



GESTALT

THE HERO WITHIN



SUPERHUMAN ROLE-PLAYING IN A WORLD OF HEROES,
ARCHETYPES AND MODERN MYTHS

BY SCOTT
BENNIE

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GESTALT: THE HERO WITHIN

Superpowered role-playing in a world of Archetypes (and other excuses to beat people up)

A Campaign World for SUPERLINK™

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In Heroic Memory...

To Jeff "Ricochet" Stitt and Elizabeth "Doc Toon" Wolcott, two of the bravest, boldest, and best people to ever grace a gaming table. You are greatly missed.

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CONTENTS

Prologue: In Mourning	5
I: Campaign Basics	14
What's in this Book	14
What's Not In This Book	15
What's a Gestalt?	15
For Knowledgeable PCs.	16
Game Mechanics and Gestalts: A Note.	17
II: Character Creation	20
Archetypes.	20
Origin	21
Goals	21
Game Mechanics and Gestalts	24
Power Level	24
Feats.	26
Powers.	26
Technology	26
Powers and Technology Notes	27
Option: Gestalt Family Powers	28
Complications and Flaws	29
III: History of Gestalt-Earth.	30
IV: Background Characters.	43
Archvillains.	43
Major Villains.	47
Minor Villains.	52
America's Finest	57
Major Metro USA	64
Leviathans	73
Rogue Leviathan Package Deal.	73
A.D.V.E.R.S.A.R.I.E.S. Inc.	74
Unusual Gestalts	76
Strange Gestalt Phenomena	78
Lost Worlds	79
Gestalts Around the World	80
Demographics	80
Worldwide Gestalt Population Survey	81
North America	81
South America	86
Europe.	88
Russia	95
The Middle East	98
Asia	100
Hot Spot: The Kurdistan Powderkeg	102
Africa	105
Australia/New Zealand	107
Antarctica	108
Near Space.	109
2006 Best Lists	110
V: Common Gestalt Archetypes	112
Regional Protector	144
Meridian (sample NPC).	145
VI: Extraterrestrials	146
A History of Known Space	146
The Ar	148
The Ar'Turodain	149
Map of Known Space.	150
The Ar'Kayadin	151
The Ar'Sarashar	152
The Fndnti	153
The Eiko	153
The Crimson Brigade	153
Alien PCs.	155
Ar Template	155
Crimson Brigade Template	155
Roykok	156
Enemies	156
Ar'Kayadin Slavers	156
Ar'Kayadin Weapons	157
Ar Vehicles.	157

Ar Warp Pod	157
Ar'Kayadin Kovvakh	157
Ar'Kayadin Oddat	157
VII: The Gestalt Dimension	159
The Void	160
Entering the Void	160
Functioning In The Void	161
Native Creatures of the Gestalt Dimension	161
Protogestalt	162
Fleeter	162
Psychic Threads	162
Memory Sharers	162
Mind Spikes	163
Provokers	163
Gestalt Dimension Changeling Template	163
Fantasyscapes	163
Metegestalts and Probability Lords, Oh My!	164
Probability Tunnels	165
Probability Tunnel Effects Table	165
Sample Fantasyscapes	166
VIII: Everyday Life	168
Attitudes Toward Superbeings	169
What the Public Thinks	169
What the Media Thinks	169
Gestalts and the U.S. Government	170
Gestalt Agencies and Operation Strongbox	171
What the Law Says	171
Technology	172
Medical Technology	172
Regeneran	172
Other Medical Breakthroughs	172
Industrial Technology	173
Energy Weapons	175
Smart Suit	176
Refrigerator Cell	177
Space	177
Orbit City	178
The Astra Foundation	180
X-Suits	181
Astra-One	181
Entertainment	181
Comic Books	181
Movies	182
Television	182
Music	183
Multimedia	183
Print Media	184
Fashion	184
Athletics	184
The Copenhagen Tournament	185
Education	186
Religion	186
The United Nations	187
Utopia 2100	188
Gestalt Slang	188
IX: Character Write-Ups	191
NPC Heroes	191
Don'ts and Dos	191
The Superhero CommunityCopenhagen Tournament	192
Columbia	193
Columbia Reserve Member Template	194
NPCs of Columbia	196
Liberator	198
Ascension	200
Carnival	202
Edge	204
Kid Mercury	206
Labyrinth	208
Starbird	210
Solo Superheroes	212
Athena	212
Korgun	214
Lament	216

Soulkeeper	.218
Technarch	.220
The Titan	.223
Supervillain Teams	.226
The Supervillain Community	.226
The Deregulators	.226
Freedom Smith	.228
Adrenaline	.230
Calamity	.232
The Juror	.234
Resistor	.236
The Terror	.238
The Firestarters	.240
Dissenter	.241
Apparition	.243
Crimson Commander	.245
Flayer	.247
Gordion	.249
Wormwood	.251
Solo Villains	.253
The Anti-American	.253
Armageddo	.255
The Blood Red King	.257
Hel	.260
The Living Gun	.262
The Magician	.263
Maligno	.265
Powerjack	.267
The Questioner	.269
Rick Thunder	.271
Tarradan	.273
Ar'Kayadin Soldier	.275
Hannibal Poole	.276
Stuntwoman	.278
Dawn Brothers	.280
Grey Army Operative	.280
Leviathans	.281
Leviathan Knight	.282
Leviathan Duke	.283
Leviathan Chancellor	.283
Leviathan Caitiff	.284
Eiko Scout Ships and Constructs	.284
Eiko Transport Ship	.284
Eiko Dissectors	.285
Eiko Neutralizer	.285
Eiko Transmitter	.285
X: Campaign Secrets	.286
XI: Campaigning	.292
Crossing Over With Gestalt-Earth	.294
Tricks of the Trade	.295
Extreme Measures: Planning vs. Reality in the ATF Campaign	.296
American Avenger	.299
"Getting to Know You"	.302
The Gestalt Club	.308
Alain Duchamps	.309
Lawson	.310
Jennifer Hunter	.310
XII: Adventures	.312
A Muse Box Melody	.312
Return of the Hero	.324
XIII: Scenario Seeds	.328
Ten Set-Ups for Gestalt Campaigns	.328
Five Conflicts for Artistic/Artform Gestalts	.329
Four Scenarios Involving Gestalt Twins	.329
Twenty Scenarios Involving Odd Gestalts	.329
Ten Easy Excuses for Gestalts to Fight	.331
Five Scenarios to Reconcile Inter-Gestalt Conflict Between PCs	.332
Four Scenarios to Introduce New Gestalt PCs Into the Campaign	.332
XIV: Afterword	.333
Index	.334

IN MOURNING

And just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is invention about truth. We have come from God... and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God.

—J.R.R. Tolkien

Some people were born to be superheroes. Estelle Wylie, however, was not one of these people. Although she received fantastic powers well beyond those of mortal men, these powers have not proven conducive to the life of a superhero.

Estelle is not an example of a typical superhero or player character on Gestalt-Earth. What she does exemplify is how the game world takes an emotion, finds its champion or exemplar, and changes their lives forever.

Game stats for Lament can be found on page 216.

This story contains sexual situations and mild bad language. Reader discretion is advised.

physical bodies, the living personifications of the nooks and crannies hidden within the human soul.

They make it sound so glamorous, so desirable. For many gestalts, it is, the ones who've tapped into the good fantasies, the ones that give them bodies that fit perfectly into skintight outfits, making them like athletic angels

with pearl-toothed smiles. That's them, the celebrities, the beautiful people, the Columbias and Titans of this world. But I'm not one of *those* gestalts. In life we celebrate beauty but we also embrace tragedy, because for some people tragedy's cathartic. Unfortunately, I'm a 24 hour-per-day tragedy, and there's no catharsis in my life.

My story isn't long or complicated. Let's start two years ago last March, on a dry windy evening in Southern California, when I fought to bring my son into the world. It was a difficult birth — I spent twenty-two hours in delivery and who knows how long in labor — but when it was all over, I held my boy's taut, struggling little body in my exhausted arms. I wouldn't have traded that minute of happiness for all the gestalt powers in the world. Giving birth is a superhuman act, we just don't appreciate it.

Then, three hours later, my son was dead.

They had taken my boy to the nursery. I rested for a few hours, and when I awoke, the doctors told me my son had passed away almost as soon as he left my arms.

They offered me a lot of awkwardly expressed sympathy, but I didn't believe them. Three times, I asked to look at my son's body, and finally they obliged me. I still remember those footsteps — I could barely walk — how I staggered, how every motion of my body built into a crescendo of truth with one shattering note, a silent note, the silence of my son as he lay still upon a table. His eyes were shut tightly and the brown tufts of hair peaked gently out of his scalp like thin, beautiful wires. His face was shrunken and fixed into a serene, doll-like pose.

"I'm sorry," someone told me. "I'm sorry."

Somewhere in my mind, the image of my dead boy froze into my skull. When I blinked and turned my head, I could still see him clearly, his tiny fingers curled as if gently grasping the world. Every wrinkle

After awhile, it doesn't hurt so much. And while I tire of squinting and brushing my face, and having to sleep on soaked pillows, I have come to a decision. I can live with what I've become.

And with that, I brush aside the tears and try to watch the afternoon soaps. Victor is confronting the superhuman who killed his son and has brainwashed his daughter into marrying him, and I'm crying. I'm always doing that. The tears, that is, not the soaps.

My name is Estelle Wylie, and I am in mourning. I have been in mourning for eighteen months, and will be in mourning for the rest of my life. No, this isn't just a metaphor, because I'm always weeping; even as I dictate this into the computer, tears are streaming down my cheeks.

Thanks to the creativity of the American press, I have many names. Some call me "the Crying Woman". To others, I'm "the Mourning Lady". Most people refer to me as "Lament". It's a short and simple name, a very comic book sounding name, and that makes people feel more comfortable. People like to think of us as comic book characters come to life. When we first appeared, the smart ones decided to play up that angle, and the media bought into the whole funny book propaganda hook, line, and sinker. I think, however, that if the general public realized what we really were, they'd be scared to death of us. Most of them are already afraid, but without the costumes and the codenames and the overblown press coverage they'd probably do something really crazy and a lot of good people would die.

Maybe I can put up with a few silly names after all.

The silliest name they've come up with is the name that's been given to all of us. "Gestalt". Like we all come from Germany or something. People have been waxing poetic over that name since 1989. Gestalt, the human imagination come to life, emotions given

on his face was as perfectly wrought as a soapstone statue. Every blemish was in place, even the blemishes that parents usually ignore. The image of my dead boy was frozen in my eyes, so everywhere I turned, I turned to him, and I couldn't stop seeing him.

I fell to my knees and cried. I howled like an animal. My stomach convulsed, and I vomited on the floor. I had lost my grandparents, my parents, my brother, and Steven (though the latter was my choice). But nothing had ever hit me like the loss of my son.

Two hours later, I was still crying. I still saw him everywhere I looked. The doctors gave me a sedative.

Four hours later, I was still crying. I still.... The doctors gave me a stronger sedative.

Six hours later, I was still crying. And everywhere I looked... The hospital staff was starting to get annoyed. They finally managed to get enough drugs into me to put me to sleep.

Twenty-four hours later, I was awake and crying again. By now, the news of my labor and my son's death had reached my friends, so I had a steady stream of visitors, all of whom were trying to comfort me, shoveling endless handfuls of Kleenex. The doctors told me I had been crying in my sleep. I could tell that from my pillow.

They sedated me, and monitored me, and visited me, and tried unsuccessfully to comfort me. Every time I started to calm down, I suddenly had a vision of my son again, calling to me with silence, looking at me with unopened eyes, and then I started crying again. Why wouldn't I cry?

After a week, the doctors transferred me to a psychiatric hospital. I can't tell you how many psychiatrists and counsellors I saw over the next few weeks. A few of them were friendly, some of them were infuriatingly condescending, and all of them were absolutely clueless. They thought it was just a nervous breakdown, or postpartum depression. I stayed there for three weeks before I checked myself out, still weeping as I crept out the door.

By now I had managed to get a small amount of control over my grief—small, very small. No longer did I howl and bawl like a hurt child, except during those moments when I dropped my guard and allowed myself to focus on the vision of my dead boy and all the emotion came flooding back. However, even in the best moments, I continued to sniffle and swallow sobs, and tears rolled down my face in a slow, steady stream.

I returned to work. I could tell they weren't happy to see me—I suppose they thought that if you were going to have a nervous breakdown, you should have the courtesy to have it in private. My boss moved me out of a cubicle and into a private office and pretended that it was a promotion. I had worked in sales for four years, but I wasn't able to hold a phone conversation for two minutes without breaking down.

"Estelle, we're going to put you in data entry

for awhile," the boss told me. "You can do data entry, can't you?"

At this point, the friends who had come to see me on that first night in the hospital had stopped coming. A few of them phoned me, but the phone calls were short and uncomfortable for all of us. Before my pregnancy, I had a very healthy and full social calendar. Not anymore. And as for dating....

All of my friends swore that they're still my friends, I have received enormous amounts of sympathy—but all of that doesn't change the fact that my life is so damn lonely it feels like I'm being crushed by an invisible force. An outcast who receives a lot of pity is still an outcast. Who would want to associate with a crying woman? A crazy woman? And who can blame them for thinking I'm crazy? Hell, I've seen enough shrinks to be crazy ten times over!

The doctors continued to examine me. They wondered how tear ducts could possibly remain so perpetually active. I really didn't care.

It was left to one of my coworkers, Dan over in marketing, to be the first one who suggested the obvious. He told me that my son died on the same day as the last "Gestalt Wave"—the day when superhumans are born—and suggested that I might have bonded with a "Sadness Gestalt". Fifteen minutes of hysterical tears followed. Gestalt? Sadness? If my grief was more than a human reaction, a trigger for a superhuman power, then it meant that I'd probably never stop feeling the emotions that were killing me.

Three days later, I went in for an appointment at UCLA's Medical Center. They have experts on the whole gestalt phenomenon there (as well as a "gestalt testing device"), and they could tell me whether I was experiencing an emotional breakdown or a warped superhuman curse. "We can't guarantee answers," the doctor, a scruffy, skinny little man with salt and pepper hair and a completely unpronounceable Eastern European name told me: "Just confidentiality."

Dan smiled and looked at me like that was the answer to all the problems in the universe. I was much less optimistic.

The doctor told me I needed to shave my head, then laughed and said it was only a joke. I just cried. Humor doesn't do much for me anymore.

After I changed into an uncomfortable hospital smock, I sat down on a hard, cold table as the doctor placed some sort of plastic mesh over my head and injected me with a chemical (I signed the release form).

"This may give you a bit of a headache," he said.

I lay down as a machine like a large camera began circling my head. It made a lot of high-pitched beeps, like a computerized bat. The procedure lasted for twenty minutes—they were uncomfortable minutes but I've had far worse.

Ten minutes after the test ended, a doctor came into the room with a we've-got-a-problem look on his face, and immediately I knew what the results

GTV

A cable network that provides 24-hour coverage of Gestalts and Gestalt issues. See page 183.

were going to say.

"This doesn't mean we can't treat your condition," he said. Or something to that effect. I'm too busy sobbing to pay careful attention. They're just words.

After giving me a few minutes to compose myself, the doctor told me a little bit about Gestalts – nothing I haven't heard on GTV – and continued to try to tell me that there was hope. I continued to sob, and he just got flustered. Giving me a few minutes to compose himself, he brusquely told me that he thought things had gone very well (they hadn't) and made an appointment for me to see a Dr. Gunther Strauss, a specialist. I'd heard about Strauss in connection with the Hollywood Knights and a few other local superheroes. He's a famous man. Strauss was available to see me "immediately". (Meaning that day, it was still a three-hour wait for him to get his ass out of his laboratory and actually make the effort to see someone who needed him.)

Strauss is a true bohemian: sympathetic, but prone to go off on tangents; like many thoughtful and intense people I've met, he's a really poor listener. I had to tell him twice that I had never seen the Blood Red King, or anyone who had looked like a "Victorian gentleman with blood smeared on his hands and face". I knew well enough from the news what the BRK (as the superheroes call him) looks like. (The Blood Red King spreads misery and suffering, usually by transforming some unfortunate person

into a monster, and it seemed plausible I could be one of his victims. It's monstrous enough.)

No, I've never known a Gestalt personally. I've never had a close encounter with a Gestalt. No, none of my friends are Gestalts. I've never suspected any of my friends of being a Gestalt. Yes, I am sad and I feel hollow inside. No, I don't think I've ever "made visual contact" with the Blood Red King. Yes, I am not usually as sad as I was when I first started crying, except when someone reminds me of that moment (like now). No, I don't have a fixation with Gestalts. No, Dan isn't a Gestalt. No, the father of my child wasn't a Gestalt either (monster yes; Gestalt no). Yes, I still see my dead boy everywhere I look. Thank you for your sympathy, Dr. Strauss, I know you have to ask these questions. No, I haven't been able to make anyone else feel sad.

I hadn't felt this battered or abused since the day the cops dragged Steven out of my apartment. I hadn't felt this angry or this scared. Sure I knew Strauss was only doing his job, but thanks to his inquisition, I was again feeling as bad as I felt on the day my son died.

And I was really pissed with Dan for making me face what I had become. He looked so chipper and pleased with himself, that he had gotten to play therapist and taken control of my life and "helped" me. I wanted to hurt him.

It seemed like the only way to win back control of my life would be if I could control someone else,

The Blood Red King

More bogeyman than supervillain, he wanders the world inflicting misery and cruelty on random souls. His game stats can be found on page 257.



so I began to play on Dan for sympathy. I explained what was happening to me, made him feel what I was feeling. I forced him to experience that sense of loss, that feeling that you're caught up in a tragedy that's as unending as a daytime soap opera that delivers a regular series of body blows. He cried. And I smiled.

I encouraged him to put his arm around me – he has strong arms for someone who's so skinny – and I began to work my way into his mind. Strauss had mentioned that if I represented grief or misery, I might have the ability to make other people feel sad. That was an interesting thought. And, if misery loved company, good. I was so sick of people shunning me. I had been shunned so much during the last few weeks that I was beginning to feel like a misbehaving Amish. Damn their hypocrisy. However, with telepathy, perhaps I could find a way to turn this tragedy to my advantage.

The relationship lasted five more weeks. If Dan had been a little more dim and a little more hormone-driven, I probably could have kept him indefinitely. At first, he was interested in my little experiments in telepathy. We had sex; he was a pleasant lover, though too much of a gentleman. There's something about weeping during sex that makes most decent-minded people want to hold back. Within two weeks, however, he told me to stop going into his mind; it was hurting him too much. I did cut back on sending him telepathic impressions, but it wasn't enough. Three weeks later, Dan told me that he thought I was using him, and he didn't want to see me anymore. It was over.

I needed to feel like I had some control over my life, so I quit my job. My coworkers expressed sympathy, but it was obvious they were glad to be rid of me, especially my boss, who complained more than once about paying a salesman's wage to a mere data entry clerk. I abandoned my friends – no loss really – and embarked on a quest to find someone who was halfway between Dan and Steven. Somewhere, there had to be a man with Dan's manners and sensitivity, but with Steven's gullibility, bulging muscles (and even more bulging billfold).

As time passed, I came to terms with my improved physical abilities. The Gestalt has made me both stronger and quicker than a woman of my size could reasonably expect to be, I was hardly as powerful as the Titan, but it felt good to be stronger and more agile than the average college football player. I also discovered subtle uses for my telepathy. I could beg, sit on the ground and weep, and people actually gave me money. Pity, it's the anti-drug; when it's forced on you, a person wants to throw money at it and run away as quickly as possible. I viewed it as one of the world's great weaknesses and decided to exploit it for all it was worth, so I panhandled for awhile. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so surprised that I was so good at it.

Once, a man in flannel who smelled like a dog-vomit/cat-piss cocktail tried to mug me. Needless to

say, I really didn't like it, so used my curse to reduce him to a quivering mass on the ground, a man who felt my loss and pain so intensely that not even a nervous breakdown could keep the grief from devouring his mind. Heh. It was probably the first time in years that he felt sympathy for anyone other than himself. What a creep. What a monster.

But how was that different than what I was becoming?

I never did find my dream man. Eventually, I grew tired of panhandling. I pursued a life of real crime; I walked into a store, wept, used my powers to force the clerks to give me as much money and goods as possible and then made them think it was their idea. Life was good for about three days and then the police found me; it was a wonder they didn't track me down sooner. At least tear gas has no effect on me. I made several officers feel sorry enough for me that they didn't shoot, although the second-in-command had a very strong will, and they resisted my attempts to force them to let me go.

Police vans are so uncomfortable.

Finally, I made the papers, as yet another participant in the Gestalt freak show. I spent about three months in jail – they decided against putting me in a Refrigerator, the isolated cells that can hold Gestalts – and then let me out on probation. An agent contacted me and encouraged me to do talk show appearances and tabloid interviews. At the time, I thought it beat panhandling.

Within six weeks of handshakes, green rooms, make-up artists who complained how much I smeared their life's work, and audiences who howled and clapped and jeered like lab animals (or delegates to a political convention) in response to signs, I couldn't take it anymore. The sharks of syndicated TV were better at exploiting people than I was (the thought of what Jerry Springer would do with my powers scares the hell out of me!) and sheer sanity compelled me to get as far away from these people as possible. So I took their money, bought a house, and tried to put my life back together. But the pieces didn't fit anymore. I couldn't get a real job, and nobody who was remotely normal wanted to associate with me. I had no future, and I knew it.

It was about this time that I started getting calls from other Gestalts. The superheroes took one look at me, told themselves that I wasn't any good at combat (they want fighting machines, not people), and closed the book (except for the usual promises of tea and sympathy). It's funny how they never came back to visit me. But the villains were a different story. Mentalists, even those who were as "specialized" as I was, are treated as a rare and valued breed. I received offers from several supervillain groups to join them. They promised me money, beautiful men, revenge, and more revenge... revenge was a big deal to a lot of these freaks.

In retrospect, I can't believe I was so desperate that I actually listened to their proposals. However,

Refrigerators

There have been many problems reliably incarcerating villains on Gestalt-Earth. See page 177

The Titan

The strongest man on Earth, widely acknowledged as the epitome of Gestalt-kind (much to his embarrassment). His game stats can be found on page 223

some of these people were so good at shoveling their lunatic crap, it's frightening. Thanks in large part to a thousand-dollar bank deposit that covered a late house payment, I decided to have a "try out" with a supervillain team called the Firestarters. I'd accompany them on one of their "urban renewal projects", and see if I had a future in "the business". Forty-eight hours after accepting their offer with a quick email response, I was jetting to St. Louis with a veil over my face.

I pretended to be a widow who was heading to Missouri for her husband's funeral – the role is a very easy one to play – and the guy at the counter felt enough sympathy for me that he didn't look too closely at the fake ID they'd FedExed me.

I was taking a long, nerve-wracking flight into an uncertain world, and so I cried a lot. The people around me got annoyed really quick, and a fat businessman asked the stewardess to get him another seat.

Landing in St. Louis, I made my way over to one of the rent-a-car counters, hysterically claiming that they'd lost the paperwork and my car had been stolen. The guy at the counter gave me a look that was equal parts pity and exasperation—and a replacement vehicle free of charge. As one late night comedian said about me when my story broke, when you've got grief in your arsenal, who needs to use sex as a weapon?

I drove to a dingy warehouse on the outskirts

of East St. Louis, parked several blocks away (as instructed) and walked through a large, unlocked metal door that was clearly marked "DO NOT ENTER". Warehouses are horrible places. Surrounded on all sides by crates, the only illumination were shafts of light that waffed through a skylight, emanating from a gaudy sign that perched on the roof. It barely provided enough light to keep me from banging my head into the crates. The place was so quiet that I thought to myself that they had to be here – only a Silence Gestalt could make things more spooky.

"Hello?" My voice was tentative and cracked, even as I was praying hard that no one would answer.

Some previously unseen black shape tumbled down from a catwalk, performing a double somersault before landing on the ground three feet in front of me. It was a woman, much taller than I am, with the build of a lady wrestler or bodybuilder. She was clad completely in leather; her dominatrix look was completed by the rawhide whip she snapped and a psychotic look that seemed permanently locked on her face as if she'd had too much plastic surgery.

"Hello?" I repeated, startled out of my wits.

"Hello, honey," she snarled, and I quickly came to the conclusion that this was the biggest mistake I'd made since I decided to give Steven "another chance".

Maybe it was even bigger.

"Flayer! Do not frighten the girl!" A baritone voice that sounded like it was trying too hard to be friendly shouted at me, and a figure appeared out of nowhere in what appeared to be a blur of color. He wore a black and yellow costume that's as dignified as any of the silly things the superheroes wear.

"Welcome to the Revolution, my dear." Dissenter said with a slight bow. "Today, we will teach how to turn that grief of yours into vengeance."

The nice thing about crying all the time is that people don't notice when you roll your eyes.

The Firestarters do not have a sterling reputation. As the conversation progressed, I could tell they deserved every bit of their "fame". Their leader, Dissenter, has made it his life's work to destroy "urban blight" (which, as far as I can tell, encompasses most of society in general) by any means necessary. At the drop of a hat, he went into a rant about social conditions; he reminded me of the creepiest of my history professors at junior college, a burnt-out schizophrenic fossil who held onto his teaching career only because of tenure. Crimson Commander, his second-in-command, was too busy primping in his tight red costume to care about anything else. When he managed to get a word in (which, when Dissenter is in the middle of a diatribe, is a very hard thing to do) he came across as uneducated as he was egotistical. He kept referring to himself as "The Commander" – in the third person. I'm not sure where he picked up that habit—it's probably television's fault.

As for the others, well, it was obvious from the

The Firestarters

As you can probably guess, Estelle is making a big mistake. The Firestarters are a team of known killers. Even if she doesn't kill, the justice system will not look kindly on her just for associating with them. For the Firestarters' game stats, see page 240.



Dissenter

Some villains are great visionaries who feel it's their destiny to impose their ideas on the human herd. Dissenter is one of these — but his career has been such a wash of petty mediocrity that he's an embarrassment to any self-respecting megalomaniac.

start that Flayer and Gordion were psychotic enough to star in a sequel to “Natural Born Killers” (horrible film). One had a whip, the other an axe, and they both had the same demented grin on their faces that they kept flashing each other, as if their psychosis had itself become an unspoken conversation. The only person I could bring myself to tolerate is Apparition – yes, she’s a ghost, and my heart stopped whenever she walked into a room – but when you can actually bring yourself to talk with her, almost immediately you discover that she’s just a vulnerable little girl dealing with her life’s tragedy. She didn’t ask for her powers either.

Halfway into Dissenter’s “briefing”, my nostrils began to bristle at a foul stench (which reminded me of a decaying animal corpse) that seemed to originate from behind a heavy set of metal doors. I didn’t ask the obvious question, but Apparition noticed my reaction and said in an echoed whisper: “That’s Wormwood. He’s not coming this time.” I didn’t say anything but I did give a prayer of thanks. She shot me a sympathetic look, as if telling me that she felt that way, too.

Perhaps it was this sense that I’d finally found one kindred spirit that convinced me to join these lunatics in their latest robbery. (Though when Crimson Commander said, “You leave the killing to us, you just emotionally prepare the grieving relatives for their funerals.” I jumped out of my seat and nearly walked away.)

I should have left them right there. Then Dissenter handed me “the uniform”, a grotesque tank top and high heel ensemble that made me look half-hooker/half-Jennifer Beals from “Flashdance”. A supervillainess for guys who like to look at supervillainesses. You could tell a man designed this. I never would have thought Dissenter had so many working hormones.

“Actually, it was Gordion who designed it,” Apparition whispered, gesturing toward her axe-wielding psychotic teammate. Gordion was beaming proudly at the sight of me in my costume; he reminded me of Alice Cooper (if Alice were playing the Jack Nicholson role from *The Shining*). It was my fault, I suppose, for not designing my own “costume” when I had the chance.

Again, I should have left them right there.

We packed ourselves into a van with thick black windows, and slowly headed for our target. I sat in a corner and stared at the paneling, doing my best to ignore the Commander’s non-stop yammering. The others did the same. Dissenter tried to get everyone’s attention and make contingency plans in case St. Louis’s (few) known superheroes interrupted the operation. The Commander told him to “chill out” and said, “It’s going to be cool”. Which is another way of saying, “I’m too lazy to plan things myself and I don’t want to deal with your plan right now”. I heard that crap a lot back when I was in marketing.

It’s amazing how much these supervillains reminded me of my old coworkers, except they kill

people.

We finally arrived at our target, a Zhengmart strip mall on the outskirts of East St. Louis. I know, everyone hates Zhengmart for crowding out American wholesalers (as if Wal-Mart didn’t deserve to be shut out of the marketplace), but this wasn’t a “patriot crime” (a crime that allegedly defends America from foreign corporations). Dissenter wanted to obliterate poverty, and there was something about a successful retail outlet in the heart of one of America’s most rundown neighborhoods that struck him as obscene. Or maybe (given the man’s “God complex”) profane.

We parked near the front entrance, blasted a hole in the side of the building (why we didn’t just have the Commander smash in the doors is beyond me) and we started robbing the place. It was one of the most despicable things I’d ever seen. We broke the rent-a-cops as easily as we smashed the ATM-machines. We saw the terrified looks on the faces of these normally confident people and everyone (except me) just laughed at them. The other Firestarters were so ecstatic to have a chance to play with their breakable little toys that I couldn’t bring myself to watch. I knew they were going to kill someone.

Flayer grabbed a guard with her whip, picked him up, and bounced him off several walls, making a sick thud that sounded like a car driving over someone. Gordion sliced another guard’s pistol in two, held the axe blade against his throat, slowly backed him up against a wall, and told them that he’d let him live “if you piss your pants now.” Charming fellow.

Crimson immolated another guard with a sheathe of fire and grinned while a man writhed in agony with second-degree burns on his face, and told him he was “only warming up”. Sadism and puns go together so well, don’t they? However, that’s when Dissenter nearly had an epileptic fit.

“Idiots! Stop fooling around and get the damn job done!” He shouted. “And save some of these peons for me!” He added, popping any delusion of being a humanitarian like a mischievous child with a pin at a rich kid’s birthday party.

To my relief, Dissenter’s warning did cut down on the torture and the attempted homicide. We stole over thirty-eight thousand dollars from the cash registers, a wall safe, and three ATMs. The money felt surprisingly clean; holding so many bills in my hand at one time was such a downright euphoric experience that I almost forgot about how I got them.

“Can we have fun now?” The Commander shouted as we finished emptying the contents of the last ATM machine into a sack.

“No, it’s my turn,” Dissenter replied, and he began to use his powers to bring the roof down (even though we were still inside). A lot of our eyes opened wide, while “the leader” blasted away at the store’s support pillars —the idiot didn’t even think to give us an evacuation order until after he’d started his destruction. His facial expression, even under a half-mask, was a dead ringer for Steven’s.

Zhengmart
A Hong Kong-based retailer that was founded in 1995 and in five short years, became the #2 retailer in North America. Shoppers love their low prices. Others point to repeated labor code violations, virtual slave labor production overseas, and allegations of sabotage against their rivals.

But that's when we heard the Voice.

You know who I'm talking about, don't you? That Voice, that unforgettable resonant, masculine baritone that can cut through other sounds so completely that everything else sounds vulgar by comparison? Involuntarily, I inhaled, a sensation that's so sharp that it stabbed my ribs from the inside. The Voice was playing over a loudspeaker, but I could tell that it would make me quiver even if it weren't amplified.

"This is Columbia." The Voice announced in a manner-of-fact delivery that belied its power. I've heard it on television dozens of times—it's the voice of Liberator, leader of Columbia, the finest team of Gestalts in the world. An armored van drove up to the opening we'd made in the side of the building, and six costumed figures emerged: three men in quasi-military uniforms and three women who wore more distinctive costumes. Three of them were sky-borne in a single step.

"What?" Flayer, who had been as arrogant and as poised a bitch as I've ever met, suddenly took on the facial expression of a frightened little girl during a thunderstorm. The only one of them who acted like he really wanted a fight was Crimson Commander, who shouted something unintelligible and charged at Edge, a brawny, handsome man who filled out one of the Columbia blue and white uniforms very nicely. Flames erupted out of the Commander's hands, completely immolating his opponent. Edge grunted, took one backward step, then leaned forward and waded toward the Commander, deliberately passing through the heart of the fire.

It was one of those perfectly dramatic moments that you normally only see in comic books, though it played a lot faster in real life. The Commander didn't even have time to panic. Two seconds after the fire struck, Edge had bridged the distance between himself and the Commander, drew back his left fist to slug him in the jaw – then pivoted, spun, and delivered a kung fu move with his right hand that connected squarely in the center of the Commander's chest. It sounded like a sledgehammer slamming into a side of beef. The punch knocked my teammate backwards at least twenty feet, where he slammed head first against drywall. The impact made a small cloud of powder.

"Don't stand there gawking, woman," the Commander shouted, wheezing a little as he pried his head from the wall. "Do your thing! The crying thing! Make that son of a bitch cry—now!!"

Edge and I traded a glance, and I reached one of the quickest decisions of my life. To hell with this. I didn't have a clue what was going on here, and this wasn't even remotely what I signed up for.

So I ran.

I kicked away those ridiculous high heels and ran as fast as I could manage. I had hoped my would-be compatriots would inadvertently cover my escape — the one advantage to working alongside

psychopaths is that you end up as a lower priority on a superhero's grocery list. But I should have known better. I'd taken about twenty steps away from the battle when an uneasy feeling overwhelmed me. Do you know the feeling that you're being watched? This felt like that, only worse. It was the feeling that I'd never go unnoticed again, like I was under the judgment of God, and it hit me like vertigo. Out of the sky descended a feminine figure, her body wrapped in a swirl of ever-changing blue lines, making her distinct and yet difficult to clearly see at the same time. She landed next to me.

"S-Stay back!" I said, sobbing. These weren't the usual tears of stress or grief—these were new tears, tears of fear.

"No, I will not," the woman insisted. She shot me a look that reminded me of my mom's stare when she was in a disapproving mood. No, not "reminded", it is the same look. The woman took three unhalting steps toward me, unbothered by the emotions I was desperately trying to project onto her. "You can do better than this, Miss Wylie," she added, reproaching me as I stumbled backward.

Labyrinth. Arguably, she's the most powerful of all telepaths, the Gestalt of Secrets, a proverbial riddle wrapped in an enigma and a telekinetic force field that's powerful enough to stop a tank shell. Her reputation alone would be sufficient to compel most people to surrender. The tears that streamed down my face were genuine, but then again, they always were.

"Better?!" I managed to work up the courage to spit a curse at her. She has no reaction: Maybe she's as inhuman as everyone says. "Just because you got into my head, it d-doesn't mean you know me!"

Again I tried to extend my anguish into her mind, but I knew that a mind as powerful as hers could ignore such emotions easily. However (to my surprise) she didn't ignore them. She accepted my pain and used it to chart a path into my psyche. I felt like such an amateur.

"I do know you, Miss Wylie," she declared with a heavy breath. "I know everything now. The realities and the falsehoods. Haven't there been enough falsehoods in your life?"

"Now you're pitying me!" I spat bitterly. "The stupid, whiny cow who can't even make a decent supervillain!" I was sobbing so hard now I nearly choked. "The Drama Queen Gestalt, every whiner in the world wrapped into a mewling, sobbing p-package!" I added, still fighting to avoid choking on my words. "Everyone hates a whiner."

"That's what hurts the most, isn't it? Everyone's expected to be a good soldier and not complain," Labyrinth acknowledged, coolly but not coldly. "Society sets a line between what's normal, accepted behavior and those neuroses that make somebody a pariah," she added, slicing the air with her hand and making a vertical line to emphasize her point. "Most people stop themselves from crossing it, but your Gestalt won't let you and it's killing you."

Columbia
When people on Earth think about superheroes, more likely than not, they're thinking about Columbia. They're the most prestigious team of heroes in the world, despite being racked by controversy and numerous scandals.

For Columbia's game stats, see page 193



"So it's all society's... f-fault?" I mocked as I fought to repress a sniffle.

"That's not true either," Labyrinth replied. "Or rather, it's less true than you believe. But it's also more true than society's willing to accept." She smiled slightly. "The line blurs."

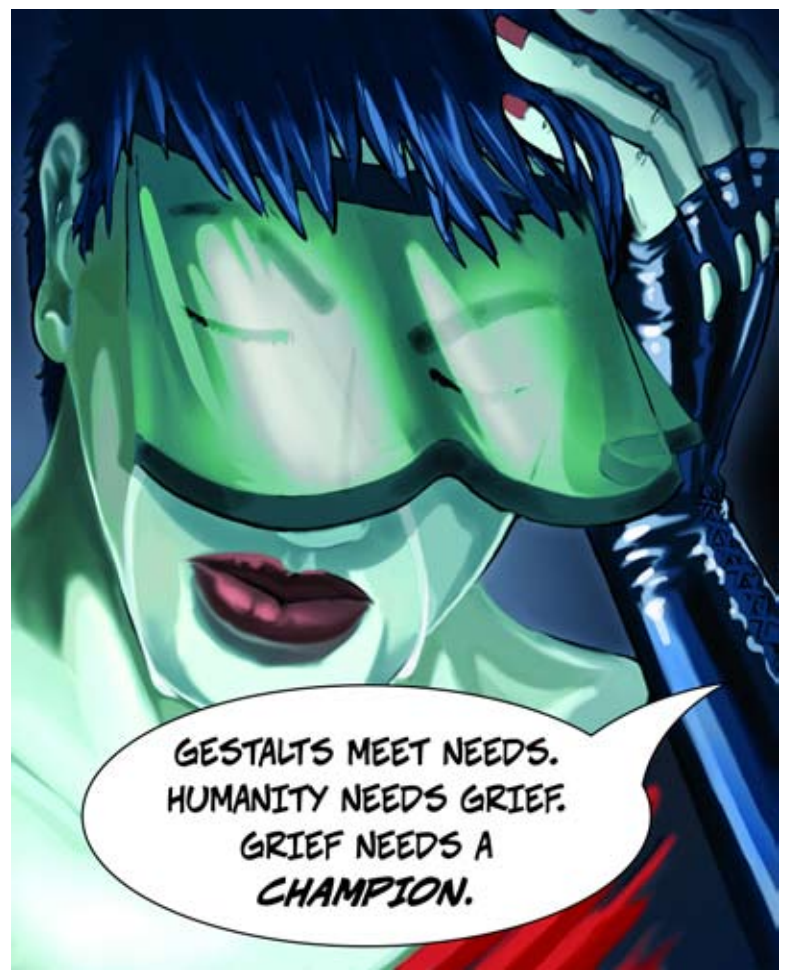
I said nothing but glared at her in hateful silence. What a smug, righteous, superior, infuriating woman, I told myself. However, when I looked directly at her, I could no sooner hide from the truth than I can normally hide from the memory of my boy. The truth is that she was right about everything, and that's what made me *really* hate her.

"So everything's a labyrinth?" I continued to fight her words. "Everything's just lines? What a typical gestalt! Are you able to see anything except through some narrow gestalt prism?"

Labyrinth smiled slightly, though she shook her head at the accusation. "But you do it too," she retorted. "What have you done in the last year with your life except to view it through a prism of emotions: pity, hate, anger, self-loathing, despair —and little else. Those emotions come so easy to you, even though you know they've crippled you."

"Then what the hell am I supposed to do?" I shouted, half-snarling, half-begging for an answer that wasn't pomp or philosophy. I didn't get one.

"Live." Labyrinth replied. "Find the courage to look for a better path, and live that better life." She almost smiled. "Because life is a labyrinth, Estelle."



Something was rattling and breaking inside me. I began to shake. My body was compulsively shuddering, and the tears were streaming very quickly. It was almost impossible to move, or even see.

So I didn't get a clear view of the explosion when Crimson Commander blasted the telepath from behind.

"Nice work, baby!" The toothy supervillain's voice reminded me of a bad actor playing an over-the-top movie pimp. "Now team up with the Commander and we'll finish off this bitch!" He added.

I stood there in quiet disbelief. The villain was hovering several feet off the ground; seeing I wasn't responding, after a few seconds, the expression on his face changed from elation to annoyance. He shouted something at me, but it didn't register in my ears. I turned around and immediately started to run.

I could hear Crimson Commander calling me an "effing bitch"; suddenly there was a crackling noise behind me, which was cut off by a whooshing sound that reminded me of a fire-breathing dragon in some Tolkien movie. He attacked me. The fire bolt missed, splashing like napalm on a brick storefront at my feet, leaving behind a scorch mark and a slight sulfuric smell. He repeated the "bitch" remark.

Steven used that word a lot, too.

I quickly turned my head. If he fired at me again... but no, Labyrinth's already gotten to her feet, and the Commander's screaming something. She's making him scream. I realized that she could have done that to me too.

I could have sat back at a safe distance and watched, but I didn't. I didn't want to see anymore. What had happened tonight was sick. I was sick. And being involved in this kind of a life, that was the most sickening part of all.

And it wasn't for me.

Supervillains like to call a bloodbath "honest violence". Male supervillains, tribes of Neanderthals who think that honesty justifies brutality – just like Steven did. Labyrinth was right, life is a labyrinth, and there's no way to know the correct path and maybe that's not the point. A labyrinth is full of dead ends, and it had become obvious that the path I was following was as dead an end as they get. And I wasn't just talking about the supervillain path; I had allowed negative emotions to rule my whole life and they'd twisted me into someone unrecognizable. How could I allow myself to turn my life into such a complete, utter waste of me?

It was time to abandon that path, to allow more positive things to rule my life. But first, I needed to clean up this mess.

Like most powerful and unpleasant revelations, it takes some time for that epiphany to sink into my dim-witted psyche. The misery I experienced that night was beyond bearable. I spent the evening huddled like an animal in a motel room off a highway somewhere in one of the bad neighborhoods of East St. Louis. I shook, I vomited, I cried, I was absolutely certain that the police were going to swoop in, snatch me, and lock me behind a force field for the rest of my life. Oh, God, how could I have screwed up this badly?

The only sane thing I could think of doing was to surrender myself to the authorities, so that's what I did. I phoned the police, and thirty minutes later a bus load of SWAT officers arrived at my doorstep. We had a brief (and surprisingly civil) conversation. They cracked open the door and tossed a black hood into the motel room. I placed it over my head (it makes them feel safer; most telepaths can't affect what they can't see) and slowly walked out of the motel room with my hands in the air. That must have been a sight. Quickly, two pairs of nervous hands grabbed each of my arms. The SWAT officers barked some muffled orders, forced me to walk ten or twelve steps into a police van, and sat me down on a solid metal bench. The van quickly drove away. Thirty minutes later, I found myself sitting in a jail cell (there's no

force field containment facility in Missouri). Everyone called a lot of lawyers.

I waited six days for my hearing. Once I had a chance to calm down, my greatest fear was that the Firestarters would show up and try to reclaim me, like a piece of lost luggage. Fortunately for me, they didn't bother. I guess either they'd been caught or they thought I was a waste of effort. However, someone did intervene – Liberator and Labyrinth showed up at the courthouse on the morning of my hearing and argued on my behalf, claiming that I was closer to reforming now than I'd been at any time since I discovered my Gestalt.

I used to think that I was the one who made people sympathetic and that all the pity in the world was my doing. Now I realized that there are actually people who are capable of giving kindness without any sort of mental prompting. They gave me a suspended sentence (although the public disapproved); it's not uncommon for Gestalts who aren't hardened criminals to receive a break. The judge warned me that any future violations on my part will not be tolerated. Sure. I knew posturing when I heard it.

I walked out of the courtroom with my freedom intact. It's always been fashionable to talk about epiphanies, those revelatory moments that take our lives out of the pit and lift them up to someplace grand. My life didn't feel elevated. Instead I found my epiphany in something more commonplace. My epiphany happened in Indiana, where moving as far from the supervillain life as I could get, I discovered Jesus Christ.

Although I experienced moments that tested my patience (and many more that strained my tear ducts), my life has improved in nearly infinite ways. I shared my story with young people, counseled them about depression and grief, and preached the Bible to them. They comforted me in turn.

Soon I will be marrying Ted Ford, a pleasant young Methodist minister who works out of a small church in the suburbs and who likes to plant carrots and fly fish. He's the last person I expected to bring me a lifetime of happiness, but a lot of chances for happiness have slipped away over the last few years. I have to work really hard not to take advantage of this man, and allow his good nature to work more effectively at bringing me happiness than my telepathic powers ever could.

I still see my dead son, as clearly as ever, and nothing's ever going to take that sight away. I still cry, and sometimes it gets on Ted's nerves, but he does his best not to show it, and he helps me get through the pain.

I still cry, but sometimes they're tears of joy.

I: THE CAMPAIGN BASICS

"The world of Gestalt is the anti-Seinfeld. You know how the pundits say that Seinfeld's 'the show about nothing'? Well, Gestalt's the show where nothing becomes everything. In today's world of gestalts, nothing is insignificant."

— The Philosopher

Comic books are the worlds of Archetypes. Our favorite superheroes include the avenging vigilante who drives the cool car, the wisecracking teenager who shoots webs at people, and the farm boy with the power of a god. On the surface they're fictional characters but they're also symbols of a larger world. These characters personify our hatred of injustice, our love of tricksters, and our admiration for immigrants who build a new life and rise to greatness in modern society.

Other comic book characters are symbols, too. They represent concepts like Heroism, Strength, Speed, Cruelty, or Ambition. They're also imbued with mythology, representing those things that mankind once worshipped: the Sun, the Moon, the Seasons, the Elements, Angels, or Demons (which, as anthropologists will tell you, are also symbols.)

All fiction deals in archetypes, but comic books apply these symbols more consciously than other fictional forms. However, the Gestalt campaign takes the idea of "character as symbol" one step further. On Gestalt-Earth, the characters aren't just symbolic—they are the symbols.

So what happens to your life when you become the living embodiment of a symbol? When you're a living card in the tarot of the unconscious, and the world turns into a place that's torn from the pages of a comic book? The answers to those questions (and others) will be determined by the events of your campaign.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

Gestalt describes a world where superhumans are archetypes come to life. The book is divided into the following sections:

"Prologue – In Mourning" is a piece of fiction that introduces the world of Gestalt.

"Chapter One – Campaign Basics" introduces the campaign and discusses what a Gestalt is, offering numerous examples of prominent Gestalt archetypes.

"Chapter Two – Character Creation" and Campaign Guidelines talks about the mechanics of creating a Gestalt character.

"Chapter Three – History" describes important events in the Gestalt-Earth timeline, including "Great Battles in Superhuman History", which shaped the history of the campaign setting.

"Chapter Four – Background Characters of Gestalt-Earth" describes the major heroes and villains of the world (centering but not exclusively focused on the United States) and some of the weirder Gestalts and Gestalt related phenomena that your campaign heroes might encounter.

"Chapter Five – Common Gestalt Archetypes" describes prominent Gestalt archetypes and offers samples for quick play.

"Chapter Six – Extraterrestrials" describes the major alien races of the campaign world, what it's like to come from those cultures, and a brief overview of enemy aliens the players can expect to face.

"Chapter Seven – The Gestalt Dimension" describes the strange dimension that's the source for superhuman abilities.

"Chapter Eight – Everyday Life In Gestalt-Earth" describes how people view Gestalts, the state of technology, entertainment, religion, space exploration, and athletics on Gestalt-Earth, as well as common Gestalt slang.

"Chapter Nine – Character Write-Ups" includes *M&M* statistics for characters ranging from unusual NPC heroes like Lament, to adversaries suitable for starting characters like the Deregulators to major campaign movers and shakers like Columbia, and the Blood Red King.

"Chapter Ten – Campaign Secrets" includes notes on future canonical events and the secrets of major NPCs.

"Chapter Eleven – Gestalt-Earth Campaigning" discusses theme and tone in Gestalt campaigns, advice for crossing over with other campaign settings, an example of campaign planning vs. execution, and a rough background for running the Gestalt Club, an unusual Gestalt universe campaign.

"Chapter Twelve – Scenario Seeds" offers plot suggestions to help get you started.

Gestalt: The Hero Within is the first of a planned two-book series dedicated to this campaign setting. The sequel, *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*, will focus on evil Gestalt archetypes, NPC write-ups (particularly villains), adventures, and the Eiko Invasion storyline.

A Note on Capitalization

When the word "Gestalt" is capitalized, it usually refers to an archetype (e.g. he's the Gestalt of Fire). When it's not capitalized, it's usually a synonym for "superhuman".

WHAT'S NOT IN THIS BOOK

It's impossible to fully document a world full of characters, so we didn't try. You'll find many characters whose game stats are not covered here. While many characters may be designed reasonably quickly using the archetype templates in Chapter Five, most character types will require work on the part of the Gamemaster.

However, the most important thing that's not in this book is a blanket assertion that characters cannot be changed, plotlines cannot be ignored or that everything in this book must be adopted for the campaign wholesale. Do you think that Columbia's too obnoxious to live? Too bad they never existed. Or if they did exist, someone dropped a nuke on them — let's see you spin doctor your way out of that one, Liberator! Do you think Titan's a bland and pale shadow of an established comic book icon? Wipe him out! You'd rather use magic instead of psionics as the basis of all Gestalt powers? Do it. Hate the Gestalt Dimension? Ignore it. You don't like so many superheroes cluttering up the world? Well, it's a shame so many of them died in your world's Eiko Invasion (or in the Gestalt Dimension Shudder or the Great Betrayal, or whatever storyline works for you) or that the book got it wrong about the total in the first place.

It's your world now. Make a mess of it.

WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN (AND SHOULD) READ

Some sections of the books are meant for the player and the GM, others are meant for the GM alone. The player should read the following chapters and ignore the rest:

Chapter One — Campaign Basics; Chapter Two — Character Creation and Campaign Guidelines; Chapter Three — History; Chapter Four — Background Characters of Gestalt-Earth; Chapter Five — Common-Gestalt Archetypes; and Chapter Eight — Everyday Life In Gestalt-Earth.

Players playing alien PCs or who have knowledge of alien space may read Chapter Six — Extraterrestrials.

Player Characters who have knowledge of the Gestalt Dimension may read Chapter Seven — The Gestalt Dimension.

Everything else is meant only for the GM.

WHAT'S A GESTALT?

"Gestalt" is a German word that roughly means "a combination of individual pieces that form something larger". In this campaign setting, "Gestalt" also means "superpowered being". The vast majority of superhumans in this campaign world are Gestalts. All Gestalts have an invisible link with the collective unconscious of humanity, which exists in a realm called the Gestalt Dimension. The collective minds of humanity within this

dimension generate incredible amounts of psychic power.

Gestalts draw their power from this source.

This energy source is powerful enough to warp the laws of physics and make miracles happen on a regular basis.

Since the term was coined, researchers in the newly pioneered field of gestalt science have tried to categorize the major categories of superhumans based on numerous complicated schema. The commonly accepted system defines a Gestalt by the relationship between the individual and his powers. According to this scheme (which is known in the campaign as the Adderlee Classification), there are three types of gestalts: pure gestalts, bonded gestalts, and chain gestalts.

PURE GESTALTS

Pure gestalts do not exist prior to gaining gestalt abilities, but are formed out of psionic energy and become the literal embodiment of an idea. A pure gestalt usually takes the form of a human being. He often begins as a blank slate with no memories (other than the ability to speak the native language and a desire to further the goals of his Gestalt).

A pure gestalt is extremely single-minded, especially after he has been created. The longer that the pure gestalt interacts with people, the more human he becomes, although even after many years, many pures do not have refined social skills.

Some people believe pure gestalts are more powerful than bonded gestalts, although this isn't always true (the most powerful Gestalt on Earth is the Titan, a bonded gestalt). However, pure gestalts can be extremely difficult to permanently kill, since many pure gestalts have the Gestalt Immortality Extra (on Healing) that allows them to come back from death unless they are killed in a particular way.

A pure gestalt isn't just a person; he can be an idea, a fancy, a behavior, a profession, or a dream. And it's very hard to kill a dream.

BONDED GESTALTS

Bonded gestalts are individuals who have been empowered by Gestalt entities; they're gestalts which required a human link to come into existence. The human maintains his personality and has complete free will, but he's still influenced by the purpose of his Gestalt archetype. Bonded

ADDERLEE'S LAW

"All Gestalts begin as protogestalts. All protogestalts are luminous, they're light."

"That's why Gestalts are drawn into the public eye. Gestalts gotta shine. It's the nature of light, you just can't hide it in the dark."

—Dr. Charles Adderlee, September 22, 1990

gestalts can be single-minded and driven, but are usually much less obsessed than pures. It's harder to determine the archetype that a bonded gestalt represents than a pure. Players who chafe at the rigidity of playing a "pure" should find the flexibility of playing a bonded gestalt more to their liking; as bonded gestalts have more freedom to play against their compulsions.

Bonded gestalts are usually less powerful than pures, and it's much rarer (but not impossible) for them to have the Gestalt Immortality Extra.

The Gestalt bonding process doesn't have a genetic basis; families with multiple gestalts have them because the family produces the proper emotional environment (*i.e.*, nurture is important, not nature). Having intense psychological traits is very important to getting gestalt abilities.

Often the bonded gestalt process will alter a person's physical appearance, satisfying the gestalt's fantasies by making him more physically attractive. Additionally, the Gestalt process will often elevate the gestalt's baseline physical capabilities, so many gestalts are much stronger, faster, and tougher than a normal human, regardless of their archetype.

CHAIN GESTALTS

Chain Gestalts are the least fortunate of the three Gestalt types. These individuals were given powers when they were transformed by other gestalts, but now serve another person's purpose. Chain Gestalts are bonded to inappropriate psychological constructs that often overwrite or even destroy the host's natural personality.

Many Chain Gestalts are under the control of the individual that gave them superhuman powers, but some of them have been known to break free from their "master's" control. Some chain gestalts are able to pass on their Gestalt to more (usually unfortunate) individuals. Some gestalts that produce chain gestalts, such as the Boy Scout, will control their targets for only a short period of time or provide minor modifications to behavior.

THE GESTALT WAVE

The unleashing of Gestalt effects into the world is called a Gestalt Wave. All gestalts begin as protogestalts, sentient energy that tries to enter the human dimension. When a Gestalt Wave occurs, this energy breaks free and shapes itself into an individual who represents the archetype's interests or bonds with a human being who has a compatible interest. Bonded gestalts do not always appear at the exact moment of a Gestalt Wave; occasionally, it requires a traumatic incident to "unleash" or "awaken" the Gestalt.

There have been five gestalt waves (see Campaign History, p. 30) since 1989. Most superhumans have been born on one of these five

dates.

FOR KNOWLEDGEABLE PCs

Characters who pay attention to the actual study of gestalts would probably know the following bits of theory (which have been reported in the popular media). An academic level of study is not needed to know this:

THE STATE OF GESTALT SCIENCE

The study of the Gestalt phenomena is in its infancy. The Gestalt Dimension was only recently revealed to the public, and many people still think it's a load of nonsense. It is possible to test people to see if they've attracted a Gestalt, but only by using large (*i.e.*, non-portable) equipment and twenty minutes of data analysis to determine whether someone has the "Gestalt cerebellum signature". This technology is rare; usually it's only found at major military installations or major university hospitals.

Gestalts can emit unusual amounts of heat, radioactivity, sound, pheromones, or brainwaves; they can have unusual blood types, fingerprints, or retina patterns; or they can appear perfectly normal in all testable conditions. Psionics often have unusual brainwave patterns, but not always: some telepaths can train themselves to avoid detection.

There are several popular competing theories about the Gestalt phenomenon. The most commonly accepted facts are:

(1) The root of all Gestalt abilities is psionic. Gestalts manipulate an unknown source of psychic energy that allows them to transcend normal space-time laws.

(2) Gestalt bonds often happen to intense, obsessed individuals.

(3) A battery of tests using recently developed (and not widely available) technology can detect gestalt signatures.

(4) The same individual who developed the Gestalt detector has claimed that there is a Gestalt "dimension" where humanity's collective unconscious creates Gestalts, which are released into our dimension during gestalt waves.

There are three other laws that govern Gestalt behavior:

Rule 1. Gestalts live to experience an emotional high caused by using their powers. This is strongest when they're championing their archetype and using it to triumph.

Rule 2. Gestalts inevitably get into situations that demonstrate the power of their Gestalt, even when it's unintentional.

Rule 3. Gestalts are a two-way street (especially for the Regional Defender Gestalts). If something bad happens to the Gestalt of Courage, then the people in the immediate vicinity will find it a little

harder to be brave. If something bad happens to the Gestalt Protector of America, then America will likely suffer some catastrophic misfortune.

(Note: This principle is not represented in the game mechanics; it's a GM option. A suggestion for handling this is offered on page 296).

TWINS AND THE "GESTALT FAMILY"

Individuals who have the same reasons for having their Gestalt powers are called gestalt twins. Extremely strong bonds are often formed between gestalt twins who can find themselves as close to each other as family (or incredibly intense rivals) in a few moments.

It is possible for more than one Gestalt to represent the same psychological archetype (Strength, Winter, etc.). Characters do not need to have the exact same powers to be gestalt twins; they just have to represent identical archetypes. There are also Gestalts that represent related concepts (Beauty and Sexuality, Courage and Determination, Winter and Cold, Strongman and Toughness—all share similar properties), and Gestalts that are subtypes (Thunder and Tornadoes are subtypes of Weather Gestalts; Generals and Drill Sergeants are subtypes of Soldier Gestalts). These aren't "twins", but they're so closely related that they might (if the GM wishes) interact in unusual ways.

GAME MECHANICS AND GESTALTS

In game mechanics terms, Gestalt abilities are expressed in two ways:

The Gestalt campaign has various power levels and limits on key stats, defenses, and the amount of damage that a character is allowed to generate. Gestalts also require characters to take certain Powers and Flaws to model the archetype they're taking.

GESTALT VS. NORMAL SUPERHERO WORLDS — A NOTE ON TONE

Because many of the characters on Gestalt-Earth are extreme, intense, and over the top, it's easy to think of the world as a comical and ridiculous place. Some will see it as a good place to parody superheroes. That's fine; comic PCs have their place.

However, extremes aren't always funny, and people who think of Gestalt-Earth as a "light" campaign are making as big a mistake as those who think of it as "dark".

In this book, Gestalt is a serious campaign world with a lot of really dark places, some really light moments, and a lot of genuine weirdness. As one of my players once called it, it's "smudged four-color". Gestalt-Earth doesn't try to fit into any of the "age" schemes of comics (Golden,

Silver, Bronze, Iron, etc.) but combines a lot of the elements of all periods of comic books to exist as its own world.

One noteworthy difference between Gestalt-Earth and other campaign worlds is in the number of unusual supers. Many gestalts don a costume and pursue "the trade" (i.e., superheroing) but there are also many other gestalts whose abilities are subtle and go unnoticed. A person with a gestalt ability to make the perfect cup of coffee would be as much of a superhuman as the Titan, but a person with that power would probably not exist in most campaign worlds. There is a weird edge to the Gestalt campaign that's usually best played with a straight face. Horror and humor scenarios often work better on Gestalt-Earth than in traditional superhero worlds.

THE CAMPAIGN: UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

Every campaign world has underlying assumptions that contribute to the campaign's tone and style of play. Gestalt isn't any different in this regard.

Gestalt-Earth is very crowded. There are many people in tights with which to interact and many supers who don't wear tights. Non-supers take more of a back seat to supers in Gestalt than they do in many campaigns, because PCs are



more likely to associate with quirky non-combat superhumans than they are with normals. Gestalt is a supers-heavy universe, and if PCs want to get to the top of the superhuman ecology, they're going to have to work at it. Gestalt is as much a simulation as it is a story-telling universe. There are a billion stories in the world and the PCs' are only one of them.

Gestalt-Earth is very different than many superhero campaign worlds, although some of the differences may not be obvious at first. The basic trappings are the same: vigilantes who fought crime, and men and women in tight costumes who went on colorful adventures,

However, the substance of the world is different from most traditional superhero campaign worlds. There is no true magic on Gestalt-Earth. With a couple of rare exceptions, superhuman abilities are not passed along generational lines. Demonic powers from other dimensions aren't attempting to harrow the souls of humanity (well, not in the same way as they do in comic books). The big conflicts aren't dimension-spanning epics; they're internal—psychological as well as physical.

Technology of Gestalt-Earth has not had as much time to develop as on many superhero worlds. There are fewer technological-based supers and there are few technological ways to deal with supers. Agencies composed of normal people who are armed with superpowered technology aren't common on Gestalt-Earth, and they aren't nearly as effective as their equivalents on most campaign worlds. Terrorist organizations don't have agents who wear costumes. The government doesn't have elite, high-tech anti-superhuman units. The best defense against a hostile gestalt is another gestalt.

The conflict between normals and supers is an important element of most role-playing campaigns where PCs operate at disparate power levels from the rest of the world. Gestalts have many advantages in the conflict with normals. For the moment, Gestalt law gives superhumans many legal breaks (although many suspect that this was caused by gestalt telepaths who used their abilities to influence important legal decisions, but no one's been able to prove this allegation). It's very difficult for normals to compete with gestalts in battle - even heavily armed normals don't get into a fight with gestalts and expect to win.

But neither advantage is likely to be permanent, and the struggle of "normals" to gain a sense of control over gestalts is one of the big conflicts on Gestalt-Earth. There is a lot of conflict between normals and gestalts, but they're often waged in arenas other than the battlefield and resolved through role-playing, not tactical play.

Gestalt runs at the mid-high range of the power spectrum: powerful enough to give PCs a mythic, larger-than-life feel, but low enough

to leave room for growth - and that's the power level supported in this book. Game balance in the campaign is supported as much by power-level-category limits as they are by the number of points on the character sheet.

Gestalt is meant to be a dynamic universe: established characters will grow and improve, new characters will enter the scene, and old ones will fade away. Many things happen in the universe that doesn't necessarily involve the player characters. When you're GMing a Gestalt campaign, show what's happening in other parts of the world (through news reports or through conversations with other supers or NPCs). Not only is it a good way to keep players on their toes (they aren't sure which campaign event isn't going to suddenly drop on their doorstep), it gives the PCs the impression that they're involved with something that's big. When players know other characters are out there and sharing their struggles, it makes the setting more believable.

Gestalt looks like a traditional comic book universe on the surface, but the deeper one goes into it, the weirder it gets. Weirdness—and the sense of wonder that the weird can inspire—is what tries to establish a difference between the Gestalt setting and other superhero settings.

THE THEME OF GESTALT

When I started the first Gestalt campaign, Spencer Kipe, one of my players, took a look at the rules of the world and said, "I see. Scott wants us to play a world where all the PCs are insane."

I didn't realize how accurate Spencer's comment was until many years later.

For most players and GMs, Gestalt-Earth is a place to spend a day or two every few weeks and have fun pretending to be superheroes and bashing some bad guys. That's great. However, Gestalt-Earth games can be more than just fight scenes and a reason to get together with friends.

Gestalt-Earth is a place to explore certain themes. Its premise is that greatness stems from the abnormal, from passion and intense behaviors that arguably border on obsession. Gestalts are highly monomaniacal by nature. Playing someone who is more archetype than human being can be a challenge, not just to players but also to GMs. When playing someone who has a strong, inflexible agenda, conflict between teammates is almost inevitable. A good Gestalt campaign rides the razor's edge, with characters fighting together for the common good and championing their individual causes. These two things shouldn't always be compatible. Conflict is the essence of drama, and nothing in role-playing is as dramatic as good inter-player character conflict. The Gestalt concept promotes this type of conflict.

[Of course, nothing in role-playing is as bad as bad inter-player conflict, when the immaturity

of players leads people to use their characters as hand puppets to attack other players as people — this is unspeakably bad. At the end of good inter-player conflict, the players are emotionally affected but realize the conflict was fictional and don't stay mad. At the end of bad inter-player conflict, the players know that role-playing was just a passive-aggressive exercise in personal degradation, and hold legitimate grudges.]

Gestalt is an exploration of how strongly held beliefs and associations shape our lives. As such, Gestalt campaigns can be used to explore many concepts that inspire passionate followings: politics, religion, sexuality, sports, or entertainment. If a subject inspires fanatical devotion or hatred, Gestalt is there.

Due to their obsessive nature, characters on Gestalt-Earth may seem flatter, less three-dimensional, than characters in other campaigns. This is certainly true of "pure Gestalts", but even they can struggle in their boxes and make themselves interesting. Like any system of archetypes, there is the risk that a player will refuse to evolve, learn, grow, or interact meaningfully with the world except in the most simplistic terms.

Yet it's a risk that offers reward. One of the major conflicts in Gestalt is the internal conflict between normal behavior and the grand obsessions and passions that will either drive us to something better or tear us apart. The struggle to find a balance between these qualities is one of the major challenges that characters face on Gestalt-Earth.

The other theme is more traditional: it's the struggle between good and evil. Gestalt is a world where people are champions of classical virtues and vices, and these opposites in particular are in a constant state of war. Even when the PCs represent unrelated archetypes, the struggle between those opposing forces can take the PCs to interesting places.

THIS BOOK - A NOTE ON AUDIENCE

Gestalt has many of the trappings of a traditional four-color superhero world, but it's not meant to be traditional — there are plenty of other universes on the market that fill that niche. Gestalt uses superhuman archetypes to create a world that's different from a typical "four-color" campaign; gamers looking for a distillation of archetypes to be used in the same way that they are in the comics are going to be disappointed.

Gestalt is written primarily for an audience of experienced gamers, for players who understand every nuance of their rules system. This is not a standard universe and because it disallows many players' favorite comic book character types, novice players (especially comic book fans) may chafe at its restrictions and find traditional campaigns more to their liking.

However, since novice gamers will probably be exposed to this book at some point, some sections (such as the sample archetypes) are aimed at a less experienced audience, and will hopefully get new players more easily involved in the spirit of the campaign.

And if a GM says: I like the idea of using character archetypes as one of the superhuman origins in a traditional comic book universe, that's okay, too.

No two people use a campaign book in the same way, and I don't expect this will happen with Gestalt. If a GM wants to ignore features of the campaign, add others, remove characters or take them to another setting, do it. Ultimately all published settings must surrender control to the needs of the individual GM, and I wouldn't want Gestalt to be any different.

Gestalt isn't for everyone; its restrictions and attitudes will undoubtedly turn off some players and GMs. However, for those for whom the idea of playing the champion of an archetype in a superhuman world is appealing, I hope you enjoy it.

GESTALT PLAYER'S GUIDE AND "GESTALT-LITE"

The Gestalt Player's Guide is available as a free download from the Blackwyrms Games site: www.blackwyrms.com.

The Player's Guide contains a summary of the campaign, an explanation of key concepts, a checklist to assist in character creation, and an extensive list of archetypes.

Some GMs consider books as large as Gestalt to be intimidating, and rightly so. The Player's Guide is a useful tool in creating a "Gestalt-Lite" game.

Simply treat the information in the Player's Guide as canon, and announce that everything else is open, including NPCs, organizations, and stats. Use whatever you want from this book, but it doesn't have to be the way things operate in your game.

II: CHARACTER CREATION

"How does becoming the champion of an idea lead someone toward becoming a superhero? In an age where just getting out of bed often seems like a heroic act, any passion that encourages people toward acts of self-sacrifice becomes a primer for superheroism."

— Ray Riordan

"Hey! 'Victorious'! You may be the embodiment of the 'unbeatable foe,' but I'm the incarnation of 'never retreat, never surrender.' So it all comes down to concept, pal, and mine's a helluva lot more badass than yours."

— Edge

Help!

If a player is having trouble choosing an archetype, refer to the Common Gestalt Archetypes section on page 112 for inspiration.

So you want to be a Gestalt? Or, more accurately, you want to play a character in a Gestalt campaign. How do you do it?

Let's start with the basics. If you've got a superhero RPG ruleset (such as *M&M*), you've already got the character crafting system in place. However, there's more to a character than just the mechanical representation of his abilities.

Two basic questions need to be addressed from the character's point of view: *where did I come from* and *what major things might happen to me*? This is expressed in terms of a character's Archetype, his Origin, and his Goal. Players in the Gestalt campaign should pick one of each.

ARCHETYPE

Archetype is the idea or concept that the character represents. Lament's story demonstrates that she is the embodiment of Grief, particularly the pain of suddenly losing a child. There is an almost infinite number of archetypes in Gestalt, from emotional qualities such as Joy and Grief, to physical qualities such as Speed, Strength, and Toughness, to ideas such as Faith, Democracy, or Existentialism, to objects such as Beer, Food, and Stone, to pastimes such as Martial Arts, Weaving, or Opera Singing.

ORIGIN

On Gestalt-Earth, it is highly recommended that everyone's first characters in a campaign have one of the first three origins:

1. *Bonded Gestalt*: These are normal human

beings who bonded with the primal force of the human subconscious and acquired superhuman abilities of varying utility.

2. *Pure Gestalt*: These are the embodiments of the primal force of the superhuman subconscious, created from nothingness to champion an ideal.

3. *Chain Gestalt*: These individuals receive Gestalt powers from other Gestalts, either deliberately or accidentally.

RARE SUPERHUMAN ORIGINS

When players have played in a Gestalt game for awhile and feel the need to play something a little different, they can take one of the following rare origins:

1. *Training to Superhuman Levels*: Extremely talented people are capable of reaching superhuman levels with intense training. However, many people who think they're super-trained normals are actually bonded or chain gestalts in denial.

2. *Aliens*: There are extraterrestrials in the Gestalt campaign setting, and some of them have superhuman powers. See Chapter Six – Extraterrestrials, p. 146 for details of these cultures. Superhuman aliens are probably descended from Ark stock, from those who were custom-engineered centuries ago to work as laborers and soldiers.

3. *Rogue Leviathans*. Leviathans are a superhuman race from the Gestalt Dimension who oppose humanity's use of Gestalt energy to create superhumans. They're a rigidly hierarchical race that seeks dominance over the Earth and the destruction of all Gestalts. Most Leviathans are fanatically devoted to their cause, but a Rogue Leviathan Template can be found on page 73; it's suitable for use as the basis of a PC.

4. *Technologically Augmented Humans*: Personal battlesuits are extremely limited on Gestalt-Earth. Typically they're either "weird tech only the inventor knows" or technology that's slightly advanced over real world technology.

5. *Weird Gestalt Bonds*: Occasionally, the Gestalt makes a mistake, and bonds with something really odd: a work of art that a creator really cares about, a historical artifact (often implements such as a sword, gun, or pen), a vehicle (from cars to ships), or an animal, and brings them to superhuman life.

6. *Changelings*. Sometimes a Gestalt Wave will sweep people into the Gestalt Dimension, where they come out... changed (see page 163).

Changelings are the noble savages of Gestalt-Earth; they've been forced to survive for so long in an utterly alien environment that they have trouble coping with the civilized world.

SUPERHUMAN ORIGINS NOT PRESENT IN GESTALT (AND HOW TO GET AROUND THEM)

1. Magic: There is *no* magic on Gestalt-Earth. You can't pick up a book of spells and study it to conjure fire, commune with spirits, produce hoary hands (or any other effect associated with comic book sorcery). Arcane rituals do not work.

However, myth and magic are powerful archetypes; because of this, there are Gestalts who do take on the form of magical creatures. There are Gestalt effects that closely resemble magic to the extent where people believe they are magical (therefore, the Gestalts of Wizards, Dragons, and other magical archetypes do exist).

However, unless a "magical" chain gestalt is at work (or the GM chooses to make exceptions), ordinary people cannot become masters of the occult.

2. Mutational/Generational: Benign superhuman mutation doesn't exist on Gestalt-Earth. There is no genetic component to receiving or passing down superpowers. There are no "filthy muties", let alone people hunting them down.

However, Gestalt-bonded powers can be passed down from generation to generation only when it's appropriate to the archetype (a monstrous Gestalt of "generational curse", the Gestalt of Human Evolution, or a Gestalt of "The Heroic Family"), which may then pass powers to their offspring as a type of chain gestalt.

Likewise, generational supers aren't part of the setting; the first superhuman was in 1989. However, for people who want them in their campaigns, it's not hard to add the concept of historical "probability freaks", Gestalts who appeared at very rare intervals throughout human history.

3. Extra-Dimensional Creature: There is only one extra-dimension, the Gestalt Dimension of the mind, where all Gestalts ultimately originate. There are no parallel worlds, no nether kingdoms, no astral planes, no imitations of Dante, or anything inspired by other games' upper and lower dimensions.

However, there are sub-dimensions in the Gestalt Dimension called Fantasyscapes. The Gestalt Dimension stores replicas of everything created by human imagination. If you want to play a Norse god, you can specify that you came from an Asgard-Fantasyscape. You're still a Gestalt, even though you're convinced that you're actually something quite different. (See page 163 for a list of examples.)

4. Radiation Accidents/Weird Mutagens: Radiation does not trigger spontaneous benign mutation in this setting. Sorry, no radioactive spiders, no space



flights into cosmic ray fields, and no wonderfully benign mutations.

However, if you really want, you might make one exception to this rule: exposure to dangerous levels of radiation might trigger a previously unknown Gestalt bond, but this doesn't happen very often and only to Gestalts that are "comic book" in nature.

GOALS

When you play a character, it's sometimes hard to get direction. In Gestalt, the character's archetype defines a lot of his life's purpose, but even that doesn't always give the character and the GM enough tools to craft personal scenarios.

By choosing a Goal at the start of the game, a player sends a signal to the GM regarding the way he wants to develop his PC. A goal is either a sub-plot, or an ultimate event that the character is working toward that will radically change his life (or even result in his death). They're the things that the PC wants to do more than anything else in the world. When working with the player to define his character's Goal, keep the following in mind:

1. Goals must be pro-active. A goal shouldn't be something like "wait around town and protect people". That's a given in the superhero genre.

I Hate A Mystery

There's a legend propagated on Gestalt-Earth regarding "The Six Mysteries", six pre-1989 immortal superhumans who have lived for millennia, engaged in a campaign of love and war with each other. This is a good origin for PCs who want to be *old* gestalts.

Goals must force the PC to go out and do things in an otherwise reactive genre. Goals spur the PC into action.

2. *Goals should be solvable.* You know those TV series where the characters have a goal but every time they get close to achieving it, a giant reset button gets pushed and everything moves back to the status quo? That's *not* how these goals should be handled.

What happens when a player succeeds in his Goal? Good question. It's good to give them 4 or 5 sessions where characters get to enjoy the fruits of their labor, then, at the player's option, give them a new Goal or allow them to finish the character's story and retire him with a (presumably) happy ending.

3. *Goals exist to give the players more power over the direction of the campaign.* GMs should understand that Goals are important and must be integrated into his plots. They are a Big Deal. If no progress has been made toward a character's Goal in three or four sessions, the GM should sit back and look at the way he's interacting with that player and his character, and make sure he's giving him enough attention. They don't have to be a huge time sink; when a team has resolved a major plotline and the characters get some down time, the GM can ask them what progress has been made toward their Goal and even hand over some of the control of the narrative to the player (although the GM can overrule the player if he brings in elements of the larger campaign and misinterprets them).

4. *Goals exist to provide drama, even when it threatens the player's comfort zone.* Goals should be personal. They should be something in which the player is willing to invest his emotions. Players who define a major Goal should understand that it isn't going to be easy to achieve it; defining a Goal is a license to the GM to throw setbacks, false triumphs, and misdirection, in the same way that authors throw them at characters in comics or other forms of serial fiction. When a player defines his PC's Goal, it should be understood that it can only be reached by traveling a very hard road.

5. *Goals should produce big, dramatic moments.* The culmination of a character's Goal should not produce an anti-climax, but provide the focus for an entire game session and produce a satisfying and memorable result. Use the culmination of a Goal as an excuse to fawn over your players and make their characters feel special! When a character's Goal is directly in play – when they hit the session where the Goal storyline is reaching its climax – the GM should award an additional 3 hero points that the character can tap into. Big events tend to draw out every last reserve of effort in the heroic soul, so that when the mo-

EXAMPLE OF A GOAL PURSUIT SESSION

GM: Let's talk about Goals. We'll start with The Thirst. What did you do to reverse your kid brother's chain gestalt?

The Thirst: I visited a gestalt powers expert....

GM: We'll make it Dr. Strauss at UCLA....

The Thirst: Sure, Strauss, okay. He told me that I probably needed to follow a special process to reverse it that's related to the gestalt who transformed him. He was going into the fine details when Ninjonin tried to kidnap him! Fortunately, I was there to beat him to a bloody pulp and sent him to prison.

GM: I don't want Ninjonin beaten that easily; he's a pretty important villain. Let's say you found the fight surprisingly easy. When you pulled off his mask, he looks like just another Asian flunky. On the reverse side of the mask, you notice there's some Japanese calligraphy. It's a message from Ninjonin saying that he knew you'd come visit Strauss, and he was offering you "this gift".

The Thirst: So it's not the real Ninjonin.

GM: No.

Chanticleer: Good. I wanted to be the one who took down Ninjonin! I still owe that bastard for what he did to my car! Stupid shurikens.

GM: Be quiet and wait your turn.

The Thirst: But Ninjonin doesn't even know about my brother!

GM: As far as you know. It could have been a coincidence.

Deviant's Player: Or he could have been hired by the mysterious gestalt who changed your brother....

GM: Sounds good to me.

The Thirst: No, this doesn't work for me. All I wanted was a clean victory, no complications.

Regard's Player: You could make the intruder someone other than Ninjonin.

GM: What do you think?

The Thirst: Okay, a new guy – let's call him "Mr. Dim Sung" – tried to kidnap Strauss, so I beat him to a bloody pulp and sent him to prison.

GM: The police look at Dim Sung's bloodied, unconscious body as he's being taken away by the paramedics. One of the photographers has a queasy look on his face while he's taking the pictures. A grizzled veteran police officer comes up to you, slaps you on the back, and says: "Mister, that's what I call quality violence!"

The Thirst: "The Thirst always does quality violence! Fortunately, I use my Brutality Gestalt for good, never for evil!" But what did Strauss tell me?

GM: He believes that because of the quasi-supernatural nature of the chain gestalt, your brother's transformation can only be reversed during the height of a lunar eclipse. You have to lure whatever transformed him into the area, and your brother has to be there, too.

The Thirst: So now I need to find out who did this...

GM: That sounds like a good next step. Okay, Tchotchke, it's your turn. About that Romance Goal of yours.

Tchotchke: I'm waiting to see what Maria thought about the ring!

GM: Bad news. Your girlfriend has thrown your engagement ring into the middle of the Atlantic and mailed you a dead crow with a note clasped in its bill which reads, "Don't you ever bother me again or I'll make you eat this!"

Tchotchke: Okay, maybe the wedding will be delayed a bit... .

ment comes, the PC breaks out of his usual mode and becomes capable of extraordinary things.

Goals that player characters might adopt include:

1. *Cleaning up the City/Neighborhood:*

Particularly appropriate for Regional Protector Gestalts, the place they live in is a corrupt mess, a criminal organization has it in a stranglehold and is squeezing the life out of it. If you take this as your goal, you usually have to start small (working on drug dealers and pimps) and peel away crime like a rotten onion until you finally reach the core, which is usually a businessman/mob boss, international syndicate, or corrupt politician who's secretly controlling crime and who is virtually untouchable (or a person behind that figurehead who's pulling the strings). When this threat – and enough of the underlying problems that led to the deterioration – have been dealt with, people will say that “the community is a good place to live again” and your goal will have been met, even if the place isn't perfect.

A celebration honoring the PC is a good capstone for this plot arc.

2. *Finding Your Way Home:* Suppose you're an exile, either from an alternate world accessible from the Gestalt Dimension or an alien and you're lost on Earth with no easy way to get home. When this is your goal, you'll either want to build transportation, repair an existing transport and/or its navigation systems (typically with rare components), or find someone else who can transport you back home. You might also want to deal with the circumstances that caused your exile in the first place.

[Note: Those who succeed in this Goal often succeed in writing themselves out of the campaign. If a character succeeds but the player wants to keep playing the character, the GM and the player should get together and determine a good reason for the character to stay with the PCs.]

3. *Magnum Opus:* Particularly appropriate for characters who are researchers, technicians, or artists, a person who's obsessed with this Goal wants to create a masterpiece. Perhaps it's a scientific project like building an awesome android or a computer or curing cancer. Perhaps it's a feat of engineering like building the perfect house or a monument for his dead wife (which may seem strange, though for Gestalts of certain cultures, such as ancient Egypt, it's perfectly natural). Perhaps it's a work of art like writing a Great Novel or sculpting a statue that's so life-like that no one can distinguish it from a living person.

Of course there will be setbacks: failed test flights, prototypes that run amok, people interrupting moments of brilliance to make sure some bill gets paid, hard drive crashes, or warehouse fires. However, a true artist will endure!

4. *My Championship Season:* With this Goal, the character wants to win a competition. Perhaps

it's a major sports championship or first prize for a beloved pooch at Westminster, or even the big title at Copenhagen (the latter is probably most appropriate to high-powered heroes, unless you're running a rookie competition that's suitable for lower-powered PCs). Pursuit of this Goal should play out like a classic sports movie with the hero receiving setbacks, clawing his way to preliminary victories, coming face to face with an obnoxious nemesis, and finally overcoming him in the final round.

However, if the player starts playing '80s power chord rock, he's going too far.

5. *The Passion Play:* This is less of a Goal and more of an Event. The player decides in advance that his character is doomed. At some point in his life, he will fall. Friends will turn away from him, he will go into solitude, he will sacrifice himself for the good of those he loves, horrible things will happen to him, and then he will die.

Obviously, only players who really like tragedy will choose this goal.

To build up for the Event, the GM should employ heavy foreshadowing. Oracle Gestalts may see a black cloud around the character (or scream and pass out when he approaches), the people who are destined to betray him will repeatedly and emphatically say how loyal they are and how they'd never betray them, villains whom this PC captures will loudly vow that they will wreak vengeance of Biblical proportions, and so on.

6. *Reverse An Injustice:* Perhaps your dad has been convicted for a crime he never committed and you're determined to find the truth. Perhaps your brother was transformed into a slaving chain gestalt monster. This Goal is not vengeance (that's a different Goal) but to remedy the injustice and bring things back to normal. The character needs to gather information on what really happened and how to reverse it, and deal with the typical range of setbacks (experts brought in to help are murdered or turn traitor, there's a threat on the person's life when you get too close to the truth, and so on).

7. *Romance!:* This is the quintessential comic book sub-plot (and quite common in real life, too). The hero wishes to pursue a relationship with a significant other and must endure the usual storms of the turgid seas of soap opera while he gets there: being caught sleeping with shapechanging villains, having one's beloved turned into a chain gestalt, having them go blind and reject the partner out of nauseatingly misplaced nobility, jealous lovers, false marriages, learning that they're related to an archenemy. Inevitably, dates will be messed up by the inopportune arrival of supervillains. Partners may be in love with the hero in their costumed identity and feel lukewarm toward them in their secret identity or (conversely) love their nerdy co-worker while

A Team Goal

In the Hollywood Knights campaign, the team's founder, Foster Erickson, was dying of AIDS. Finding a cure for AIDS (which a team member obtained via time travel) became a major goal for the team, a ticking time bomb that advanced the main plot.

expressing such hatred toward “gestalt elites” that you wonder if she’s secretly a member of the Dawn Brothers.

The capstone of this Goal is a wedding; if this wedding isn’t a major event that takes up most of a session, the GM isn’t doing his job right.

8. *Tabula Rasa*: This character’s background is a mystery that he intends to unravel, regardless of what he might find. The character may have amnesia or he may have discovered he was adopted, or he may be a robot who doesn’t know who created him. In any event, there is an identity issue that must be investigated; in typical genre fashion, there will be people hiding dark secrets who do not want the truth to come out, perhaps even a murder or a betrayal or two, and the investigation should lead to a profound (though often horrific) understanding of one’s self.

9. *Vengeance*: You have a Nemesis. He (or It—it may be an institution) is more than just an Enemy (or a Complication); he’s someone that you hate so much that revenge consumes your every waking thought. Studying him, discovering his weaknesses, thwarting his schemes, and finally coming face to face with him and wiping him off the face of the planet and sending him straight to Hell is your raison d’être. Perhaps he’s a supervillain who caused a horrible tragedy, some punk with a gun, or a crime kingpin who’s seemingly untouchable. Perhaps you’ll risk going over the edge in pursuit of your vendetta – it happens. But in the end, even if you decide not to sanction your nemesis, one will live and one will die.

GAME MECHANICS AND GESTALTS

The Gestalt campaign has various power levels and limits on key stats, defenses, and the amount of damage that a character is allowed to generate. Gestalts also require the taking of certain powers and flaws, and complications to model the Archetype they’re taking.

POWER LEVEL

The power levels of superbeings vary, from lowly chain gestalts to the puissance of The Titan. Campaigns don’t have to play at the same power level so we’ve divided characters in Gestalt into five power categories: *Novice*, *Experienced*, *Respected*, *World-Beater/Galactic*, and *Beyond* (which is an NPC-only power level).

In *M&M* Gestalt, the GM should choose a power level at the start of the game. Each power level is similar to PLs in a standard *M&M* game.

Characters are not allowed to save experience points at the start of a campaign to spend on advancing to the next power level.

NOVICE HERO

This is a typical starting four-color superhero campaign. PCs represent a team of novice superheroes who confront threats to local establishments, landmarks, and individuals, with occasional lapses into high stakes superheroing.

Power Level: 8-10

EXPERIENCED HERO

This campaign revolves around a hero team that starts out as experienced superheroes. These heroes protect a lot of territory and are well known on their home turf. Examples of characters at the Experienced Hero power level include: the Hollywood Knights, the ATF, and the Hot Gods.

Power Level: 11-12

RESPECTED HERO

If you believe PCs should start near the top of the food chain, this power level is for you. The Respected Heroes are the world’s greatest teams of superheroes and rank among the most respected or feared superhumans in their nation (if not the world). Columbia, The Tyranny League, the USMC Vanguard, and Garuda are examples of supers at the Respected Hero power level.

Power Level: 14

WORLD-BEATER/GALACTIC

This is the highest power level attainable by PCs. These characters represent the best that the world has to offer. They operate on a global scale, face the most powerful villains, and routinely safeguard the planet. A cosmic-level campaign (the heroes travel around the known galaxy, fighting alien threats) or a quasi-mythic campaign (the heroes fight against menaces which live within the Gestalt Dimension) are examples of campaigns set at this level. The Titan, Cygnus, and the Blood Red King are examples of World-Beater level characters.

Power Level: 18

BEYOND

For characters on a galactic scale, the Beyond measure exists. No PC can ever attain Beyond-level. The Beyond-level character is a galactic being like the Probability Lords or one of the most powerful Metagestalts. Going up against a Beyond-level character should be a major, campaign-shattering event.

Although Beyond-level characters often best work as abstracts or plot devices, numerical representations are provided here.

Alien technology (particularly those on Ar’Turodain and Ar’Kayadin cruisers) may be considered at Beyond-level or equivalent as well as nuclear weapons.

SKILLS

Certain knowledge skills and sciences need to be defined for the campaign; these are listed in the sidebar. In any case, if there's something that a GM doesn't want the heroes to learn with a roll, don't let them. (Though if they make the DC 30 roll, it's only fair to give them a few hints.)

ARCHETYPES, DRAMATIC EDITING, AND HERO POINTS

This Option allows you to freely introduce a plot element into scenes by making a Power Level check (a d20 + Power Level vs. a DC) or by spending a hero point. Either one allows you to make minor changes to a scene. This is called Dramatic Editing.

To do some dramatic editing, your gestalt must be in play (for instance, if you're a Regional Protector Gestalt, you may perform Dramatic Editing on your home soil but not when you're visiting a foreign country). As an Animal Gestalt, you might cause the mate of a dying animal to appear at its side in its final moments or declare that a poacher falls into a sinkhole as he takes a shot at an endangered animal. However, you can't raise a little old lady from the dead (even if she was a cat lady whose hundreds of cats repeatedly licked her) because people don't count in the traditional definition of "animal".

The types of changes that you can make include:

Minor Cosmetic Changes to a GM's description ("actually, he's wearing a blue beret with the button 'Ramjet Rocks!'"): This requires a PL Check DC 15.

Minor changes in a character's behavior ("Because I'm a Gestalt of Persuasion, the lawyer who's going to file the lawsuit, changes his mind. He only threatens to sue us if this ever happens again!"): This requires a PL Check DC 20.

Minor changes in a character's state ("Miraculously, the normal who died in the blast is still breathing. Even if we can't stabilize him, perhaps he'll give us a clue to the bomber's identity before he dies!"): This requires a PL check DC 23.

Gestalt Control should be used to provide the players with a slight edge in advancing the plot. It requires a good explanation to justify the successful change (or alteration) to the environment (or scenario). A GM always has a veto over a player's ideas ("I don't care if you're the Gestalt of Niceness – the Blood Red King still attacks you, though he might not stop to crush the bunny's head first."). Generally, if it's simple to do something with an existing power, the PC should use the power and not Gestalt Control.

The GM has the option to incorporate

Knowledge: Behavioral Sciences

DC Knowledge

- 20 *Archetype Recognition*: A hero can recognize a Gestalt's archetype after a short period of observation (a day).
- 30 After a day's observation, the hero can successfully guess at behavior-based complications (hates, loves, prejudices, etc.)

Knowledge: Current Events

DC Knowledge

- 10 *Basic Knowledge*: a hero may have heard about another gestalt and how well they know about things pertaining to the Gestalt subculture (what are the rules at Copenhagen, what's playing on GTV and so on).
- 20 A hero knows some of the "inside dirt" on a superhero or villain that is not known to the general public (which member of Columbia is having affairs and similar pieces of gossip). They also have a good idea of the combat capability and social influence of any given gestalt.
- 30 A hero knows a secret that someone in the Gestalt community is trying really hard to suppress, including weaknesses and all but the most carefully kept secret identities.

Knowledge: Life Sciences

DC Knowledge

- 10 *Gestalt Studies*. A character is familiar with the latest academic research on Gestalt theories.
- 20 *Gestalt Medicine*. The hero understands unusual gestalt physiology (eg. an animated flying carpet, a statue, or a living sailing ship) and can make Medicine rolls without penalties.
- 20 *Psionic Studies*: The hero is well-versed in current theories about psionics; what constitutes a psionic power, what brainwave patterns indicate psionics are being used, and what are the theories that explain why psionic powers work. Provided they have a psychic sense, the hero can guess at a psionic's archetype merely by seeing their powers in action.
- 30 A hero with a psychic sense can guess at a person's behavior-based Complications merely by observing their powers in action.

Knowledge: Physical Sciences

DC Knowledge

- 10 A character can recognize a phenomena (such as a Probability Tunnel) as having a connection with the Gestalt Dimension.
- 20 A character recognizes a major landmark in the Gestalt Dimension and can use it to assist in navigation or in avoiding a hazard. They can recognize a Fantasyscape after a brief exposure. They can recognize the denizens of the Gestalt Dimension.
- 30 A character can recognize minor deviations in the psychic "background noise" of the Void and use it to navigate through the Gestalt Dimension.

GESTALT CONTROL SKILL EXAMPLES

Example 1: Convenient Props.

A character playing a Regional Protector Gestalt who wants a certain common object to appear on their home soil can make it appear ("Hey, here's a car and the engine's running") even if it's ludicrously improbable that the object would be there.

The GM considers the request and allows it if he makes a PL Check DC 13. He makes it and finds a 1988 Toyota Corolla. For the Jag, he'd have had to make the roll with a -5 penalty (DC 18) unless he's the Gestalt Protector of Beverly Hills.

Example 2: Babe Magnet.

Also a gestalt can specify the presence of non-combat, non-well trained normals, such as a Strongman Gestalt who makes sure that he has plenty of good looking babes to ogle him when he's showing off with his strength (some people are *real* shallow).

The PC's not in a place where a lot of "babes" frequent, but it is a common strongman schtick. The GM allows it with a PL Check (DC 13).

The PC makes the roll, and the bus containing the Bikini Wax convention models just happen to be passing under the bridge while he's holding it up with his superstrength.

Example 3: Slick Move.

A Water Gestalt wants to use Gestalt Control to make a pool of "slick water" appear under an enemy who's pursuing him through a desert and trip him.

The GM laughs and says "no", because (a) they're not around water and (b) the player is trying to use the Dramatic Editing for a combat effect.

details suggested by the player without requiring a roll. Also, he may assign penalties to the Will Save depending on the difficulty of the suggested action. ("Sure the meteor just hit the mall during the height of the Christmas rush – but I'm the area's Regional Protector Gestalt, and I say no one got hurt... what do you mean I have a +5 penalty to the target number of my DC?!!")

Gestalt Control cannot be used to impose penalties on an opponent's die rolls or improve a hero's rolls (use hero points or extra effort for that). An archetypal champion feat can be used to ensure the success or even broaden it (the example of the cats licking the cat lady could be done with that feat.)

FEATS

NEW FEAT: ARCHETYPAL CHAMPION

Sometimes a gestalt is called upon to be more than a hero; he, she, or it has to be a champion. If a character takes the Archetypal Champion feat, they receive a Champion point at the start of each session.

When a gestalt's archetype comes directly into play (eg. a Gambling Gestalt walks into a casino, a Bodyguard Gestalt's employer comes under fire), the character can spend that Champion point on one of the following:

- a hero point (which must be spent immediately).
- extra effort (without becoming fatigued).
- automatically win a Power vs. Power contest (by 3 or higher)

The Archetype Champion feat costs 1 power point. You can take this feat multiple times. You cannot have more ranks in Archetype Champion than one-quarter of the campaign's power level (rounding fractions up).

POWERS

ARCHETYPES AND DESCRIPTORS

Naturally, all gestalt powers have the descriptor "Gestalt". An archetype is its own descriptor as well.

GESTALT IMMORTALITY

This is a new power that replaces the Resurrection benefit on Regeneration. See Sidebar, p.27.

TECHNOLOGY

There are two types of technology on Gestalt-Earth. The first type, everyday technology, is described in the *Everyday Life* chapter (see page 168). However some technology does more than make life easier for the citizens of Gestalt-Earth — it also elevates ordinary human beings to the level of the superhuman.

Compared to most comic book worlds, Gestalt-Earth is low-tech. There simply has not been enough time for a lot of technology to be developed and disseminated into the general population. The scientific discoveries of Gestalt-Earth, however, have begun to change the world and will continue to do so for some time to come. This technological revolution is one of the most important plot elements of the setting.

The GM should be aware that Gestalt attempts to portray a more realistic use of technology than many superhero campaigns, and some special effects (an ice blaster, for instance) may not be appropriate for the campaign. Campaign technology should have some basis in real-world tech.

GENUINE VS. GESTALT TECHNOLOGY

Some Gestalt scientists develop their inventions via the Gestalt. These include Technician Gestalt, and Eccentric Professor/Mad Scientist Gestalts.

This technology is often so complicated or alien that it cannot be understood, analyzed, reproduced, or repaired except by its inventor. This is called Gestalt Technology. These are not genuine technological breakthroughs; rather, they are archetypal representations of how weird and strange technology can be. Their technological creations are actually a form of chain gestalt.

Other inventions can be studied and reproduced. These are called (by anyone who cares to make the distinction) Genuine Technology. The race to develop technology to cope with gestalts is one of the most important ones on Gestalt-Earth with dire consequences if it is ever realized.

POWERS AND TECHNOLOGY

Powers and skills may not be freely employed in technology in this setting. The following guidelines apply:

AWKWARD powers require them to be placed within a Headquarters. This technology has not been developed to a level where it's portable (yet).

ADVANCED indicates that technology is limited to alien races (for

now);

FORBIDDEN powers are those that cannot be duplicated by technology at present.

It should be noted that none of the known alien cultures want humans exposed to their technology, and alien PCs who use **ADVANCED** technology openly will have an Enemy, whether or not it's in their list of Complications.

POWERS AND TECHNOLOGY NOTES

There is no way to handle every combination of powers. The GM should take into account the spirit of the campaign (particularly as detailed in the Everyday Life chapter) before deciding whether or not a piece of technology is appropriate. A few general notes:

FLIGHT: Certain special effects (such as gravitics) are **FORBIDDEN**, although research is being done in these areas that will eliminate that barrier within the next few years of the campaign.

HEALING: The best healing available is through the drug *Regeneran* (see page 172). Effects beyond these limits are **ADVANCED**.

IMMUNITY: Some of the immunities (especially aging and disease) should be considered **AWKWARD** (requiring a hospital) or **FORBIDDEN**.

MIND SHIELD: **AWKWARD**, with a maximum of **Mind Shield 4**. Note that a *lot* of research money is going toward raising this limit, particularly since many are worried by the prospect of heads of state, military, and the judiciary falling prey to *Mind Control*.

MENTAL POWERS: The Ar'Sarashar has technology that can **Boost 2** to any mental power. Any other attempt to boost or artificially create Mental Powers requires dangerous pharmaceuticals (the GM can invent suitable side effects and incorporate them into the story), beyond this, they're **FORBIDDEN**.

PROTECTION: Modern armors are limited to Protection 4. Ar armors are limited to Protection 6. Armors that exceed these limits are **FORBIDDEN**.

SIDEKICK: Artificially Intelligent computers do exist, but for the purpose of building them (see the Invention rules) they are considered **FORBIDDEN** (with side effects). Pre-programming a personality into an A.I. has never been achieved by any known culture; this has proven annoying (and worse).

SUPER SENSES: Please note real world limitations on technological uses of senses. Consult suitable texts for limitations of microscopic and telescopic senses.

Detect Gestalt is an **AWKWARD** power which requires Progression (5 minutes). Analytical cannot be used on this power.

Detect Psionic is also **AWKWARD** with iden-

OPTIONAL POWER: GESTALT IMMORTALITY

Type: Alteration

Action: Reaction

Range: Personal

Duration: Permanent

Cost: 2 points per rank

This optional rule allows you to buy a special power in place of the Resurrection benefit on Regeneration.

Your gestalt has the ability to return from death. For one rank in this power, you return to life on the spot where you died, one round after you were killed. Any wounds that you suffered are healed, however because resurrection is traumatic, you return to life in the Staggered condition.

Gestalt Immortality does not protect you from all forms of death; you must define one circumstance where an enemy can kill you permanently. This circumstance should be related to your gestalt (ie. a Family Protector Gestalt dies when every one of his family line is dead, a Misery Gestalt dies when everyone in the world experiences joy at the exact same moment). Additionally, Gestalt Immortality does not work in the Gestalt Dimension, so if you're killed there, you're permanently dead.

You can also purchase the following benefits.

Altered abilities (1 rank): Your reborn gestalt has the same archetype and number of points, but may have different skills and powers.

Altered appearance (2 ranks): Your reborn gestalt has a different physical appearance.

Birthplace Resurrection (2-4 ranks): Instead of being reborn in the place where you died, you're born somewhere else. For 2 ranks, you're resurrected on the spot where you were born. For 4 ranks, you're resurrected in any place of your choosing.

Established identity (6 ranks): Your reborn gestalt has a new identity fully established for you (your citizenship and residence are established, people have false memories of your new persona, etc.).

Improved Condition (1 rank): You are undamaged (ie. not Staggered) when you're resurrected.

Rebirth Power Surge (2-3 ranks): When your gestalt is reborn, you receive 5 points that may be converted into hero points or extra effort (with the fatigued condition delayed). These points fade after 5 minutes. (This costs 2 ranks if you can only use the surge against your killer, 3 ranks if you can use them against anyone).

Power Feats

Altered action (1-5 ranks): You have better control over when you're reborn. Each rank may move the moment of rebirth up 1 rank on the Progression chart. You may choose any round within this time frame to return to life.

Flaws

Amnesiac: You are reborn with no memories.

Powerless: You are reborn without your gestalt abilities. It requires a special event to bring your abilities back.

Gestalt Wave: Your rebirth is delayed until the next gestalt wave.

Unconscious: You are not reborn Staggered, but Unconscious.

OPTION: ULTIMATE GESTALT POWERS

If you want to play a very freeform version of Gestalt, use the Variable Power from **Ultimate Power** (page 113). Every character would get this power at the campaign's Power Level, at the cost of 7 points/level (the base cost of any combination of traits that fits the descriptor, which in this case, is the archetype). Thus a Fire Gestalt would be able to change his powers to anything that's Fire related

You would receive an additional 10 power points per Power Level to complete your hero. Because the Variable power is so flexible (and because not everyone can easily reconfigure their powers on the fly), the GM should be cautious about employing this option. However for groups who are willing to sacrifice attention to detail for a more freewheeling style, this might facilitate your type of game.

tial requirements to Detect Gestalt.

SPACE TRAVEL: ADVANCED. Because of warp od technology, Ar transport ships have a maximum speed of **Space Travel 13** (10,000C or 8.4 parsecs/day). Ar military ships travel at **Space Travel 12** (4.2 parsecs/day). Eiko ships are much slower (**Space Travel 8** or 0.2 parsecs/day)

TELEPORT: FORBIDDEN for all cultures. Weird special effects with a focus may be bought as teleportation (instant acceleration/deceleration effects), but true teleportation does not exist.

OPTION: GESTALT FAMILY POWERS

As mentioned earlier, Gestalt "family" powers (twins, related archetypes, and subtypes – see the sample Gestalt templates for examples) interact in interesting ways. In addition to normal interaction, people who share similar archetypes can, if the GM wishes, influence each other. This can be unbalancing, but also adds to the flavor of a universe where people bond and share superpowers.

Members of the Same Gestalt Family:

1. *Have a chance to sense each other.*

All Gestalts receive Super Sense (detect (similar gestalt archetype), as a bonus visual sense. If you make a successful Notice Check vs. DC 5 + the other gestalt's power level, you can sense that they're related to you and how closely (twin, related, or subtype). All gestalts have this sense; it costs no power points.

2. *Can battle in a Gestalt Power Contest.*

If you recognize another gestalt as being related to (or a sub-type of) your archetype, you may force them into a Power Contest. This may be done once per round as a free action. If you win this content, you gain mastery over the archetypal forces at play and may impose your will over the loser. Only two people may participate in any Power Contest. They must be initiated at close range (within 30 feet).

If you challenge someone to a Power Contest, they do not lose any actions. They can refuse a Power Contest by making a Will Save of DC 8 + your power level. Success means the contest doesn't take place and things proceed normally that round (neither one loses any actions).

However, if the contest does takes place, then you and your opponent each makes a Power Level check (d20 + Power Level). If your gestalt is a subtype of your opponent's, you gain a +2 bonus to your roll (specialists have an advantage in these contests).

If you beats your opponent by less than 3 points, nothing happens. Hpwever, if you beat your opponent's modified roll by 3 points or more, then you win the contest and gain power over that opponent,. You can do one of the follqwing:

- Use Extra Effort that round, without becoming fatigued. (Your opponent becomes fatigued instead of you).
- Drain any single trait or power by 1. (This only applies if both characters have powers with the same special effects. If a Thunder Gestalt beats



a Weather Gestalt, he can drain his thunderbolt attack, but not the Weather Gestalt's hail powers. Likewise, the Thunder Gestalt might drain a sonic entangle, but not a wind-based one.) The drain is Slow Fade 1 (returns after 5 rounds).

- Stun an opponent for one round.

Once you've chosen your effect, the contest is over. You cannot have another Power Contest until the following round.

Gestalt Twins

Power Contests between gestalt twins operate under the same rules, but the winner has the following additional options.

- Instead of Drain, the gestalt may Transfer one point of a power or trait.
- *Emotion Control*. You gain the Emotion Control power over the target at a rank equal to your power level, until they successfully save against your effect.

Gestalt twins have other abilities that they automatically receive, only usable on each other. No Power Contest is needed for these:

- *Communication with a glance*. This isn't actual telepathy; it's more the transmission of a psychic impression. The gestalt looks at his twin and sends him a brief message. This can be a greeting and acknowledgement that he recognizes the twin, a one or two word instruction ("Go away!"), a statement about how he's feeling ("I'm hurt!"), an unspoken word of sympathy or encouragement, or a challenge to a Power Contest.
- *Heal*. A character can take a fatigue or injury condition to remove it from his twin. The condition must be of the same type (non-lethal must be replaced by non-lethal, and lethal to lethal).
- *Reverse Transfer*: A character can voluntarily transfer one of their own traits, one at a time, to a Gestalt twin. This has a Slow Fade 1.

COMPLICATIONS AND FLAWS

Popular opinion believes that being a Gestalt is a gravy train. While there are enormous benefits to being a Gestalt, there are also drawbacks.

REPRESENTING A GESTALT'S "DRIVE"

Gestalt is about more than just powers; it's about intense personality traits (specifically, how identifying one's self as the embodiment of an archetype affects them psychologically). In *M&M*, this drive is represented through a Complication (usually an Obsession of one's own gestalt or a Hatred of others) that forces a gestalt to do things they might normally not want to do (e.g. a Strength Gestalt who's chasing a felon might see a group of beautiful

women and be tempted to stop and show off for them, or a Regional Protector Gestalt might defend a criminal if he's a native son). All gestalts should experience this sort of conflict at some point in their lives.

This drive is represented in *M&M* as a Complication: Obsession and Complication: Hatred (towards his gestalt's philosophical opposites). All gestalts should have one of these Complications, though they should conflict the PC, not enslave them.

Chain gestalts don't have a drive. They may, however, possess an Obsession with pleasing their master, depending on how they got their powers.

REPRESENTING A GESTALT'S SOCIAL STATUS

Gestalts are not second-class citizens. If, however, gestalts should ever be required to register their powers, a small Prejudice Complication would be in order. "Registered Gestalt" would mean that the government could round him up if they chose (it's not an Enemy unless the government is making a deliberate effort to keep tabs on him. "Unregistered Gestalt" would be a Complication if the penalties for violating the law are severe.

A Prejudice: Monster might be appropriate for gestalts with a monstrous appearance, even if they're a known hero. A stigma is often part of that package.

REPRESENTING A GESTALT'S ACHILLES HEEL

Archetypes give great powers; as in mythology, however, they almost always come with a weakness. Gestalt characters should take a Vulnerability Drawback and/or an Addiction complication to reflect the fact that even the greatest hero is not indestructible.

Addictions are usually toward the archetype's favored environment. (A Gestalt of Wind needs to feel a breeze every day or suffers a setback). Similarly, Power Losses are usually toward environments hostile to the archetype (the Gestalt of Sun may suffer during eclipses).

Most gestalts in this book take a Vulnerability, to an opposite (a Fire Gestalt who's vulnerable to Water), to a Gestalt twin (no one hurts you like the ones closest to you), to someone who defeats them in a Power Contest, or to someone who's resisted a power use (particularly common for gestalts with mental powers like charm gestalts; if your Mind Control doesn't work on someone, they have the advantage.)

III: HISTORY OF GESTALT-EARTH

A Reality Show, of Sorts

Unlike many other superhero settings, Gestalt-Earth attempts to entangle itself deeply with real world events. This may not be to everyone's taste, particularly when some gamers are more sensitive to politics and world tragedy than others. As always, the GM should feel free to revise this section to fit the desired tone of his campaign.

Gestalts of the Pre-Gestalt Era

The late Dr. Robert Adderlee speculated that since 1820, the Gestalt Dimension has "spat" out low-powered superhumans (probably one to three per decade). These superhumans were barely distinguishable from the best of the human stock, and it's arguable that their impact on human history was negligible,

A FEW KEY DATES

Players don't need to know everything in the history of Gestalt-Earth but the following dates (and the events they reference) should be known to all players:

First Gestalt Wave: September 22, 1989

CounterMeasures Disbanded: May 24, 1991

Red Plague: Summer 1993

Second Gestalt Wave: February 23, 1994

"Red August" (The Fall of the Mundane Alliance): August 30, 1995

First Copenhagen Tournament: September 22-29, 1997

Third Gestalt Wave: November 8, 1997

First Contact With Ar'Turodain: June 24, 1999

First Contact With Ar'Kayadin: December 6, 1999

Fourth Gestalt Wave (Leviathan Wave): May 4, 2001

The Atlanta Disaster: January 24, 2006

Encounter With The First Eiko Probe: January 11, 2007

Fifth Gestalt Wave: A few weeks ago...

On Gestalt-Earth, the phenomenon of the superhuman is a recent one. Nearly everyone over the age of 20 can remember where they were on September 22, 1989, when jaws dropped across every corner of the globe and the human imagination leapt from the pages of American "funny books" onto the streets, monuments, and everyday life of the world.

Why Gestalts emerged on this date, no one knows. There are numerous (and often contradictory) scientific theories. The late Dr. Robert Adderlee, whose studies in Gestalt Theory were groundbreaking, placed the roots of the Gestalt phenomenon at the Industrial Revolution. Adderlee identified two strains on humanity's collective unconscious that (he believed) brought the Gestalt Age into being.

First, the world population drastically expanded and human life expectancy doubled. People lived longer lives, experiencing more emotions and sensations than ever before.

Second, it brought about changes in the human psyche. Before the new age, human beings were primarily concerned with survival. Now, with the coming of the leisure society, they no longer worried about basic needs and turned their psychological attention inward. Society became more angst-ridden and neurotic; it was more secure but, in spite of not having to worry about the basics of survival, it was not happier.

Unbeknownst to humanity, these two changes affected something else, something hidden from

the world. It affected the collected unconscious of humanity, the "Gestalt" of human experience.

The Gestalt has always been there; it is the "background radiation" of human consciousness. But as human experience broadened and human mental energy increased exponentially, the Gestalt was disturbed. More humans meant more psionic energy. More complicated lives and inner torment meant more psychic disruptions.

By 1989, the collective unconscious could not tolerate the situation. It needed to expend some of that built-up psychic energy.

And so, the dam burst.

The Gestalt used its vast psychic reserve to create super-powered individuals who would help humanity deal with its conflicts and channel the psionic energy before it built to dangerous levels. Some of the energy manifested as beings of great power, born instantly into the world. Other pieces of this psychic energy bonded itself to individuals with intense psychological natures, transforming them into superhumans.

ENTER - AMERICA MAN!

On September 22, 1989, the living embodiment of America was created in the First Gestalt Wave. As it came into being, it attempted to understand the world and its purpose in it, and decided that a comic-book character was the ideal paradigm by which to help the world accept superhumans. Thus America Man, "that flag-wearing patriot Joe and



perfect specimen of the American ideal" was born.

He was, by all accounts, an endearing (if utterly cornball) individual.

America Man offered his services "to give a strong, friendly hand to any good-hearted American who needed help". He was born in Boston but was instinctively drawn to Washington DC where, on the White House lawn, the newborn gestalt pub-

licly demonstrated his superhuman abilities to a disbelieving press and a panicked Secret Service. President Bush, extremely impressed by what he was witnessing, decided to take a chance on the newcomer. He greeted America Man and shook his hand on live national television even as the United States intelligence agencies tried to figure out just what the heck was going on.

On the next day, when a superhuman dubbed "El Milagro" demonstrated similar abilities in Mexico City, it became frighteningly clear that America Man was not alone. On September 24th, however, a new and disturbing phenomenon appeared—supervillains. The man with the dubious distinction of becoming the world's first costumed malefactor was "Golden Gladiator". A former US Army corporal who held a grudge over his dishonorable discharge, he put on a costume, broke into a heavily guarded military installation, stole what he thought was a nuclear device, and threatened to detonate it on *Good Morning America*. A SWAT team attempted to liberate the bomb (the army refused to acknowledge that anything had been stolen, and left the situation to the local authorities). Golden Gladiator withstood their assault and seriously injured three of the SWAT members and a cameraman.

But America Man disrupted the standoff, and challenged Gladiator to single combat for the bomb. Since he was starting to get bored by the situation, Golden Gladiator happily accepted his challenge, and the two men proceeded to wreck the studio. In the end, America Man quipped, "America doesn't need gladiators, Golden Gladiator, it needs heroes!" and knocked the villain unconscious with a series of left hooks and right crosses, while the nation

GESTALTS OF THE PRE-GESTALT ERA

The late Dr. Robert Adderlee speculated that since 1820, the Gestalt Dimension has "spat" out low-powered superhumans (probably one to three per decade). These superhumans were barely distinguishable from the best of the human stock, and it's arguable that their impact on human history was negligible, though the phenomenon might explain alleged "freaks of nature" such as the turn-of-the-century Quebec strongman Louis Cyr or the legendary constitution of Rasputin.

There's also evidence that a time-traveling telepath from the future, who had the ability to pass his abilities down to his offspring arrived in the American West in the 1860s and settled there. Malachi Chambers was a rake who was hung by a lynch mob in 1883, but had at least ten children (legitimate and illegitimate) who in turn had many descendents. One of them, Influence, is arguably the most powerful telepath on Earth.

Mythological and historical Gestalts fervently believe that gestalt powers or something like them (such as magic) existed in ancient times. Most experts quietly dismiss the claim.

Perhaps the biggest enigma of the pre-Gestalt era are the so-called Six Mysteries, a rumored council of centuries-old Gestalts whose existence has largely been discussed in the pages of the tabloids. Whether these alleged immortals actually exist is entirely a GM option.

These exceptions to the 1989 rule are meant to provide a way out for those who *really* want to play a generational superhuman on Gestalt-Earth.

EVENT HOOK: THE END OF INNOCENCE

"The End of Innocence" might hook into a PC's background:

My Dirty Secret: The PC was one of the cultists. Perhaps she was a "poor deluded girl" who didn't know what she were doing. Perhaps you were a seriously mixed up kid who's repented. Perhaps you're even a plant for the Blood Red King. In any event, you were there and not on the side of the angels. Given that former cult members have been persecuted, you're not anxious to be identified with the incident.

Unfortunately, someone who's not above blackmail knows about it.

The Prey Had Better Learn How to Pray: You're Mistral's kid sister. You're driven to hunt down every member of the cult and bring them to justice. Many now occupy high places. No one wants their past exposed. Some may still work for the BRK.

watched in disbelief.

This was the beginning of a new age. Many other superhumans who chose to expose themselves to the public followed America Man and Golden Gladiator's example and donned spandex and masks. Within months, the world took on comic-book overtones - much to its bewilderment. But comic books were an easily understood paradigm for the Western media, and many gestalts discovered that using the superhero motif was an ideal way to express their powers without freaking out the general public.

The press went into a feeding frenzy, but the United States Congress and its network of security agencies were extremely unamused. Congress set up the United States Security Council on Superhuman Activities, an organization that would oversee a covert anti-superhuman security team called Project Countermeasures.

The First Wave of Gestalts produced a worldwide population estimated between 4,000 and 6,000, including many pure gestalts.

AND A DARK KING SHALL ARISE, IN AMERICA'S BRIGHTEST HOUR

The next four months might be termed "the Golden Age of Gestalts". One by one, those empowered by the First Gestalt Wave chose to reveal themselves, often taking on costumed identities. Many of the first wave of supervillains were folk like Starfinder and the Measurer, whose gimmicks and motif-based crimes almost seemed quaint.

On January 24, 1990, the Golden Age ended forever. A previously unseen gestalt who called himself the Blood Red King entered the National Cathedral and murdered a Roman Catholic Cardinal in cold blood.

The incident disturbed a lot of supers. Although the Golden Gladiator incident had attracted a lot of attention, it became obvious to most people (after a few weeks of calming down) that Gladiator was just a bully with a chip on his shoulder who probably wouldn't have gone through with his threat even if he'd actually taken a nuke. The Blood Red King, on the other hand, was pure, unadulterated Evil and he reveled in it without pretense or excuses. The Cardinal's death was the first of many; as the body count climbed, a terrified public asked themselves what else was out there.

America Man, the first to sense that the Blood Red King was more than just another villain, vowed publicly to bring him to justice. With the aid of Private Detective Gestalt Ted Heath and New York City's superheroine, a woman who called herself Mistral, he tracked the King to a lighthouse in Maine where he was assembling a cult of killers.

The King killed Mistral and Heath in the ensuing battle, but the enraged America Man

pounded the King so badly that he was forced to flee for his life. The King did not reappear for many months.

The battle was noteworthy for the first superhuman deaths. Heath left behind a (divorced) wife and two kids. Mistral, who was establishing herself as a vigilante in New York City, was a woman of great intelligence and fighting skill who might have had a spectacular career had she lived. Mistral's body vanished after the fight, and to this day, many people believe that she faked her death and is still alive and fighting under another name. However, it's more likely that a close friend took the body before her identity could be leaked. Some people believe Kinestar, her successor as New York City's protector, was responsible (or that Kinestar is Mistral reborn).

This battle is known as "the End of Innocence" in the Gestalt world. It drastically changed the way humanity viewed Gestalts. The battle also sealed America Man's reputation as "the First Defender of Liberty", a title bestowed on him (unofficially) in a speech by President Bush, though the fight against the King would be taken up by the newly formed Columbia superhero team by the end of 1990.

The only existing records of this fight are a few (overly dark) photographs taken by a cultist during the later portions of the fight. They're currently on display in Columbia's museum.

MANY QUESTIONS, MANY DISCOVERIES

Among other things, the Blood Red King's murder spree became a catalyst for a worldwide debate on gestalt spirituality. Were they angels or demons (or something else) and did they have souls? On February 11, 1991, one of the world's most prominent religious voices, Pope John Paul II, gave a formal proclamation that quickly became known as "The Declaration of Souls" and answered the questions for most of the world. He proclaimed that Gestalts were "gifted humans" and that everyone, even the Blood Red King, had souls. The religious debate continued, but most mainstream religions came to agree with the Pope.

Science looked on the religious controversy with a mix of skepticism and amusement, but if anything, the Gestalt world was a bigger mystery to them than it was to theologians. Scientists didn't understand where gestalts came from or why they could do most of the things they could.

For a year, scientists tried to use quantum physics to provide an explanation before a psychologist named Dr. Robert Adderlee, a researcher whose own Gestalt put him in tune with some of the scientific truths behind the Gestalt Phenomenon, published his landmark paper: "*Superhumans and the Gestalt -- Superpowers and the Human Collective Unconscious*" on September

EVENT HOOK: REGENERAN

Guinea Pig: Regeneran is rightly hailed as a modern marvel but no one talks about the price paid by you, the volunteers. Perhaps you're a person who was badly scarred in an accident and you've traded those scars for further disfigurement and cancer. Perhaps you're a lab animal who gained sentience. Now you're a gestalt, and you have one major goal — to expose the dark side of Gestalt research and seek justice for its victims.

22, 1990. It was an extremely controversial work (fistfights broke out at the Chicago conference where he first presented the theory), but given the lack of other explanations, Adderlee's work became established by 1992 as the best theory on superhumans and the reasons they exist. By 1993, the term "Gestalt" came into popular usage. But Adderlee did not live to enjoy his success. Less than six weeks after the publication of his landmark paper, he suffered a massive stroke and died in his Vermont home. Some suspect that he was murdered, but the police have never uncovered evidence of any crime. However, a surprisingly large number of Gestalt inventors have experienced unexplained deaths over the years, providing conspiracy theorists with plenty of grist for the mill.

While mainstream scientists generally found the Gestalt Phenomenon infuriating, it didn't take long for gestalt scientists to start making scientific breakthroughs. The first New Electric engine was patented in April 1991, and in early 1991, Dr. Emilio As-trada (a flamboyant inventor who became known in the popular press as "Dr. Astra") developed a battery which had twenty times the equivalent energy storage of a "normal" battery at room temperature.

Once this was developed, many other technical innovations became possible.

Dr. Richard Greer broke Moore's Law when he developed the Quadrant computer chip, and Dr. Astra added a second Nobel-class discovery to his resume when he invented "New Plastic", a transparent aluminum alloy. Astra's greatest dream, however, was to rekindle humanity's quest to explore space, an inspirational mission that he hoped would unite mankind — gestalt and non-gestalt alike — and bring about world peace. To this end, Astra designed a new generation of space vehicle. When NASA didn't show interest in the design, Astra pursued his own financing, and the Scobee (named after the captain of the 1987 Challenger mission that had ended in tragedy) was successfully launched in 1994.

There were several breakthroughs in medical science. The greatest of these occurred in 1993, when Dr. Walter Price of John Hopkins University patented Regeneran, a wonder drug that healed injuries at a rate four to six times greater than normal. Several generations of regeneran refined the process but at present, only the basic varieties of the drug are cheap enough to be commonly available. This has been enough to set off a small medical revolution; for one thing, when it's quicker to heal injuries, previously risky treatments are now more of an option.

Significant Timeline Diversion: The Gulf War

Ironically, the use of supers shortened the air strike portion of the war and resulted in over two thousand American casualties when the Americans underestimated Iraqi ground resistance. The USMC Vanguard did storm the beaches of Kuwait and led the Marines to victory.

Saddam Hussein was captured and placed on trial by the United Nations for war crimes. Iraq was eventually divided—Iran annexed the southern Shiite section while a Kurdish state was set up in the north, which pressed for the liberation of Turkish Kurds.

The Middle East became increasingly destabilized, with Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and the newly created Kurdistan fighting for control.

GREAT BATTLES IN SUPERHUMAN HISTORY!

BERSERKER VS. THE PHYSIQUE SEPTEMBER 9, 1990, VENICE, CALIFORNIA

One of the earliest (and most notorious) brawls in superhuman history was Berserker's attack on Venice Beach, California. Berserker, then a circus strongman named Terry Vlacek, had discovered his superhuman strength and decided to go to Hollywood to cash in on it. The studios were nervous about hiring a gestalt who had no heroic reputation, and Terry, whose verbal and social skills were virtually non-existent (essential to success in Hollywood), soon found himself on the streets. In a fit of pique, Terry disrupted a film shoot in Venice, using his strength to play with cameras and props and fighting all comers, stars, security, stuntmen, extras, and anyone else who wanted to play.

Another Strongman Gestalt named Gary Corbin happened to be sunbathing near the shoot and decided to intervene. This was the first significant public battle between "heavyweights" in the Gestalt world and ended with Berserker defeating Corbin after a minute of intense mano-a-mano fighting that knocked over the set and most of the people present. Most of the battle was filmed. The collateral damage from this brawl was extensive but serious injuries were confined to Corbin's concussion and two stuntmen with broken ribs.

The media made light of the incident, given the brawn of the combatants (both men fought in swim trunks, bringing about comparisons to Charles Atlas advertisements) and the setting (which was close to the famed "Muscle Beach"). Corbin went on to capitalize on the incident as the superhero "The Physique". Vlacek was given a fine and a suspended sentence and returned to the circus. Both men's lives took interesting turns. The Physique (despite his goofy name and vain image) won a lot of acclaim and respect as a superhero but was destined for tragedy; in September 1992, his young son Wyatt was caught in the crossfire of Gary's battle with the Anti-American and killed. Corbin immediately retired. He now serves as a trainer to the Hollywood Knights superhero team. Vlacek went berserk again in 1992, this time with less laughable results; he killed ten people at the circus where he was performing and became a fugitive from justice. He was eventually recruited by the Tyranny League and is considered one of their most powerful members.

**Significant
Timeline
Diversion:
No Oklahoma
City Bombing**

One of the soldiers killed in the Gulf War was Timothy McVeigh. As a result, the Oklahoma City Bombing of 1995 does not occur on Gestalt-Earth.

As a result of this, characters with "far-right political" leanings are more tolerated in America, and American militia groups on Gestalt-Earth have faced less government prosecution, which later set up the Frank Saunders' run for the Presidency in 1996,.

VANGUARD ACTION

One other area where gestalts made immediate inroads was the military. In November 1989, one of the first wave of gestalts decided to come "out of the gestalt closet" and reveal himself to his superiors: Corporal Jonathan Clark of the USMC. The Marine Corps was suspicious of superhumans, but a few generals made no secret about wanting to develop a special unit. The USMC Vanguard program, arguably the world's first group of superheroes, was born.

The effectiveness of military superhumans was proven when Corporal Clark and a few soldiers captured Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega on the first night of the assault and brought him to the States to stand trial on narcotics-trafficking charges. This prompted the first public appearance of another gestalt, Amnesty, who went to Washington to protect US foreign policy. Depending on who you ask, she's either the conscience of the world or an ultra-liberal nutcase.

Clark's success brought him a number of enemies, both foreign and domestic. One of those most disturbed by Clark's popularity at the Pentagon were the CounterMeasures operatives, who decided they needed to discredit the US Marine Corps Vanguard program. They managed to administer a hallucinogen to the newly promoted Captain Clark and made him go berserk. Several marines were killed before Private Randy Adams, a superstrong marine who had previously chosen to hide his powers, subdued the Captain.

Clark was not shot dead (as CounterMeasures had hoped) and he and Adams soon became good friends and comrades. Clark also recruited Phil Torrance and Manny O'Connor into the Vanguard program, and the four superhumans became the most versatile weapon in America's arsenal.

The Vanguard remained a subject for rumors until the Gulf War. On February 9, in their first public appearance, the Vanguard engaged an elite unit of Iraq's Republican Guard, which included two gestalts: an Iraqi and a Palestinian volunteer.

The Iraqi unit was nicknamed the "Jihad Squad" by the Allied military (ironically this was adopted by the unit, who called themselves Lashkar-e-Jihad, or "army of the jihad"). They had been ineffectual during the initial bombing of Baghdad and were kept out of the war until the storming of Kuwait. After a vicious three minute firefight, Private O'Connor was dead, Clark was badly injured (he received a wound on his face from Lashkar's leader, *Abu Sayf*, "the Sword of God", that even his regenerative abilities couldn't heal) but the Jihad Squad had been completely wiped out, with the exception of Dharaba-al-Maghreb, who managed to escape with only the loss of one arm. The Vanguard led the drive into Baghdad where they captured Saddam Hussein and many leading officials of the Ba'athist regime. Hussein was later killed in a disastrous rescue attempt from a United States military prison in 1992.

This was the only major superhuman combat

of the war. It took three weeks for word of the fight to leak to the press, first shown on a highly rated episode of the American newsmagazine *Sixty Minutes*. This was also the first time the Vanguard's existence was revealed to the general public.

The Vanguard would go on to see action in every subsequent major American military action except Kurdistan, snatching everyone from Somali warlords to Serb generals to Colombian drug kingpins and Venezuelan guerilla leaders. They became the subject of a *fatwa* after a prominent Egyptian cleric was killed during a 1997 raid on a terrorist training camp in Sudan.

NEMESIS

In late 1990, two prominent teams of superhumans were formed whose clash was destined to shake the world. The first of these teams were the Devastators, a villain squad that lived up to their name. They had different reasons for getting together. Big Bang, the leader, wished to create as much destruction as possible and felt that five could destroy more than one. Heartless, Gestalt of the Death of Compassion, wanted protection from superheroes as he enjoyed his favorite activity, deadening the moral centers of people's brains. Cannon Fodder was an ex-soldier who formed a new body whenever he was killed, and he enjoyed experiencing the thrill of death and knew that a supervillain team would attract some truly wild deaths. Warhead, a sentient cruise missile that may have been the embodiment of the nuclear fears that were just beginning to ebb at the end of the Cold War, needed someone to fire him. The Vandal, who was the most physically powerful gestalt of the first wave, just enjoyed the opportunity to crush people and objects in his bare hands. Together, the ferocious five embarked on a spree of robberies, happily killing any law enforcement officer or rent-a-cop who stood in their way.

The other team was Columbia, formed by a coalition of superheroes who wanted to stop the Blood Red King. The leader was Liberator, a pure gestalt who was a part-time lawyer and part-time defender of the American Way. Many called him "a second-rate America Man", but Liberator was far more intelligent (and much less naïve) than America's other star-spangled champion. Joining Liberator were Reactor (a Science Gestalt who was called "Gestalt of the Atom"), Dr. Zenith (a second scientific genius who called herself "the Gestalt of Human Potential") and Thrillseeker (whose motto was "Fear is a stranger to me"). Columbia enjoyed many early successes battling villains like Starfinder, Dr. (Mathias) Power and Los Vecinos, a team of superhuman mercenaries in the employ of the Medellin drug cartel, but their victories were tarnished by the fact that they had yet to face the planet's greatest enemies.

Liberator guessed that Columbia's growing reputation would eventually attract the Devastators — and it did. The battle took place in June 1992 in a

EVENT HOOK THE RED PLAGUE

Carrier: There's something about you that people don't know — you were traveling in India in 1993, ran short of a little cash, and decided to volunteer for a medical experiment that was being conducted by a reputable doctor. You thought it was a malaria inoculation.

Yes, you're Patient Zero of the Red Plague. You even spread it back to your hometown in the States, where thousands died; it's a good thing the CDC managed to place a quarantine around the place and keep millions of people from being infected. But the thought of what might have been still haunts you.

You survived. You even became a gestalt. You hope that as a costumed superhuman, you'll find redemption. However, you might still be carrying the disease, dormant, in your system...

big office building in downtown Washington, DC. Unfortunately, Liberator underestimated the Devastators' teamwork, and the battle went very badly for Columbia — until a huge African-American man appeared out of nowhere and attacked the Vandal.

The stranger managed to wrestle the Vandal to a standstill. Columbia rallied. Desperate to regain control of the fight, Big Bang pushed with everything he had in an attempt to fry Liberator. That's when disaster struck. Reactor, using previously unrevealed energy control powers, took control of the "Big Bang Blast" and directed it straight into Warhead. The villain detonated like his namesake. The stranger managed to contain the explosion so it only affected the building, and Columbia escaped without sustaining casualties. The building fell on top of the Devastators — and the combination of the explosion and the collapsing building killed them all, except for Cannon Fodder.

Cannon Fodder remains in jail and waits for his (unlikely) chance at parole in 2007. Liberator ordered Columbia members never to mention the huge stranger to anyone. The man's body was never found nor has he ever reappeared. After the fight, Liberator bought the property — an extremely expensive property — and turned it into Columbia HQ.

The Columbia-Devastators clash was probably the most important battle in superhuman history. It ended the threat of the Devastators who posed as great a threat as the Tyranny League later became (few villains have ever rivaled Big Bang or the Vandal in raw power). The victory solidified Columbia's reputation as the finest hero team on Earth when they could have easily been destroyed. The Strong Man (as the mysterious stranger has come to be called) has passed into the myth of the Gestalt community. It is said that when Dr. Zenith asked him who he was, the Strong Man quipped, "I'm not supposed to be here." The Oracle Gestalt Insight has prophesied that the Strong Man already walks among us, "but will not come to his full strength until Earth is threatened with its last breath."

THE RED PLAGUE

While Gestalts were embraced as heroes in the West, the rest of the world was far less certain about them. In 1993, the worst fears of the developing world came true when a Plague Gestalt named Dr. Typhus unleashed the Red Plague on parts of India, China, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. Over a hundred million people died (including Typhus), seventy-five percent of them in India. Calcutta

was particularly hard hit, and became the center of heart-wrenching scenes of devastation the likes of which had never been seen in the modern age.

After the pandemic subsided, the word "gestalt" became a curse throughout much of Asia and parts of Africa. This stigma holds to the present day in many places, and goes a long way in explaining the United Nations' hostility toward Gestaltkind, especially in the developing world.

THE SILVER AGE

The defeat of the Devastators was the beginning of a relative period of calm in the Gestalt world, at least in North America. But that peace was despite the efforts of certain gestalts and non-gestalt agencies.

Telepaths had been active since the start of the Gestalt Wave, and the most powerful was a man named Influence. He had a dream — if telepaths were unified to serve a common purpose, they could easily rule the world. He labored to locate known telepaths and in late 1991, he invited them to a gathering that he called the Council of the Mind, where he proposed his takeover.

Unfortunately for him, one of the invited guests was Labyrinth, a Gestalt of Secrets who considered interference in human free will to be the greatest evil imaginable. Because of her opposition, the Council meeting dissolved into bitter arguments and fractious infighting and never attained Influence's dream of psionic unity under his command. He and Labyrinth became bitter enemies.

The major conflict that remained to be resolved was between the American government and gestalts. Despite what the tabloids say, governments are lousy institutions at hiding a big secret and the secret of the CounterMeasures program couldn't be kept a secret for very long. In 1991, after an attempt to assassinate Golden Gladiator went awry, killing 37 tenants at a New Jersey apartment complex where the villain was staying, someone leaked details on CounterMeasures' activities to *the New York Times*. The scandal was explosive, and when Jonathan Clark broke his traditional public silence to address the House Empowered-Human Affairs Committee (the word "superhuman" was an anathema to some and "gestalt" was not yet in common usage), that drove the final nail in CounterMeasures' coffin. On May 24, 1991, the United States Congress formally disbanded the CounterMeasures program. Rumors persist, however, that CounterMeasures never really disbanded and continues to run covert anti-gestalt missions.

The status of gestalts was further bol-

Significant Timeline Diversion: U.S. Election 1996

Bill Clinton who, largely due to the state of the economy, beat George Bush in 1992 is narrowly reelected as president over Republican candidate Steve Forbes and Independent Frank Saunders. Saunders, a radical right-edwing militia activist, had been employing Public Relations Gestalt Keith Willard in his campaign with astonishing results. Chunin, a member of the ATF super-team, black-mailed Willard into resigning and barely managed to sink Saunders' campaign in time to give Clinton the win. Saunders and Willard both vowed to run again, and may do so in 2008 or 2012.

Major issues in the election are the economy, the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, the Tyranny League, and Gestalt incarceration.

On April 1, 1998, Columbia announced they uncovered evidence that proved Federal Special Prosecutor Ken Starr was working for the Tyranny League and that the main charges of the Whitewater investigation were a Tyranny League fabrication. Starr denied the allegation, but Federal Attorney-General Janet Reno dismissed Starr from the case. Starr was never charged with collusion. Many suspected that Liberator forged the evidence to discourage what he saw as an attack on the institution of the presidency, while others believe he did it in exchange for a presidential favor.

GREAT BATTLES IN SUPERHUMAN HISTORY!

THE TITAN VS. POWERJACK
JUNE 28, 1995, SAN FRANCISCO

While the confrontation was bound to happen, it was still ugly. Frank "Powerjack" Lombard considered himself the most physically powerful gestalt in the world, and with the exception of Taros Vlcek (Berserker) and the Vandal, he was. Gifted with good looks, incredible wealth, and exceptional abilities, Frank wanted to be known as the foremost gestalt on Earth, even though he never put a lot of effort into being a superhero. He had already developed a grudge against Physique whose good PR rivaled his own.

But all that changed after the Second Gestalt Wave. When The Titan emerged, he became a media favorite, maintaining a public profile as a NASA workhorse but staying away from the superhero scene except in extreme situations. Lombard developed an instant dislike for him and lured him to San Francisco to test his powers. Titan rescued people from a tenement fire (which Lombard had arranged) while Powerjack watched. After the rescue, Powerjack goaded the tired Titan until he shoved him, and the fight was on.

Powerjack expected an easy victory, but even though Titan was exhausted from the rescue, he was still much stronger and tougher than anyone else on the planet. He easily overpowered Powerjack, giving him three chances to end the fight, but Powerjack refused. Finally, Powerjack gave up, took a few deep breaths, then jumped Titan from behind. This was the last straw for Titan. In a near berserk rage, the ex-farm boy cut loose and shattered Powerjack's jaw with a haymaker. Powerjack had to be hospitalized and needed several months of reconstructive surgery to repair the damage.

In spite of Powerjack's injuries, the press was sympathetic to Titan who made several public apologies. Those who saw the television footage (Powerjack owned a media conglomerate and his cameras were quick to arrive on the scene) thought that Powerjack deserved everything he got. Powerjack's devotion to heroism ended after the fight, and he became determined to destroy his enemies. He sabotaged a rocket that Titan was launching in 1996 and tried to make it look like Titan was responsible. He hired the Psionic Seven to kidnap Titan's parents in 2002, leaving a false evidence trail back to the Tyranny League (something that both amused and disturbed Imperator). He has used the media to spread numerous scandalous rumors about Titan, alleging personal corruption, political ambition, and sexual depravity.

stered by a series of bizarre legal decisions which protected the identity of gestalts. On March 7, 1992, the case of Turgeon (Chris Turgeon, aka Action) v. the State of New York was heard by the US Supreme Court, and the court came to the conclusion that the unique nature of gestalts gave the government sufficient room to allow masked vigilantes to testify without revealing their identity under special circumstances (testimony by a law enforcement liaison on the gestalt's behalf, no use of unreasonable force, and no responsibility for fatalities). The verdict shocked the nation, and many believed that it was influenced by telepathic gestalts. But the verdict has not yet been overturned, and while it lasts, gestalt vigilantes have a measure of legal protection.

America Man had been the most prominent hero of the early age of Gestalt, but his luster was diminished in 1992 when he captured the Blood Red King and delivered him to Fulsome Penitentiary — where the King proceeded to massacre the entire population of the prison, both prisoners and staff, before making his escape. America Man took the killings very personally and was notably less cheerful and optimistic after the incident.

By 1994 a certain equilibrium had been reached in the Gestalt world. The world's legal system had adjusted to their existence, gestalts who

represented professions had been integrated into their communities, many of the major supervillains had been captured (or killed) and many pure gestalts had acclimated themselves to life among complicated, non-archetypal humans. The world had the feeling that the worst was over.

And that's when the Gestalt Phenomenon happened all over again.

NOT AGAIN!

February 23, 1994. On that morning, an estimated eight thousand people around the world awoke and discovered they had superhuman abilities (or in the case of pure gestalts, had come into existence). For the second time in five years, the waters of human imagination had spilled onto reality and created a wondrous, if dangerous, swamp.

Naturally, this threw everything into chaos. Many of the newcomers saw their powers as a means to get rich quick, and the existing superheroes were hard-pressed to maintain order. Fortunately several new heroes emerged to help humanity cope during this difficult time. The world needed them.

The greatest of these heroes was Trevor Griffin, better known as The Titan. Physically gifted beyond even the wildest dreams of gestalt



experts, this farmboy turned flight technician dreamed of becoming an astronaut and when he saved the space shuttle from disaster, he got his wish. Most superhero teams, including Columbia, tried to recruit him into their ranks, but Trevor was happier to work as NASA's back-up delivery system than as a superhero, so he only occasionally involved himself in Gestalt affairs.

Three more heroes who were more active in the superhero world were Rex, Bombard, and Kid Mercury, who were inducted into Columbia after an impressive public display of their powers, along with the (troubled) first wave heroine Starbird. They replaced Dr. Zenith, who left the team to conduct a vendetta against the tobacco industry after her father died of lung cancer, and Thrillseeker, who decided to explore the ruins of Dr. Power's Canadian base and mysteriously vanished. The latter heralded the arrival of the most dangerous gestalt on Earth.

Dr. Matthias Power was a Mad Scientist Gestalt, a second-rate genius who, like a bad pulp villain, schemed to bring North America under his fist with some bizarre device. He died in a 1993 battle with the Canadian superheroine Crucible, but he had a survivor, his daughter Theresa. Theresa wasn't a gestalt, but she became something far more dangerous when Matthias discovered some alien technology buried in the heart of the

Canadian Shield of northern Ontario and forced his daughter to plug herself into it. Theresa's already brilliant mind was expanded to superhuman levels – and her mind completely snapped. When Theresa's father died, she was determined to avenge his death. Her wrath was directed against her father's two greatest enemies: Crucible and Columbia.

A number of supervillains — Energy Master, Berserker, the Scarlet Knight, the Magician, and Jericho Bronze - plagued New York City and her sworn defender Kinestar for years. They earned reputations as minor league villains and petty psychotics – until Phil Dansen, once an ambitious lieutenant of Matthias Power, now the criminal mastermind "Imperator" decided they'd make the nucleus of a splendid supervillain team – a new Devastators. It took several years to gather his forces together, but once he did, he made an immediate impact, murdering the Bronx Guard superhero team in their first outing. This new villain team called itself "The Tyranny League", a name that was not just chosen for its comic book overtones but also because it had connotations of a nearly invincible level of power.

DEATH OF A HERO

For years the negative effects of the Gestalt Phenomena had mostly been confined to the

EVENT HOOK: FIRST CONTACT

*Where Were You When
The Aliens Landed?:*

Here are a few possible answers to that question.

You were with the Department of National Security. You were sent to process the aliens and contain the situation. Everyone ignored you.

You were being stabbed to death in an alley when word hit of the alien encounter and the city went nuts. Your attackers even dropped their weapons and ran off to see what all the fuss was about. This saved your life.

Seventy-five hundred years ago, you were struck with alien power and given a duty to proclaim the coming of the Ar if they ever returned to Earth. You hibernated for over seven millennia, and awoke when they landed. You're determined to help them adjust to life on Earth.

You were drunk. You were staring at a hotel ceiling in Rome when CNN started covering the landing. You thought it was a hallucination.

world's major cities; the average citizen had never encountered the Gestalt on a personal level. The Red Plague had disaffected that notion for many people in the developing world. Red August would now do the same for people in North America.

In the summer of 1995, an anti-Gestalt movement known as the Mundane Alliance came out of nowhere and swept across North America in a pandemic of hate and violence. By July, they had over a million members. By mid-August, civil order had broken down, and the general population was filled with one all-consuming purpose: hunt down every last gestalt and kill them like beasts.

Columbia HQ was engulfed in flames and its members were forced to flee, while suspected Gestalts in custody (or people known to have close associations with Gestalts) were murdered. The Mundane Alliance was led by Golden Gladiator, who had publicly disavowed his Gestalt heritage. However, because Gladiator had never been a public speaker or a leader, it soon became obvious that he was merely the figurehead for a more diabolical mastermind.

Many suspected Influence was behind the Mundane Alliance, an accusation that annoyed the mastermind. He turned to America Man and Kinestar for help, and the three gestalts infiltrated the headquarters of the Mundane Alliance to confront the true villain – the Blood Red King, who was using a pair of extremely powerful psychic twins, Auric and Argenta to do his dirty work. In the confrontation that followed, the twins used their powers to sap America Man of his faith in his country, nearly destroying him. Golden Gladiator, however, had a great respect for his adversary. With Influence's help, the world's first supervillain broke free of the twins' control and snapped their necks.

The Blood Red King, angry that America Man had escaped from the one situation that could permanently kill him, took out his fury on Golden Gladiator and drained his body of its blood. Gladiator died in America Man's arms. His last words were: "Yeah, I guess America does need heroes after all..."

The destruction of the Mundane Alliance had a mixed effect on the people of North America; they were more sympathetic to their gestalt protectors, but now they knew what it was like to have a telepath invade your brain and throw your life into turmoil. It's probably not a coincidence that an anti-gestalt paramilitary organization known as the Dawn Brothers made their first appearance shortly after the incident.

As for America Man, he attended Golden Gladiator's funeral and delivered a eulogy and a goodbye message. The hero literally vanished into the sunset and has not been seen in over twelve years.

FIGHT! FIGHT!

By the end of 1996, the chaos that had accompanied the arrival of the Second Gestalt Wave was beginning to settle down. Many people remarked that the world felt peaceful again, but to Liberator, it was "as though the forces of good and evil were gathering for a major clash."

In August 1997, on the second anniversary of Red August, silver envelopes appeared at the homes of gestalts around the world, as well as whatever they needed to safely travel to a castle located on the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark.

The invitation was to the world's first Gestalt fighting tournament. The tournament host, Victor Eismann, announced that the site was neutral ground— people could interact but could only fight in the competition. Berserker decided to test the prohibition by attacking Eismann... and vanished before he could lay a hand on his Danish host. He reappeared three weeks later in New York City.

Many prominent gestalts decided to compete at Copenhagen, including a reluctant Titan. After a week of fighting, he defeated a Chinese gestalt named Lao-Shi Khan and won the tournament. This triumph enhanced Trevor's already formidable reputation but it also brought him a world of trouble. The opponent he defeated in the semi-finals, an Assassination Gestalt named Cygnus, had sworn an oath that no man would defeat him. He declared a vendetta against the Titan that would have unexpected consequences, and not just for Trevor Griffin.

Eismann told the gathering that they had to prepare for "new arrivals," a prediction which came true little more than month later, on November 8, 1997, when the Third Gestalt Wave occurred.

FIRST CONTACT

On May 18, 1998, after several unsuccessful assassination attempts, Cygnus was determined to trap Titan and try to finish him off once and for all. During a mission to launch the Hephaestus-I Platform, Cygnus trapped the Titan in a small container in orbit and attempted to send them both hurtling into the sun. A panicked Titan discovered his ability to travel at faster-than-light speed the hard way—he accidentally created a warp that hurtled them both hundreds of parsecs from Earth.

Several months later, a race of near-human aliens, the Ar'Turodain, detected this odd craft in their space. They rescued the humans and brought them to Parayma, the Ar'Turodain administrative world. A misunderstanding briefly made the Titan a wanted fugitive and forced him to run for his life. Fortunately, after Titan exposed an Ar'Kayadin spy in the highest levels of the Ar'Turodain government (and prevented Cygnus

Significant Timeline Diversion: The Capture of Osama bin Laden

On August 20, 1998. The USMC Vanguard stormed a camp in Afghanistan and captured Osama bin Laden. The matter of jurisdiction prevented a meaningful trial for nearly a year.

His capture also prevented the linking of Bin Laden's organization with the Islamic Jihad that produced the Al-Qaeda organization that was responsible for the destruction of the World Trade Center in the real world (and numerous other real world events of 2001-2003.) The Taliban remain in power in Afghanistan.

from detonating a bomb in the Ar'Turodain council chambers (the Presidium) the Ar'Turodain pardoned the Earth hero and showered him with honors. First Contact between Terrans and the Ar could be considered a modest success.

Trevor persuaded the Ar to return him to Earth. On June 24, 1999, the Ar'Turodain landed at the door of the United Nations. The entire world came to a dead stop for about a week, then continued business as usual.

After receiving numerous invitations, on August 11, 1999, the Ar'Turodain formal representative Iskari Ingago agreed to address the United Nations General Assembly. The warm welcome he received cooled after he called Earth "primitive but promising" and offered to trade advanced technology with Earth—provided they agreed to curb all A. I. research, destroy 95% of the world's nuclear arsenal and consolidate the rest under an independent authority. On August 20, the United Nations Security Council met to discuss the conditions to the proposed Ar'Turodain trade agreement. China and France vetoed it, while the United States and Russia abstained.

BAD OMENS

On September 22, 1999, the Second Copenhagen tournament began. Apart from the usual conflict and mayhem, it was noteworthy for one critical event: the Tyranny League announced that the United States government was collaborating with Dr. Astra to build battlesuits, an operation called Project Capricorn. Imperator claimed that the US military planned to set up a special strike force to subdue the "Gestalt threat" and vowed to lay waste to any city in the United States where battlesuit development was taking place, rather than allow the American military to develop weapons capable of stopping them.

Columbia, of course, opposed the threat. The usual trading of insults and promises ensued, but the neutrality of Castle Eismann kept them from coming to blows.

One thing that Eismann couldn't prevent was the secret of the tournament from being revealed to the outside world. A journalist named Dani Jensen published an exposé on Copenhagen in *The New Yorker* and the tournament's existence was revealed to the public—including the world's governments—for the first time.

Shortly after Copenhagen, Earth was surprised by the arrival of a second alien race. On December 6, 1999, the Ar'Kayadin, an enemy offshoot of the Ar'Turodain, followed their cousin's lead and made First Contact with Earth. The Ar'Turodain warned Earth's governments that they were not to be trusted, and as a result, the "space Nazis" (as the Ar'Turodain labelled them) enjoyed a very cool reception. Eventually the Ar'Kayadin were reduced to making private contacts with some of Earth's smaller governments in a bid to gain influence over this newfound world. Some factions of the Ar'Kayadin,

humiliated by this treatment at the hands of a "primitive" culture, advocated a more aggressive strategy.

THE NORFOLK TRAGEDY

Defeating the Tyranny League had been at the top of Columbia's agenda since the murder of the Bronx Guard, while Imperator's main concern was that soon, technology would reverse the edge that gestalts had over ordinary humans. When Columbia announced they'd protect Project Capricorn, the clash was inevitable.

In January 2000, the Tyranny League struck. The first phase of the operation was a success: their target, Dr. Astra, was kidnapped. However, before Despot, the Tyranny League's telepath, could secure Astra's secrets, the good doctor sent a signal to Columbia HQ that allowed Columbia to track him.

The result was the first battle between the League and Columbia. It ended with the League in flight and four people left dead on the battlefield: Bloodkite of the Tyranny League, Rex (killed by Daimyo) and Reactor (killed by Bloodkite) of Columbia, and Dr. Astra. Astra blew Bloodkite and himself to bits to turn the tide of the fight, otherwise Columbia's defeat might have been total.

The world mourned the losses of Rex and Reactor (Rex, an exceptional acrobat and martial artist was one of the world's most popular Gestalts), and the death of Dr. Astra. It sent the members of Columbia into a deep depression; Edge took a long leave of absence and nearly quit the team for good. Much to Liberator's annoyance, several of their best support staff members did leave the organization.

Doctor Astra, Rex, and Reactor were buried with presidential honors. Rumors spread that Dr. Astra had many secret laboratories hidden across the country, and even had a plan to engineer his resurrection in the event he was killed. No proof of any of these claims was ever offered, which makes them even more appealing to the tabloid press and to conspiracy theorists. There's a substantial number of people who believe that Dr. Astra is still alive and well, drinking coffee in a South American cafe, and plotting the overthrow of civilization.

The battle shook Columbia's invincible reputation, and established the Tyranny League as the foremost gestalt threat on the planet. In the 2000 American Presidential Election, voting irregularities in Florida were initially blamed on the Tyranny League. Columbia later determined that Influence mentally affected the administration of ballots in several key precincts. The Florida Supreme Court forced a re-vote that led to the election of George W. Bush. Naturally, many Democrats were displeased with the result, and there was some speculation that Liberator colluded with the Bush camp to handpick the president.

Influence also played an unexpected role in another incident. In March 2000, he kept Labyrinth from attending a crucial meeting of the Council of the Mind so he could take control of The Five, five gifted

Significant Timeline Diversion: NATO Doesn't Win in Serbia

Rising tensions in Kosovo led to NATO military action. The Vanguard was sent into Belgrade to find Slobodan Milosevic, only to run into Team Haedar who chose to oppose "NATO aggression". (Milosevic learned the lesson from previous Vanguard captures and hid.) The Vanguard was caught off guard and decided to retreat rather than risk capture. The pullback was seen as a major Serb propaganda victory.

NATO's will to prosecute the Serbs eventually ebbed, and Milosevic remained in power. Serbian incursions, particularly those into Macedonia, had an increasingly destabilizing effect in the region. By 2002, Drustvo, Serbia's "superhero" team, had become one of the most feared bands of gestalts in the world.

**Significant
Timeline
Diversion:
Russia
Crushes
Chechnya**

After a terrorist bombing that killed 113 people, Russia responded to Chechen and Dagastan separatism with frightening efficiency. On November 17, 1999 thirty gestalts, the largest gestalt military assault team ever assembled, captured Grozny in a round of bloody fighting. Russian telepaths helped to locate and crush rebel strongholds. This was the most open and extensive military use of psionics ever and many nations, including the United States, called it "a dangerous precedent."

**Significant
Timeline
Diversion: And
No Tears Fall**

September 11, 2001. A normal day in New York City.

GREAT BATTLES IN SUPERHUMAN HISTORY!

HOLLYWOOD KNIGHTS VS. THE VICEROY

JUNE 28, 2001, LOS ANGELES

The Blood Red King was notorious for spreading misery and suffering but he also had a practical (and cowardly) side: after several defeats, he learned the value of creating minions to fight his battles. By 2001, the King decided to make his base in the Los Angeles area, a move that put him into conflict with the Hollywood Knights, a fledgling superhero team. To battle them, he created the Viceroy, a new vampire lieutenant from a respected African-American reverend, and gathered a group of villains who would later become known as Los Animales.

A series of vampiric murders drew the attention of the Knights, local mobsters, the long-time Los Angeles vigilante Streethawk, and the King's old enemy, Pastor Brown. The murder spree culminated in a satanic ceremony conducted at the Viceroy's church. The Knights interrupted the ceremony, fought the villains, and emerged victorious, although the Warder and Athena had to knock themselves out in order to bring down the Viceroy.

After the battle, Pastor Brown found the unconscious body of the Viceroy lying in the street, and shot him with silver bullets. The Viceroy perished instantly. Pastor Brown was arrested and later convicted of murder. The incident brought the Knights to national prominence—and put them at the top of the King's hit list.

psionic children. Labyrinth, furious at this deception, tracked him down and brought with her the wrath of Columbia. Influence was forced to teleport into the Gestalt Dimension where he accidentally awakened a new and dangerous enemy. On May 4, 2001, a Fourth Gestalt Wave took place. Seventy of these gestalts bore no obvious archetype but were a race of three-eyed giants, indistinguishable from each other, who despised Gestalt-kind and hunted them with the single minded obsession of a medieval Inquisition. These called themselves "The Leviathans".

THE OLYMPIAN COMETH!

In 2005, one of the most controversial gestalts in history made his first appearance on the streets of New York City—the Olympian. Seemingly stronger than the Titan and handsomer than any man had a right to be, this golden paragon of humanity took the United States and the world by storm with his charm and ability.

However, chinks appeared in the Olympian's armor. Every superhero he met, from Columbia to the Titan to the Hollywood Knights, was compelled to pick a fight with him. Victor Eismann said he wasn't a true gestalt and refused to invite him to Copenhagen. There was a rapid surge in unexplained strokes and deaths due to brain aneurisms in the places where he stayed. Eventually, Kinestar revealed that the Olympian was a psionic construct of the human ideal, created by a lonely homeless man, James Wirtz. Unfortunately, the Olympian was empowered by the mental energies of those around him, and to sustain himself about ten people (usually the infirm or those already at high risk) suffered serious—and often fatal—brain injuries every day.

Kinestar confronted Wirtz. Because of the psychic rush he experienced through his bond with the Olympian, the telepath refused to admit he was doing anything wrong, and summoned the Olympian to defend himself. However, Kinestar was prepared for this: she had already goaded the supervillain Portal into creating a gateway to a place in the Gestalt Dimension

where there was no escape (or so Portal claimed). Wirtz and the Olympian were tricked into going through the Door to Nowhere and were lost, apparently forever.

As one of the Olympian's powers was super-popularity (with everyone but his rivals and enemies), many were outraged by Kinestar's actions. Some privately admitted that ten sickly lives per day was a small price to pay for having someone with the Olympian's incredible power available to fight the enemies of mankind.

THE ROAD TO ATLANTA

On November 12, 2002, one of America's leading battlesuit designers, Dr. Quentin Crane, died of a heart attack. Later it was revealed that he was poisoned, presumably by the Tyranny League's resident Master Ninja Gestalt, Daimyo. It was clear that this was the opening salvo in a new Tyranny League offensive to eliminate anti-Gestalt technology. What was not immediately apparent is that Despot had already infiltrated the battlesuit program, identified its least capable managers and researchers, and used his mental abilities to ensure that they get promoted into positions of authority.

"Nothing ensures failure like the promotion of blind ineptitude," Imperator remarked.

The strategy of selective incompetence held back the project for years. Meanwhile, the League had a plan to deal with Columbia: Imperator surmised that Liberator might permanently die if he were killed at the same instance that the Liberty Bell and the original Declaration of Independence were destroyed. On September 12, 2003, they lured Columbia into a trap at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, but the ambush did not go as they expected. The resulting battle was a serious defeat for the League: the Bell was damaged but not destroyed, and Edge and Kid Mercury killed League stalwart Energy Master.

Thanks to the intangibility powers of their new member Poltergeist, the League narrowly avoided capture. After that fight, Imperator thought

twice before openly challenging Columbia, though he continued to recruit and train new members for an eventual showdown.

Meanwhile, relations between Columbia and the US government were disintegrating. The Bush Administration had initially been strong Columbia supporters, but now Columbia's failures to capture the League were causing them to lose patience with America's premier heroes. For their part, Columbia had their own grievances. Since 1989, Liberator had cooperated with three administrations. Though he often bristled at decisions that he felt were not in the Republic's best interests, he always kept silent. In the 2004 election, more voting irregularities pushed the Defender of the American Order to his breaking point. Columbia's leader, who rarely upset the status quo, spoke out publicly, "Even if the allegations prove false, still the possibility of corruption represents the greatest danger to our democracy in living memory".

Although he was careful not to name names, Republicans interpreted the remarks as a partisan attack. Liberator was no longer invited to the White House and many conservative commentators turned vociferously against the team. Acerbating Columbia's woes were the public statements of several prominent liberal gestalts, most notably Stuntman of the Hollywood Knights, who have spoken out against the administration's Kurdistan policy. These heroes have had a rough time in the popular media.

Riding a promise to deal decisively with the Tyranny League in his second term, President Bush was overwhelmingly reelected in November 2004.

The Tyranny League ignored the administration's jibes and continued to hide until their plans were ripe. On January 24, 2006, with Project Capricorn on the verge of completion, the League felt it had no choice but launch a first strike on its base facility. Using mercenary villains to distract the major heroes, the League, fielding a giant gravitic fortress for the first time, firebombed one of the research firms that was subcontracting for Project Capricorn. A thirty-block radius on the outskirts of Atlanta was incinerated, with additional devastation spread over a ten-kilometer radius. Once the League finished its first strike, they flew into the ruined complex and killed anything that moved. One casualty was Atlanta's favorite superhero, the Clipper.

By the time Columbia reached the disaster site, it was too late. Thousands were dead, many more were wounded. With the permission of Clipper's family, Columbia inducted Clipper as a posthumous member of the team, a gesture that did not entirely sit well with the public. Project Capricorn was completely destroyed and many of the world's best engineers were dead.

People were not happy.

THE DAY OF MONSTERS

Since 1989, strange Gestalt Phenomena have become commonplace; while most people don't like these annoyances few regard them as global threats. This perception changed on October 23, 2006, when a large meteorite crashed in the Arctic. Somehow it created a ripple in the Gestalt. Hundreds of mon-



sters emerged across the globe: from giant rabbits in Japan to a huge land-kraken which attacked the Canadian parliament buildings, to an ominous black cloud that caused over a billion of dollars damage in Beijing.

These creatures were beaten back with considerable effort by the world's superheroes but not without grievous loss of life. The day spurred calls for unity between gestalts. Most monsters vanished after twelve hours, however a few of the most powerful ones, including a fifty-foot humanoid powerhouse dubbed "Golgotha" that beat the Titan like a rag doll, remained behind.

A POLITE SOCIETY?

Shortly after the Day of Monsters, on December 7, 2006, a second strange occurrence happened. A man calling himself "the Armsmaster" opened a gateway to a place he called "The Arsenal of Freedom" and declared that anyone, in any part of the world, who wanted a weapon could simply reach out and draw one into their hand; the stronger the person's will, the more powerful the weapon. Convicts in hundreds of prisons armed themselves and caused widespread rioting and jail-breaks. Around the world, militants armed themselves with advanced weapons, re-igniting conflicts in the Balkans, Kurdistan, and West Africa, and deepening the crisis in Darfur. A few superheroes also took advantage of the phenomena (most notably Athena, who grabbed a Leviathan-slaying sword and decapitated nearly a dozen Gestalt-killers). Most exotic weapons vanished (along with the Armsmaster) after twelve hours, however many conventional weapons were left behind. Worse, shortly after the Day of Weapons, Influence announced that he was now a nuclear power. No one was sure whether this is a bluff, but people are scared.

Some people predicted that there was a pattern with the Day of Monsters and the Day of Weapons, citing the old folk saw that "things always happens in threes". If they're correct, there will be a third Day soon. Whether that will turn out to be a blessing or a curse remains to be seen.

THE PRESENT

The world is still struggling to deal with the Atlanta Incident. Billions of dollars were spent on trying to hunt the Tyranny League and waging an aggressive campaign against other villains who pose a threat to national and international security. The United States

government has all but turned against gestalts, and a Department of Homeland Security was created to deal specifically with the "gestalt threat".

More recently, superheroes from around the world have had to deal with two major natural disasters: the Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004, and the flooding of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 29, 2005. The efforts of dozens of superheroes during these two crises did much to smooth over the international community's ill feelings toward gestalts, however Liberator (who *felt* the destruction of one of America's largest cities on a physical level), made some undiplomatic remarks about the US government's handling of Katrina, calling President Bush "a blunderer" saying, "If there's one more failure of this magnitude he should resign."

Since Katrina, Columbia has attempted to recruit a world-class weather controller and a world-class telekinetic into their ranks, believing they would bolster the team's capability to handle natural disasters. The two proposed candidates, Mexico's Ascensión and Canada's Bellweather, were both denied entry by the INS — reportedly at the direct order of the White House. Columbia is beyond furious with the delay. Many suspect Liberator has authorized a covert campaign to undermine the United States government and force Bush from power. Recently, Ascensión was allowed into the States on a temporary work permit, however Bellweather continues to be denied entry, allegedly because of a minor drug possession charge dating back to his college days, 15 years ago. More disturbing, when the incident was leaked to the press, so was his secret identity.

The big winner of the Columbia-Bush Administration conflict has to be the Tyranny League who have been far from idle since their (as Imperator calls it) "victory in Atlanta".

AN IMMINENT THREAT

As great as the Tyranny League threat may be, an even greater one is coming from beyond the confines of the Gestalt, from outer space. In September 2003, the Canadian supervillainess Dr. Power announced that she had detected a non-Ar spaceship on an approach vector to Earth.

Eiko ships are relatively slow. On January 11, 2007, that Eiko scout ship finally reached the solar system. Several heroes, including Titan and the Warder, attempted to contact it. The ship responded by attacking and was destroyed — barely.

Power predicted that it would be the first of many such Eiko vessels to come to Earth.

IV: BACKGROUND CHARACTERS

Being a living embodiment of an idea, unfettered by social norms, tends to get one noticed. Here are most noteworthy heroes and villains active in the United States, whose actions can shake the entire world. Some characters are described in greater detail in Chapter IX: Character Write-Ups while others have been left for the GM to develop.

A NOTE ON PCS IN THE WORLD

The approach that Gestalt-Earth takes (at least in my home campaigns) is that this world is as much a simulation as it is an exercise in storytelling. The PCs are not the center of the world, especially at the start of the campaign, but they have the potential (if they work hard and intelligently) to earn a place among the premier heroes of the campaign world after a few game-years of play.

There are heroes who have more acclaim and power than the PCs. There are also villains who have far more power than a starting PC.

Gestalt's philosophy is that PCs should start near the bottom of the "food chain", facing novice villains, and some of the weaker minions of the campaign's master villains. They should be given time to develop adversarial relationships with established characters and build anticipation for major fights. Foreshadowing is a terrific way to build drama and sustain interest in a campaign. Sometimes, novice villains develop at close to the same rate as the PCs and become a recurring menace. At other times, the PCs blow the villain away and move on.

I try to live by the Three Strikes rule in the campaign: if the PCs have defeated a villain three times, the bad guy has lost his dramatic impact and should be retired from the campaign. Also remember the One Strike rule: keep villains who make a dramatic impact—immediately discard any who don't.

There are some very powerful heroes and villains in Gestalt. However, there's more than enough room for PCs to make an impact, find their niche, and fight their way to public esteem and personal satisfaction. The campaign belongs to the PCs, although victories are more meaningful when they take place in a world that doesn't look like it revolves around them. The pond in Gestalt is a big one.

ARCHVILLAINS

Archvillains are the most important "movers and shakers" in the campaign. These villains have the potential to devastate or conquer the world. Every major Gestalt, government, and security agency

on Earth views their actions with intense scrutiny. The PCs may stumble across their schemes (such as other villains who are working for or against them) but a direct confrontation should be a climactic event in the campaign or a major campaign arc.

THE BLOOD RED KING

"Take every fiend who has ever walked the Earth, every sadist, every anti-saint who has made cruelty his god, and place a bloody crown on his head, and you will find yourself staring into the bloody visage of the Blood Red King."

– Labyrinth



Of all the beings on Gestalt-Earth, the *Blood Red King* is the most hated and feared. He is the Gestalt of Pain and Suffering. The King is actively trying to make misery "the dominant emotion on the planet". His transformation powers have enabled him to create over thirty monstrous offspring, including the vampires Night Huntsman and Viceroy. The King has engaged in numerous killing sprees over the years; sometimes, heroes have killed him, but his Gestalt Immortality has always brought him back, deadlier than before. Most of his recent activities have centered in the Los Angeles area (which he's renamed Los Diablos); this has put him in direct opposition with the Hollywood Knights.

The King has grand ambitions, but enjoys playing in the mundane world. His Imperious Presence delights in the creation of new monstrosities, and he takes a detached pleasure in lacing his horror with irony.

The Blood Red King does not seek political power or wealth—he wishes to harrow the souls of mankind. Although he's an extraordinarily capable killer, he prefers his victims to live and suffer through the consequences of his actions. On the other hand, he more than enjoys a good mass slaughter when he's in the right mood.

The King is part demon, part god. He never addresses anyone directly, and his speech, a series of formal pronouncements, is riddled with metaphor and archaic structure. In combat he causes wounds to open spontaneously that will not easily heal, and he appears and disappears at will, leaving a trail of blood, or a train of bloody footprints to mark his path.

The King's ultimate goal is not world conquest—he wants to discover a way into Hell (for he is certain it must exist) and usurp control. He will stop at nothing to find an individual who can open the gateway and lead him to his ultimate destiny.



DR. POWER

"Theresa Power is the future; unfortunately she's a future who's in desperate need of more psychotherapists than you'd find in the Los Angeles basin."

– Edge

Of all the so-called Archvillains, *Dr. Theresa Power* is the most dangerous, though she's not as active as the Tyranny League or the Blood Red King. This Canadian researcher has no superhuman abilities except for her intelligence; she's a master of Gestalt science, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence. Her many feats of mad science include: cloning human beings from strands of DNA; building nearly a dozen artificially intelligent computers; and launching deep space probes into the Oort cloud, probes with much better scanning technology than those of the Ar. Theresa also developed a Gestalt detector years before Raymond Curtis patented his version, as well as a power neutralizer.

Doctor Power engineers gestalts. She clones millions of human beings, tests the embryos for their capacity to accept Gestalt bonds, and discards the failures. It's a slow process, but she's successfully bred twelve customized gestalts with this method – twelve more than anyone else on the planet.

Theresa has bred organisms that transform stone into sludge and accelerate the rusting effect of metal as well as pheromone clouds that have placed entire cities under her control. When you cross swords with Theresa Power, you never know what horrors she'll unleash.

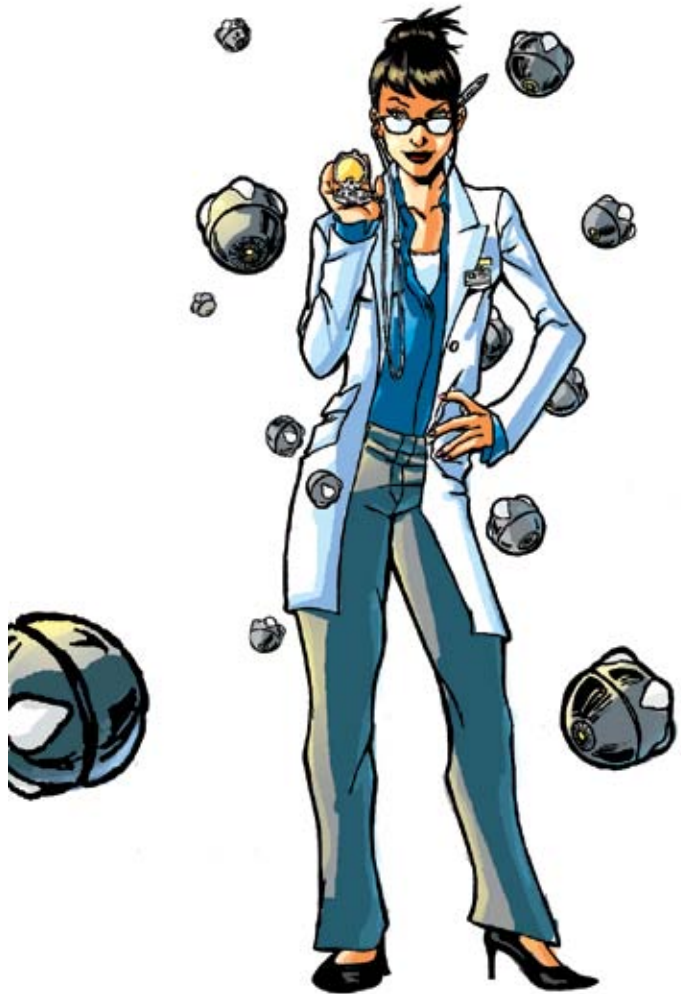
Doctor Power is one of the world's few second-generation supers; she's the daughter of Dr. Mathias Power, an abusive megalomaniac. He was killed in a fight in Toronto with the Canadian superheroine Crucible in 1993. Power, whose intellect was boosted either by a Gestalt Wave (or contact with Probability Lord technology) vowed to avenge his death. She has three known goals: the destruction of Crucible; the destruction of Columbia (Matthias's most hated foes); and the conquest of the world, which she intends to turn into a memorial to daddy. Power is cold and analytical except when her father's memory is insulted—then she can become very angry and irrational.

Under some circumstances, Power can be a valuable ally. She's provided superheroes with valuable data on Eiko fleet movements and strength. Power does not make alliances with other villains; she distrusts the Tyranny League (she and Imperator have had an unpleasant history) and views the Blood Red King with loathing.

Power's recent activities center on kidnappings. No one's sure why, though the number of previously unknown gestalts in her service may indicate that she's found a way to manufacture gestalts.

Doctor Power's main stronghold is in Canada, hidden somewhere north of Sudbury Ontario in the low-lying mountains of the Canadian Shield. It is believed that Power's base is adjacent to a Probability Lord artifact and that Power has found some way to tap into it. Included among her many superhuman servants, Power has two bodyguards – Gyrfalcon, a female psionic who rivals Labyrinth in power, and Silverfist, a brick who's only a little weaker and slower than Titan, both physically altered recreations of dead celebrities. Gyrfalcon is the facsimile of a pleasant aspiring actress who was murdered by her husband in 1980, and Silverfist is the reproduction of a brawny young actor who accidentally shot himself when he played with a gun on the set of a 1984 television show. She treats her minions with the disturbing sentimentality that a carpenter feels about their favorite tool.

Her other tools are the Power Orbs, tiny floating gravitic globes which produce force fields and tiny tractor beams. Controlled by Theresa's inhumanly efficient mind, the Orbs serve as a hundred extra hands when she needs them. While Theresa



shuns combat, these globes make her frighteningly effective in fights, as both Columbia and Crucible can attest.



INFLUENCE

"Like a bad puppeteer, Anderson would turn the world into a spectacularly sadistic episode of a Punch and Judy show."

– Labyrinth

Few members of the general public have heard of George Anderson, and that's the way he likes it. With the possible exception of China's T'ien Ming, Anderson is the most powerful psionic on Earth. Other psionics know Anderson as *Influence*, the black-clad leader of the Council of the Mind, a body of psionics that meets every six months at a location of Influence's choice.

The Council of the Mind is an unofficial governing body of the world's telepaths. All telepaths are considered members of the Council — even Labyrinth attends its meetings. The Council meets to set guidelines for telepaths and to prevent actions that would result in government persecution of telepaths, such as openly using powers against the wrong target (mind controlling the President of the United States would not bolster the cause of "the psionically endowed").

Subtlety is Influence's game, and it's a game he plays very well. Influence wants nothing more than domination of the world and control over the development of the human species. He and Labyrinth are implacable foes, though neither has openly attacked the other; he has used surrogates to attack her while she has manipulated Columbia to secretly disrupt his operations. For his part, Influence is also learning to dislike the Psionic Seven supervillain team and Brazil's archvillain, the psionic Sinistrado.

Influence occasionally employs a pair of telepathic women named *Ermine* and *Lethe*, who also serve as his consorts. More recently, Influence's servants have been a team of five teenage telepaths known simply as *the Five*. They aren't capable of competing in a fight against trained superhumans, but Influence prefers errand-runners to warriors. Only one of the Five has a known super identity; he is called Perceptor; he can tell at a glance whether someone is going to gain Gestalt abilities.

Influence is also the only known gestalt who is able to move freely between the human dimension and the Gestalt Dimension. He has been manipulating unformed gestalts, trying to figure out how to make them obey him once they get released. This alone makes him an extremely dangerous threat.

THE TYRANNY LEAGUE

"There's no greater threat to the nation than this pack of terrorists, egomaniacs, and mad dogs. If someone doesn't neutralize them soon, God help us all."

– Liberator

There is no question that the Tyranny League is the most powerful supervillain group on Earth and the most deadly. The supervillain Imperator formed the League in 1994. It began as a typical villain team: killing heroes; performing robberies; and desecrating landmarks. Its initial goal was to overthrow the government of the United States and set up a tyrannical dictatorship, led by Imperator and enforced by an army of superhumans. They never seemed to make much progress toward that goal.

Lately, the United States government has attempted to develop human augmentation technology that could allow soldiers to compete with gestalts in terms of mobility and fast assaults. The League announced its opposition to the program and struck against these centers with frightening effectiveness. Experts have been forced to reevaluate their estimates of the League's competence, and some have wondered whether their open assaults weren't just been a cover for more insidious actions.

The League has cultivated a feud with Columbia, the preeminent superhero team on Earth. Their battles rank among the most brutal in superhero history, with members killed on both sides. The League has poor relations with other Archvillains (there's major bad blood between Imperator and Dr. Power, the Blood Red King's nihilist streak is an anathema to them, and Influence is far too self-centered to be a reliable ally). However, the League is highly respected and admired by novice villains, and the League has been patronizing some journeyman villains and forming alliances.

The League is rumored to have connections with many gestalts, and that it's true membership is between ten and fifteen gestalts, many of them extremely powerful. Publicly, it's never shown more than its combat core, and most combat operations use either small teams (Jericho Bronze, Berserker, Scarlet Knight, and the Hand of Chaos are an extremely effective and common strike team), or a squad of six to eight members for major operations. The full known team has only appeared twice.

Its known members are:

Imperator is the team leader. This embittered scientist and would-be monarch rarely involves himself directly in a fight; he's a strategic leader, not a soldier. Imperator was once the lieutenant of Dr. Mathias Power and is not on good terms with his daughter. Imperator possesses force field technology (an anomaly on Gestalt-Earth), in particular a force field belt and a force beam-projecting scepter. Imperator loves ceremony and enjoys cultivating a regal persona.

Computer is Imperator's lieutenant. He's a machine empath of extraordinary ability, (rivaled only by the San Francisco superhero Technarch) but no combat skill — he will not appear on a battlefield

until it's been secured by his teammates. Computer's background is a mystery. Most believe he and Imperator are good friends, but others speculate that Computer is just using the Tyranny League leader to promote his own agenda.

Daimyo is a jonin, a master ninja. He's a pure gestalt who considers himself a hireling, not a League member. He's an exceptional martial artist, probably the best on the planet, though Daimyo rarely stands and fights, given his access to a wide variety of ninja tricks. Daimyo is the Tyranny League's assassin; he only accompanies the League on missions when Imperator wants someone dead. He's incredibly arrogant and dismissive about other people, unless they show extraordinary levels of ability. Daimyo has never appeared at the Copenhagen tournament (see Athletics); he views competitions as meaningless games that are unworthy of his time.

The Hand of Chaos is the most mysterious member of the League. He wraps himself in a probability-warping field that he can twist to perform nearly any effect he wants. The Hand of Chaos wears red robes, and no one, not even Imperator, has seen his true face. Some believe he has no physical body but is chaos personified. His actions, however, dem-

onstrate an extremely keen and focused intellect. He rarely speaks; his voice is an inhuman distortion that's extremely disconcerting.

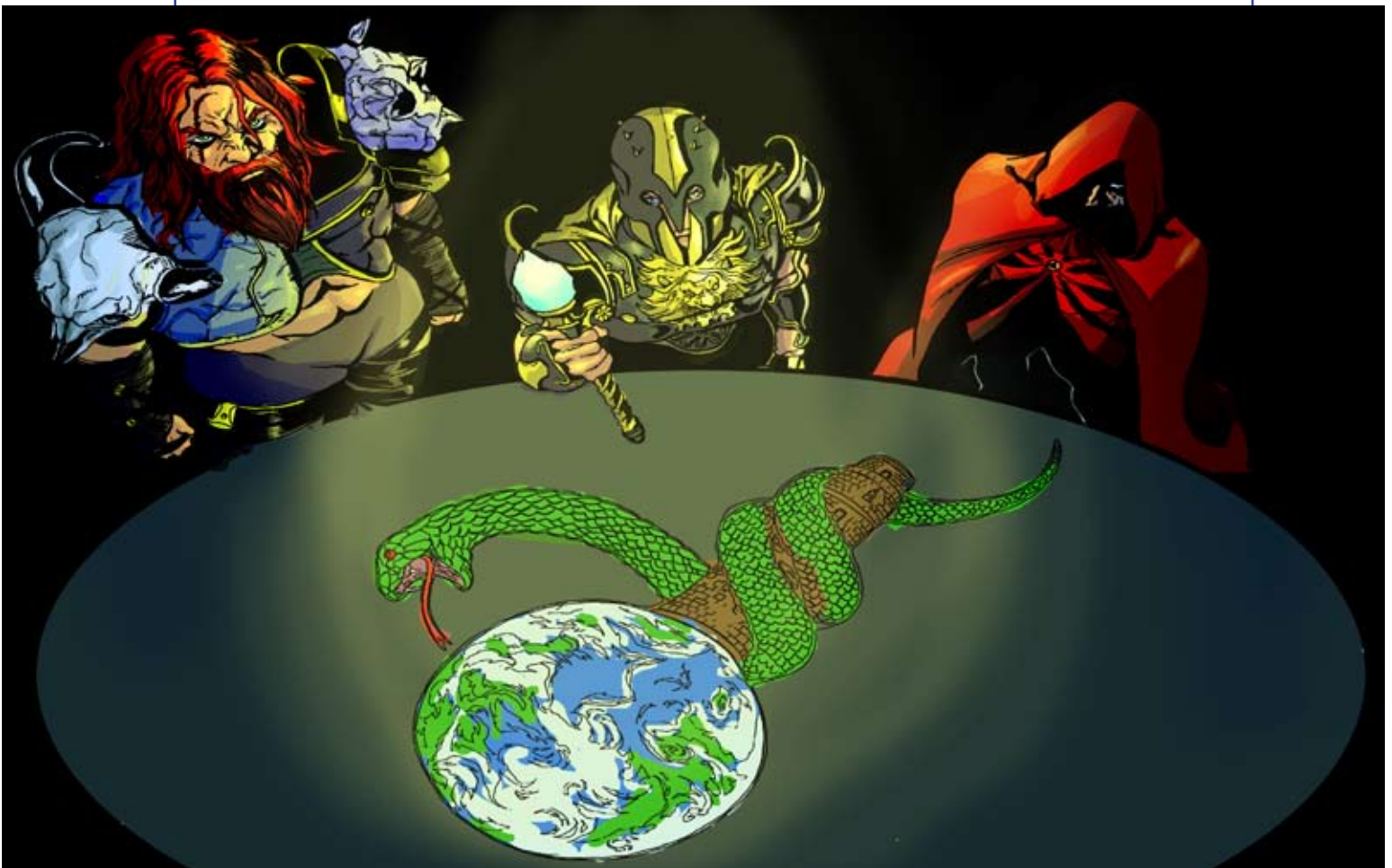


Jericho Bronze is the team's field commander. Bronze is one of the most unusual gestalts in the group, a statue of the Greek god Mercury brought to life. Bronze never shuts up. While he usually acts with extreme politeness and friendliness, it's a facade to cover his homicidal intentions. Bronze is a paragon/martial artist with a

talent for cheap shots and sneak attacks.

Berserker is one of the first known members. A bruiser with incredible strength, only Titan, Umsipha, and Silverfist are considered to be more physically powerful. True to his name, Berserker is notorious for his murderous rages, from which only the Hand of Chaos or Jericho Bronze are able to calm him down. Provoking Berserker is incredibly easy, and he backs down from no one. He hates Columbia's Edge above all others (Edge really enjoys insulting and belittling Berserker in their fights), so much so that's not safe even to mention the word "edge" when he's within earshot.

Despot is the Tyranny League's mentalist, specializing in telepathy, domination, and illusions. He's



GREAT BATTLES IN SUPERHUMAN HISTORY!

THE TYRANNY LEAGUE VS. THE BRONX GUARD

JUNE 8, 1996, CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK CITY

Imperator was an ambitious man. He had originally been the lieutenant of Dr. Mathias Power, but a Gestalt of Conquest does not remain a vassal for very long. Remembering the success of the Devastators, he was determined to repeat it on a greater and more destructive scale. He would form a supervillain army so large and so powerful it could deal with any threat, and be able to dictate terms to anyone, government, hero, or villain team. The initial squad was Imperator, Jericho Bronze, Energy Master, Despot, Bloodkite, Scarlet Knight, and the Hand of Chaos.

The Bronx Guard -- Grave, Shadowmark, Street Legal, The Fire, and the Tower of Power -- styled themselves as the next Columbia, and become the biggest team in the biggest city in the world. Shortly after they were formed, they encountered the superheroine Kinestar during an armored car hijacking. Kinestar saw potential in the Guard and offered to lead them, but they responded to the offer with contempt and ridicule. In truth, the Bronx Guard were just five overconfident novices with more power than brains.

Outnumbered and outgunned against the Tyranny League, they didn't stand a chance. The League drew the Bronx Guard into the open by attacking Wall Street at noon, while television cameras rolled. It was a short battle. When all heroes were unconscious, the Scarlet Knight and Bloodkite executed them on camera. This was the first time an entire hero team had been killed by their opposition, an act of brutality that shocked the world and the superhero community.

Several days later, a British supervillain team, the Destruction Society, murdered a group of MI-5 heroes led by the old British superhero Peerless. It was obvious that a new era in supervillainy had begun. Liberator, who had feared the reemergence of a "New Devastators" immediately saw the League as a threat and bolstered his forces for the coming battle. It was commendable foresight on Liberator's part, but even he could not foresee how dangerous the League would become, or how much the coming war would cost Columbia.

a Hate Gestalt, but his telepathic abilities are more versatile than one might expect for that archetype. He's also a very nervous gestalt because he knows his archenemy, Columbia's Labyrinth, is more powerful than him. As long as Labyrinth lives, Despot is very, very vulnerable.

Aside from Daimyo, the deadliest member of the League is *The Scarlet Knight*. The Scarlet Knight wears medieval plate armor, tinged with a blood red color, and wields an atom-thin sword that can slice through anything. The Scarlet Knight is the League's executioner and has no qualms about killing captured opponents. The Scarlet Knight talks in a slightly archaic manner, mostly via sentence structure and his choice of imagery (not vocabulary, he doesn't use "thees and thous").

Poltergeist, Gestalt of Ghosts, is the newest League member. Little is known about him except that he can extend invisibility and intangibility over a wide area and to multiple targets. He once successfully cloaked an Apache helicopter and made it intangible when it was attacked with Sidewinder missiles. He seems to be permanently in ghost form and can only affect the real world via telekinesis. No one has ever heard him speak.

There are rumored to be other members of the Tyranny League, and there are two noteworthy deceased Leaguers. *Bloodkite* was an extremely agile, bestial birdman with large claws who liked to kill people. Dr. Astra killed him during a battle with Columbia in January 2000. *Energy Master* was a powerful energy controller who was killed by Columbia's Edge and Kid Mercury in the 2003 Philadelphia Columbia-Tyranny League clash. It is widely believed

that Imperator is looking for a replacement for the latter, as his loss leaves the Hand of Chaos as the League's only energy controller.

The League is known to possess a teleporting, T-shaped flying fortress that they refer to as "the Hall of Tyranny". Its origins are unknown, though it's widely speculated it uses a gravitic-flight source similar to the one employed by Technarch.

MAJOR VILLAINS

Major villains have a worldwide sphere of influence and a very high power level. They're not the first opponents that a superhero team will face, but can be confronted after acquiring enough experience points and lessons in teamwork. About ten to twenty sessions into the campaign, some of these villains can make their initial appearances.

THE ANTI-AMERICAN

"You're the greatest patriot of all, Anti-American. You test the mettle of the American spirit and the strength of our Constitution like no one else alive."

"God bless you, A.A. — now have a nap!"

<POW!>

— America Man

Originally known as "the Angry American", this pure gestalt battled patriotic foes during the early Gestalt era. Early in his career he acted like a ridiculous Armageddo-style "over the top" villain who tied heroes to giant American flags that he set on fire (his idea of a death trap) and who made his home

in a “Hall of Infamy” (filled with humongous exhibits dedicated to American criminals and traitors). As time went on, he became much more serious.

In 1993, he was responsible for the death of Gary “The Physique” Corbin’s son Wyatt and attempted to shoot Vice President Al Gore with a pistol that had allegedly belonged to John Wilkes Boothe. Finally, in 1995, he helped the Blood Red King coordinate Red August. The King

immediately betrayed him by throwing him from a New York skyscraper. He’s spent the last ten years in a coma — from which he’s only recently awakened.

Some call him “the dark reflection of America Man” and note that his evolution in *gravitas* mirrors that of his adversary.

ARMAGEDDO

“Nothing can beat Armageddo! Nothing! But what if some smart aleck hero decides to call himself ‘Nothing’? Hmm, I need a new master plan...”

– Armageddo

Of all the supervillains on Gestalt-Earth, *Armageddo* is the looniest, a crazed energy controller who acts like a stereotypical exaggerated comic book supervillain. Armageddo spends most of his time in asylums or prisons but has extraordinary luck escaping.

Armageddo’s schemes involve going to a public place; issuing ridiculous demands to politicians, businessmen, or the general public; and then getting stomped by superheroes. Armageddo has kidnapped presidential pets and demanded that Congress pass an entitlement bill for supervillains. He also founded the Armageddo School for Supervillains, located next door to Columbia HQ in downtown, Washington DC. Armageddo sees himself as Earth’s preeminent bad guy and goes to ridiculous lengths to prove it.

Armageddo occasionally takes on other names and identities, most of them as ridiculous as Armageddo.

Armageddo is considered to be a nuisance by most superheroes and supervillains, but it’s also a mistake to view him as trivia—people have died when Armageddo was treated like a joke. Armageddo emits low-level radiation that is carcinogenic on long-term exposure, and his concussive blasts are one of the most powerful attacks possessed by any supervillain. Some heroes worry that one day Armageddo will come to his senses and become a truly lethal menace.

Armageddo has a small gang of supervillains that he sometimes uses in operations: *Leech Lad* is a sidekick Gestalt with exceptional life draining

abilities; *Fantasia* is an illusionist who believes in the mental images she creates; *Rage* is a former mail carrier with superhuman strength that raises to obscene levels when he’s upset; *Ski Bunny* (who usually doesn’t work with the other gang members) is a mentalist whom Armageddo uses as a distraction to commit highly successful crimes, although there’s evidence that Ski Bunny uses Armageddo to commit her crimes.

CYGNUS

“Good and evil, like gravity, pull at our souls. One force pulls us to Heaven, the other to Hell, and we stand at the brink of two abysses. I have already made my leap, but when I push you, which way shall you fall?”

– Cygnus

Cygnus (“the Swan”) is the codename for a Murder Gestalt who’s widely considered the most capable assassin in the world. Trained by the United States Marines, John Cygnus served briefly with the USMC Vanguard in Somalia, however psychotic episodes led to his expulsion from the team and eventually he went AWOL. His next public appearance was in 1995, when the Serbian government hired him to kill several important European generals and politicians.

Cygnus is a cold, ruthless (but honest) professional. He’s only failed to deliver on one contract: a villain secretly hired him to kill the Titan, but the big guy beat Cygnus and sent him to prison. After escaping from a UN war crimes tribunal, Cygnus cut off his right hand, and delivered it to his employer as a “late payment penalty”.

Cygnus is still trying to kill the Titan, no longer caring that if he kills himself in the process. In his most famous effort, the assassin lured the Titan into a spacecraft and attempted to throw both of them into the sun. That’s when the Titan discovered that he could travel at faster than light speeds, accidentally sending the craft hurtling into interstellar space. This eventually led to first contact with the Ar’Turodain. Cygnus is currently held in the *Dassogirya*, the Ar’Turodain’s most impregnable prison, a fortress buried beneath the Fume Forests on the planet Gilada where he rests in suspended animation (along with seventy criminal Ar’Turodain superhumans).

Cygnus is a telekinetic who prefers to use his powers instead of guns to deliver bullets into his target. He has no possessions except for the cloud of knickknacks (which include his bullets and hand-carved miniature glass swans) that continuously orbit his body. He derives his name from these swans, and the large black swan tattoo that covers half his face. Cygnus is also famous for having extremely long, deeply existential philosophical conversations with his enemies about life, death, God, Heaven,

Kneel Before the Terror and Glory of Armageddo Unleashed!

The GM can find game stats for Armageddo in this book on page 255.

Hell, and good and evil; either he thinks they could provide him with a good debate or they've earned enough of his respect that he feels compelled to explain why he's killing them.

HEL

"I really wish these mythological types would have the decency to stay back in their textbooks."

– Edge

The Mythological Gestalt is a prominent one, and Hel, Norse goddess of Death reborn, is one of the most feared of all reincarnated gods. Half-beauty, half-corpse, Hel's powers are simple; when she touches someone, death must follow.

Hel is obsessed with collecting the fingernails of the dead so she can build the ship that will sail at Ragnarok. Periodically, she launches mass murder schemes to facilitate this long-term goal. In extreme situations, she'll ride her unfinished ship into battle, although usually to her regret, as it always seems to get damaged in the attack.

Hel's sidekick is The Living Gun, a flying Colt pistol that speaks in an awful Mexican accent. These two villains are rumored to be looking for powerful Gestalts from the most recent Gestalt Wave to join them and may be putting a team together: "Convocation", "Concordia", and "Compact" are rumored codenames for this new team which might give the Tyranny League a run for its money.

THE HOT GODS

"Again, I really, really wish these mythological types would have the decency to go back to their textbooks and stay there. Athena excepted."

– Edge

Take six superpowered adolescents, hook them up with an embittered deity, and set them on the longest joyride in human history, and you have the Hot Gods. The Hot Gods are not the deadliest supervillain team, but they get noticed.

The 1997 Gestalt Wave brought Apollo into the world, the reincarnation of the Greek God of Music, Philosophy, Athletics, and Charioteer of the Sun. When Apollo first looked at modern society, he couldn't believe how repressed it had become, and the amount of influence that a "backward, repressive cult founded by the mountain men of the Levant" (i.e., Christianity) had over it. He decided to find young superbeings and teach them how to be gods.

The "gods" he chose were a wild lot, but Apollo decided that as long as they didn't do too much harm to mortals, they had the right to indulge themselves—he would teach them manners later.

As a result, the Hot Gods are a very self-indulgent lot. Most of the team members take after Apollo's example and perform their operations in the nude. They commit petty vandalism and pick fights with supers. They're mostly nuisances, but they're also hard to ignore. They show *noblesse oblige* to people in need, but only in extreme circumstances, and Apollo usually demands worship and public sacrifice in exchange for his favors.

The Hot Gods are heroes to many in alternative culture. Over the long term, Apollo would like his pantheon to expand, settle down a little, and find a more pro-social place in the world. Apollo also fears the return of certain members of the Greek pantheon (Ares and Pan are old enemies, but

above all else, he fears what his father Zeus would do in this world), and is making preparations for the day they return, including training his own private army. He's kept this a secret from the other Hot Gods and from his sister Athena, currently a member of the Hollywood Knights. He remains on good terms with her, though they frequently argue over his methods and activities."

The membership of the Hot Gods is:

Apollo has a well-earned reputation as one of the most egotistical supers in the world.. He brooks no contradiction, and only Venus's intervention has prevented him from killing people who have offended him. (Venus also had to stop him in a sexual assault situation in 2000, before Apollo realized how seriously modern society takes that crime). Apollo can create a flaming chariot and hurl deadly javelins of fire. On occasion, he has also taken up one of his less fortunate traditional roles – when a superhero shows too much *hubris* (excessive pride) it's one of Apollo's duties to punish them.

Horus is probably the most agreeable of the younger Hot Gods despite his tendency to smirk and make bad puns. Horus is a luck controller, almost as versatile as the Tyranny League's Hand of Chaos, (though not as powerful). Horus has a falcon's head but says he's not a true reincarnation of the old Egyptian deities. Horus is everyone's friend on the team, and the other Hot Gods get upset when he gets hurt.

Kukulkan is a gangly seventeen-year-old in Aztec garb, but when he speaks, he has the voice of a god. Kukulkan has admitted that his body is a "mask", and that he's really the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl, reincarnation of an Aztec deity, although he's never worn coatl form. Kukulkan is superhumanly strong and fast, with superb flying ability. He's also the most mature of the Hot Gods – Apollo included – and sometimes serves as peacemaker in situations where Apollo's ego gets in the way. Kukulkan is very protective of Latinos in the American Southwest.

Shiva is the youngest Hot God and the most

Hel Unearthed!

A character write-up for the Queen of Death can be found on page 260. The Living Gun's character sheet follows on page 262.



obnoxious. Originally a street kid and hard-core tagger from Chicago, Shiva acquired his Gestalt when he was twelve; he grew four extra arms and can destroy nearly anything he touches. Now fourteen, Shiva is a mean little guy with plenty of attitude. Of all the Hot Gods, Apollo finds him hardest to control.

Thor is easily the most controversial of the Hot Gods, a seventeen-year-old kid who is one of the strongest men on Earth and given to drinking, partying, and bullying. He loves to badmouth his opponents, often with homophobic slurs. However, Thor also has a fanatical devotion to Apollo, and rarely contradicts anything he says — which is probably the only thing that's kept him from joining a more lethal type of supervillain team.

Venus may not be the actual goddess of love, but she is certainly a vision of naked female beauty. Venus is the lieutenant of the Hot Gods, although she's content to allow Kukulcan to give orders when Apollo is absent. She enjoys the role of the bimbo but abandons it when necessary — her friendship with Apollo is what has kept him from making some major mistakes. Despite appearances, Venus and Apollo's relationship remains platonic. Her powers include the production of pheromones that give her almost complete control over men's minds.

LAO-SHI KHAN

"The West is such a pack of craven dogs, it's a wonder that anyone can muster the courage to crawl out of their beds!"

– Lao-Shi Khan

Dubbed "The Destroyer" by the Western media, this martial arts master believes that he's on a mission to save humanity — he will find the twelve men who, through the practice of Dragon-Style Kung fu, will transcend human form and combine to become the *Tai Bang Le Lung*, the Great Dragon who will elevate humanity to its next collective stage in the Buddhist hierarchy, bringing enlightenment to the world.

And if he has to kidnap hundreds of young men and women and force them to fight to the death to determine which twelve will combine to form the Great Dragon, it's a small price to pay.

Lao-Shi Khan is otherwise as dangerous an opponent as you'll ever meet, a World-Beater martial arts master. He's only been beaten once in single combat, by the Titan at the first Copenhagen tournament. Since that defeat, he's been ashamed to show himself in public but some of his students, the *Jai Ren Li Zhen* (which translates, very roughly, to "Family of Strength and Truth") are almost as deadly as their master.

THE MENAGERIE

"Not even a genius like myself will ever figure out how a species of primate dullards (like yourselves) ever managed to avoid extinction!"

– Dr. Canus

The Menagerie is the supervillain group that everyone laughs at — until they actually meet them in person and realize how dangerous they are. The Menagerie is a team of talking animal Gestalts whose goal is the extermination of the human race. The Menagerie believes that the food chain has become unbalanced, and unless they take direct action, all animal life in the world will die.

The Menagerie was formed in 2001 and is led by *Dr. Canus*, a talking beagle with a pompous British accent (even though he was whelped in the American Midwest); he's a powerful telepath and an exceptional genetic engineer. In fact, most of his creations defy the laws of physics (colonies of giant ants, hatching dinosaur eggs) which lead people to believe his creations aren't scientific, but a form of chain Gestalt. The Menagerie uses these creations to terrorize the general populace. They also perform individual acts of terror against "special" enemies of animalkind (performs "tests" on scientists who test toxic products on animals, zookeepers from particularly rundown zoos, cruel circus trainers, and people who poison dogs). Animal rights extremists are the Menagerie's allies and often shelter them.

The Menagerie is also an extremely deadly group. *Bengal Tiger* has killed and eaten superhumans on several occasions, and the other members are just as vicious. The Menagerie views superhumans as irritants to kill and devour and enjoys using them as object lessons to instill fear in the hearts of "over-evolved primates" (i.e., humanity).

The membership of the Menagerie includes:

Dr. Canus is an egotistical, human-hating beagle. He sets the agenda for the rest of the team and is its resident spokes-dog. A condescending intellectual, Canus specializes in genetic engineering. He overcomes the handicaps of his canine form with his formidable telepathic and telekinetic abilities.

Bengal Tiger is the Gestalt of Man-Eating Tigers. He enjoys terrifying his enemies and takes pride in being higher on the food chain than anyone else. *Bengal Tiger* is a bully of the most dangerous sort. His powers include teeth and claws that are much sharper than a normal tiger's, he can rend steel as well as he rips apart flesh.

Mister Monkey, deranged and mutilated from a series of cosmetic industry experiments, is a thoroughly psychotic little beast. This crazed spider monkey's only joy in life is the feeling that he gets when he strangles people—he sings crude songs in an incredibly annoying, high-pitched voice to express his love of choking. *Mister Monkey*'s agility makes him a very frustrating opponent.

Rhinoceros is a slow-thinking brute who loves to cause property damage. *Rhinoceros* is very fond

of watching things crunch around him. He says very little, and is considered the most bestial of the Menagerie.

Widow is a giant black widow spider that was nearly killed when she tried to build her webs amidst the skyscrapers of Chicago and took some of its residents as prey. Widow joined the Menagerie for protection.

A member named *Super Gorilla* has been mentioned by the team but has yet to appear to the general public.



THE PSIONIC SEVEN

"For people who like to call themselves 'professionals', most superheroes and supervillains bear a surprising resemblance to the amateur hour."

– Ominos

If the Tyranny League is the undisputed holder of the heavyweight supervillain team title, the Psionic Seven is the number one contender. The Seven was founded in 2001 by a female Leviathan named Ominos. She deserted the Leviathans almost as soon as she was created and gathered together her own team of supers with telepathic, telekinetic, or pyrokinetic powers. Psionic abilities are not necessarily the most pronounced of every member's powers, but all members of the Seven must be psionic in some way.

The Psionic Seven are mercenaries. They charge extraordinarily large sums to perform kidnapping, theft, or rescue operations. They refuse assassination missions, viewing them as too damaging to their reputation. Likewise, they refuse to conduct operations for "mad dogs" (homicidal villains such as the Tyranny League or the Blood Red King)

The Psionic Seven have earned a reputation as a frighteningly effective tactical unit. Ominos is an extremely capable commander and has a talent for keeping some of the more unstable personalities of the Seven in line.

Some experts believe the Seven would even be a match for Columbia. Ominos is pleased by their reputation, and would like to take the Tyranny League's place as the most feared team on Earth but most of all they want to become a financial success and retire to a life of comfort and luxury. Their secret base is in an island in the Caribbean.

Ominos is a renegade Leviathan female (in fact, the only known Leviathan female). Her powers most closely resemble a Leviathan Duke—she's a talented shapeshifter and telepath.

Psycho-American is an Insanity Gestalt, though one would never know it from a casual meeting with this quiet, philosophical young man – who fights against emotional instability by passing it onto oth-

ers. When working with other members of the Seven, he employs both illusionist and pyrokinetic powers, creatively combined to spectacular effect.

Dominator is a Gestalt of Command, and the only member of the team who gained Gestalt abilities during the First Gestalt Wave; she quietly used her powers to accumulate a fortune from "donors", millionaires under her mind control. Kinestar detected her powers, and Dominator was eventually caught and sent to prison. When the Seven was reformed, Ominos made her liberation one of her first priorities. Dominator, possibly the most powerful mentalist on the entire team, enjoys humiliating her opponents. Because of her sadistic tendencies, Ominos (who dislikes cultivating grudges) tries to keep her on a short leash.

Psilence, Gestalt of Evasion, is an undetectable speedster and the dirty trick that makes the Psionic Seven such a devastating team in an ambush—he's an invisible speed demon who often takes out the most dangerous member of the opposition with a single shot. This young Latino man is cocky, but only when it's obvious the Seven has the upper hand.

Slab is a male Beauty Gestalt who's the most egocentric member of the Psionic Seven, is a telekinetic powerhouse whose machismo is often punctured by barbs from the team's female members. Slab may be the "weak link" of the Psionic Seven, as his ego is greater than his ability, but Ominos can usually direct him so his strength will be an asset. Still, Slab gets bested on a regular basis by other powerhouse gestalts and man, he does not like it.

Star Shield may be the quietest member of the Psionic Seven, but she's also one of the most useful in combat. Star Shield can project a force beam that is very good at knocking a target around the battlefield, but her greatest ability is the power to project a powerful force field domes around her teammates (usually Psycho-American, though Thrasher and Ominos also use it as a fallback when the battle is going badly).

Evo, the Post-Human, is an amoral biologist, a chronic overachiever who views humanity as a herd of dull, barely evolved apes. He's an Evolution Gestalt who can cloud the minds of those who are less intellectual than him. He uses his position on the Psionic Seven to fund private experiments on human evolution (and to wage a war against Creationist groups). His personal vendettas will probably lead to break from the team within a year (which gives the GM room to add his own villain to the squad).

WEAPONSMITH

"I'm no supervillain. I'm just a big bad kid who likes to play with my toys."

– Weaponsmith

Some supervillains have no superpowers, except for the ability to dream big and be smart enough to make their dreams come true. Kyle Smith,

AKA *Weaponsmith*, is one of those. When it comes to weapons design, Weaponsmith is the best and he charges a healthy premium. Only the late Dr. Astra came close to Smith in his mastery of this field.

Weaponsmith's greatest creation is the Warmaker, a tank/battlesuit that is one of the most advanced weapons systems ever constructed. The Warmaker has been rebuilt several times, usually for some exceptionally ambitious criminal – the latest version gave Columbia a very nasty fight. He is also the world's foremost supplier of battle robots, a fact that makes the Tyranny League uneasy about him.

Aside from his genius as a maker of weapons, Weaponsmith is also a criminal mastermind with bases in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Dallas. He is heavily involved in the drug trade and is emerging as a major player in the West Coast underworld. Weaponsmith is completely ruthless and amoral. His most notorious quirk is his love of playing the villain when he's up against superheroes. He loves luring heroes into deathtraps. Next to the Blood Red King, Weaponsmith is the Hollywood Knights' most persistent, determined enemy; he'd like nothing better if every superhero on the American West Coast were to die a slow and painful death, especially the Knights.

MINOR VILLAINS

Minor villains are either powerful villains who confine themselves to a small area or villains who can be easily beaten. These are meant to be good opponents for heroes at the start of the campaign.

BOMBAST

One of the newest mercenary supervillains to hit the scene is *Bombast*, a physical powerhouse who appears to choose operations so long as he gets a chance to fight the world's most popular superheroes. His motivation is unknown, but he's prone to putting his opponents in humiliating poses after he defeats them, including stripping them and hanging their costumes from flagpoles to signify his victory.

Many people think Bombast is actually Thor of the Hot Gods in a different costume, as Thor also pulls the same denuding trick at Copenhagen and their heights and builds are virtually identical. However, both Thor and Apollo deny the rumor. Thor's response is to issue an open challenge to Bombast for a fight, as if the challenge were enough to allay suspicions.

THE BYZANTINE

The Byzantine is a pure gestalt from the 2001 wave, a Gestalt of Despair. The Byzantine is a mentalist with superhuman strength. He surrounds himself with a force field that causes psychic feedback to anyone who touches him, also transferring an opponent's strength into him. The Byzantine began his criminal career by attempting to drive Titan to suicide, he was defeated but not before he killed

several of Titan's NASA coworkers and a few old childhood friends.

The Byzantine is currently a mercenary for hire. No one's quite sure why he's working for others, given that he's more of a master villain, but he is quite powerful and his services are heavily in demand. The Byzantine's presence gives people "the creeps" — he disturbs anyone he meets on a psychic level.

The Byzantine rarely says anything, except when a remark can destroy a person's confidence or self-regard.

CENOTAPH

Imagine a world without war. That's what Matt McArthur, *the Cenotaph*, does — constantly. The thought literally screams inside him because within Cenotaph's mind is the ghost of every soldier who's ever died. While the individual voices of the soldiers speak of bravery and honor, the collective voice is a scream of anguish as he remembers how they died — and how they were treated after their death.

The ghosts provide him with bravery and skill, he can draw on their collective strength and toughness to perform incredible feats and commands any soldier at a glance. But he hates the machine of war with a passion. Cenotaph hires himself to perform industrial espionage against the world's military-industrial complexes, though he'll never willingly harm someone who's a military member or reservist.

THE DEREGULATORS

A group of superhumans who believe that the United States government was created illegally and the Constitution is invalid, the Deregulators are hell-bent on destroying the infrastructure of regulatory agencies, and to bring down the federal system and return control of all American institutions to state governments or private control.

The Deregulators are a young supervillain group, and not as tough as most established superheroes. They are, however, a very clever group, especially at using distraction and infiltration. They have ties to many militia groups, and to militia sympathizers in the US Army.

The Deregulators' *modus operandi* involves disruption through destruction of public records or public buildings. They also employ assassination and blackmail to further their ends.

The members of the Deregulators are: *Freedom Smith*, marksman, former political science student and Gulf War veteran, Mason Smith's military service exposed him to a lot of ideas about why America is going wrong. An examination of America's history convinced Mason that America was flawed from its conception and he decided to do something about it. Mason is a good strategic and tactical leader for the Deregulators. He uses an incredibly large gun (designed and produced by Weaponsmith) in combat. As a gesture of contempt,

Secrets of the Deregulators!

The GM can find game stats for this villain team in this book, starting on page 226.

Freedom Smith's costume is identical to Liberator, leader of Columbia.

Adrenaline is a Thrillseeker Gestalt. A former truck driver and white-water river rafting pilot, Adrenaline is a powerhouse whose body creates chemicals that allow him to boost his abilities.

The Juror is the Gestalt of Mob Justice. He believes that the government and all who obey it are criminals. The Juror can transform himself into twelve angry men, each armed and dangerous.

Resistor is a Murder Gestalt, a former member of the Scarpachi mob family. Ostracized for his public boorishness and disrespect for the family patriarch, joined the Army, where he met the other Deregulators. Nearly anything becomes a deadly weapon when Resistor throws it.

The Terror is a Fear Gestalt who joined the Deregulators because they're the enemies of authority (although he's not sure he can trust them either). Terror's powers involve the telepathic extraction of someone's greatest fear and using it against them in a telepathic onslaught.

DHARMA BILL

Dharma Bill is a strange gestalt who exists to find truth by exploring new avenues of good and evil. Some days, he'll rescue flood victims. Other days, he'll drown old ladies in bathtubs. Some days, he'll comfort the poor. Other days, he'll go to a mission, steal all the food and Christmas gifts, and dump them. For every evil action Dharma Bill commits, he must perform a good action, and vice versa. Bill believes he'll eventually discover his inner balance and find a way to ascend to Nirvana. Most people, including other Buddhists, think he's nuts.

Dharma shapeshifts between two forms, each which can manipulate reality to reflect his moral outlook. His evil form works for anyone, but most employers consider him unreliable. They have good reason: one time, during a bank robbery, Dharma Bill spat on the sidewalk, decided he had done his evil deed (spitting), and walked away without fulfilling his contract.

THE FIRESTARTERS

Like many superteams, the Firestarters began as an extension of the ego of its leader, Dissenter. Dissenter is a discredited academic who believes the only way to remove poverty is to forcibly remove the poor — by killing them. He burns down decrepit buildings and sends his team to massacre squatters. He creates narcotics that kill an addict after only a few exposures, virulent plagues that only affect the severely malnourished or people with chemical imbalances mostly likely found in a schizophrenic's brain. Given that the Firestarters are composed mostly of social misfits, their hypocrisy is appalling.

The Firestarters' reputation in combat is far from sterling; they've been beaten by most superhero teams at one point or another since their formation in 1999;

despite of their competence and power, they've always lacked cohesion and tactical unity. Still, the Firestarters are a threat to anyone who treats them lightly.

They also hire themselves as expensive mercenaries, although the market for a supervillain mercenary team has been undercut recently by the success of the Psionic Seven, and the Firestarters have found themselves low on cash lately. The members of the team had enjoyed a lavish lifestyle until recently. This decline has increased dissension within the team.

Dissenter has become obsessed with what he regards as the slipshod approach to thinking on Internet posting, and has tracked down and murdered individuals that he believes have shown themselves unworthy of publishing their ideas in a public forum. This included two teenage boys, which outraged just about everyone. The Firestarters' days are numbered.

The members are:

Dissenter, a Chemistry Gestalt, is a former college science professor. He's one of the most arrogant and self-righteous villains you'll ever meet; he really believes the Firestarters are doing a world a favor by culling the worst of the human herd.

Apparition was once a normal girl — a good job, engaged to be married to someone she loved — until the Blood Red King appeared and turned her into a living ghost, surrounded by an aura of fear. Apparition is a subdued young woman, except for periodic bouts of anger when she lashes out at the world with her ghostly abilities.

Crimson Commander began his criminal career as a member of a South-Central Los Angeles street gang, and forced his way into the leadership role. Crimson Commander sold out his gang when he received a good money offer from Dissenter. Crimson Commander is the most powerful member of the team, with superhuman strength augmenting the ability to project deadly flaming bolts. He hates Dissenter and is scheming to replace him (Dissenter is fully aware of his treacherous ambitions).

Flayer is a serial killer's daughter who saw her father gunned down by government agents. The trauma led to her becoming a Gestalt of Murder who specializes in the whip. She has no interest in Dissenter's agenda of social "reform", but as long as she gets to hear people scream in pain, she doesn't care. She is tired of what she sees as the Firestarters' losing record, and plans to abandon the team soon. Flayer has some secret connections with the Tyranny League.

Gordion is a former Hollywood special effects man whose love of bloody effects work led him to emulate real horror-movie serial killers. Gordion manipulates force fields, shaping into a huge force field ax that can chop through nearly anything (as well as reflect incoming attacks back at their originator). Gordion is wanted for nearly a dozen homicides.

Wormwood is another chain Gestalt creation of the Blood Red King. A deformed, pitiable, barely intelligent monster, Wormwood is a former San Francisco museum curator whose touch withers anything he contacts, and whose body issues a highly nause-

The Firestarters Revealed!

The GM can find game stats for this villain team in this book, starting on page 240.

ating stench.

GARROTE

The “poor man’s Cygnus”, this Gestalt of Strangers is a frequently employed mercenary villain, a brutal man who gets an adrenaline rush (and a boost in his powers) when he’s strangling people. *Garrote* was originally a Chicago hitman (clashing with Golden Serpent and the Longshoreman on several occasions) but now works on a national scale.

Garrote works for anyone and prefers assassination missions.

THE LEOPARD

One of the most capable speedsters in the world is *the Leopard*, a female cat burglar. The Leopard died during a heist in 1994, but was resurrected by the Blood Red King in 2002, and is terrified that she’s going to end up becoming one of the King’s pawns. She’ll flee any situation that remotely looks like the King is involved. Some have accused the Leopard of being the Gestalt of Whining, since she tends to break out into tears and complain about being persecuted at the slightest opportunity. Other people have pointed out that if you owed your life to the Blood Red King, you’d be whimpering too.

The Leopard still performs robberies, mostly jewelry store heists. The Leopard is definitely no killer, and might even be reformed – provided that the heroes can put up with her bawling. She is willing to work with others but she prefers to avoid murderers and extremely violent teammates.

MALIGNO

The Gestalt of Petty Malice, *Maligno* the Magnificent is an Imp Gestalt. He spends most of his time invisible, using his mind control on individuals to set up “interesting” situations, then tittering gleefully at the results. Situations that Maligno considers “interesting” include spiking water coolers with hallucinogenic drugs, having firefighters use hoses to have a water fight with each other (while leaving a burning blaze unattended), or forcing people to say what they really think of each other at a social function.

Where Maligno really shines, however, is in his dealings with supervillains. Maligno likes to do people... favors. His favorite favor is to take a relatively weak or discredited villain, such as the Osprey and give their powers an unexpected boost so they’re one of the most powerful villains on Earth. Maligno’s favors always have a price, usually something that will embarrass or humiliate the person receiving the favor, or create a great deal of chaos.

Maligno hates physical confrontations, so he does his best to make sure someone else is around to do his dirty work for him.

THE MEASURER

The Gestalt of Arch-Nerds, Tommy Spiegelhaven was a high school science student for whom no detail was unimportant. In 1989, during the First Gestalt Wave, he acquired superhuman measuring abilities. This was a godsend to Tommy, who put on a costume and called himself *the Measurer*. Tommy now had the ability to indulge his measuring fetish, to satisfy any question that captured his attention.

The Measurer’s powers involve detecting the properties of objects. His main offensive punch is his agents, the Measuring Sticks. These handpicked men are given a precisely calculated training and nutritional regimen that the Measurer has determined will transform them into peak humans, making them far more capable than most agents. Unfortunately for the Measuring Sticks, their costumes are ludicrous bodysuits with a measurement theme that constantly display data on a readout on their shoulder (weight, heartbeat, blood pressure, respiration, body temperature, brainwave fluctuations). Worse, the Measurer insists on taking more detailed measurements of each agent at least three times per day. Those Measuring Sticks who leave the Measurer’s care decrease sharply in ability, which makes Gestalt experts suspect the improved abilities are actually a variety of chain gestalt who depend on the Measurer’s regimen to maintain it.

The Measurer’s crimes always involve his fascination with measurements, except in 1999 when he fell in love with supermodel Karla Larocca. He decided to measure how long it would take for Karla to fall in love with him. Unfortunately, the Measurer filled her with loathing and she violently spurned his affections. Despairing, the Measurer decided to get precise data on the temperature of a fusion bomb’s detonation at ground zero, but his Measuring Sticks betrayed him to Kinestar and Cosmic Man before he could detonate the bomb in the center of New York City (Kinestar actually felt sorry for him). The Measurer has since gotten over his lost love, but some bitterness remains.

However, the Measurer has also performed some public services. He’s worked with heroes and scientists in instances when something absolutely had to be measured correctly. He earned a pardon when he measured superhuman performance for the US government at the most recent Copenhagen tournament, gathering data and analyzing the competition. This has not been very reassuring to the Gestalt community.

Most long-term Gestalts experience some evolution in personality, but the Measurer is still as anal-retentive as he was in 1989. Many joke that the one thing he can’t measure is his own capacity to annoy people (especially at movies, which he analyzes for bad science and plot holes—which he’ll loudly critique to anyone within listening distance).

The Malignancy Begins!

The GM can find game stats for this villain in this book, starting on page 265.

MORDRED

Mordred is a supervillain who claims to be King Arthur's bastard son (no other members of the Arthurian milieu have appeared yet in Gestalt). Mordred works as a mercenary while he slowly puts together his own criminal organization (he intends to conquer a small Central or South American nation and work his way from there). Mordred is a thoroughly modernized Dark Ages black knight; he uses modern speech without archaisms, although he's demonstrated that he's fluent in Old Anglo-Saxon and Old French as well as modern English.

Mordred uses modern military weapons almost exclusively. He only uses a sword when he thinks he can dispatch his enemies with a single stroke. Mordred will work for anyone but tends to cherry pick his assignments toward those that are likely to help him make criminal connections.

Mordred has also threatened to form "The Pernicious League", a team composed of Gestalt recreations of the vilest blackguards from history and literature. While most people consider this to be a joke, Mordred recently met in Prague with several villains who fit this description: Circe, Ravanna, a previously unknown Gestalt who "looked a lot like pictures of Attila the Hun", and an angry and insistent British gentleman who said that he came from a place called "Porlock".

THE NIGHT HUNTSMAN

The Blood Red King's most infamous creation — *the Night Huntsman* is a hematologist turned vampire. He's one of the few BRK offspring who wanted to become a monster. The Night Huntsman broke free of his creator's control and became an independent villain several years ago. His agenda is the creation of the Vampire Nation, a large, unstoppable army of undead, with himself as its King, a nation that not only uses its abilities to take what it wants but will infiltrate the highest positions of American power: political, economic, social, and intellectual.

The Night Huntsman was created in early 1997 by the Blood Red King and spent many of his early years traveling around America, creating vampires. A few of these vampires (most notably Chicago's Harvester and Boston's Old Carver) went on to establish their own grisly reputations before they were forcibly "retired" by Pastor Brown, who has made stopping vampires into his life's work. Naturally, the destruction of the Pastor is one of his highest priorities.

The Night Huntsman's powers are those of the traditional vampire, except he can't assume an animal form, and lacks some of the weaknesses of the popular vampire mythology. He assumes a charming guise, but it's a facade that covers the fact that he'd gladly rip out a person's throat if they drop their guard.

The Night Huntsman's chatelaine is the Lamia, formerly Columbia's Happiness Gestalt Utopia. She had been transformed into the Lamia by the Blood Red King but chose to align herself with the more human Night Huntsman.

The Night Huntsman prefers to live in rich surroundings, rather than hide in sewers. He has major bases of operation in Boston, San Francisco, and New Orleans, and minor bases elsewhere. He likes to be accompanied by the Lamia and at least two vampire bodyguards at all times. He doesn't like the idea of the Lamia being harmed, in part because he's fond of her company, and in part because she's a prize that he wrested from his "father's" grasp. Night Huntsman hates the Blood Red King more than anything and will interfere in his plans whenever possible.

THE PRODIGAL

The Prodigal is the Gestalt of Patricide. He's an assassin with a death touch that's greatly amplified against someone who's a father. He particularly enjoys killing fathers in the presence of their children, especially if the fathers or sons are famous. The Prodigal allows people to employ his services for a small fee. Although the money isn't important to him, having friends who will employ him makes it easier for the Prodigal to do his "job".

The Prodigal will take any assignment that involves murder (preferring to murder a father, of course) His most infamous assassination attempt was against Titan's dad in 2003, a murder foiled by the Hollywood Knights.

THE QUESTIONER

Life is a series of questions without answers. *The Questioner* has a burning need to discover the answer to anything that bothers him. The Questioner is part Diogenes, part schizophrenic. He wanders the Earth seeking truth, issuing a continuous stream-of-consciousness monologue, asking any question that comes to mind and only questions. Being with the Questioner is like being in the company of an inquisitive five-year-old and George Carlin on amphetamines.

The Questioner is a good hand-to-hand fighter and athlete, perhaps because searching for the truth can be dangerous. He can find a weak spot on nearly anyone, provided that they fail (or refuse to answer) one of the Questioner's questions.

He might have become a hero (albeit a strange one), but after he was committed to a mental hospital, he decided that he could get more questions answered if he joined the antisocial factions of the world. The Questioner hires out his combat capabilities to anyone, provided they can answer three questions. Most people don't particularly have the Questioner at the top of their list of desired hirelings, but his abilities can be impressive and superheroes find him very annoying to deal with.

The Questioner is an enemy of the Journeyman, as one of the questions that bothers him is whether he can commit a crime that the Journeyman can't solve. Thus far, the answer is no.

Q&A

The GM can find game stats for the Questioner on page 269.

Listen to the Thunder

The GM can find game stats for Rick Thunder on page 271.

RICK THUNDER

Rick Callaghan is a wild teenager. Originally from San Antonio, Rick gained gestalt powers, had a long series of arguments with his parents, and became a supervillain because it would embarrass them. Rick Thunder, his “professional name”, is a mercenary Thunder Gestalt who’s very active in Texas. He’s been a thorn in the side of teen hero Dynamo Jack, and he and Endeavor (one of Texas’s mainstay superheroes have tangled on three occasions, with Endeavor beating him each time. Incarceration has only hardened his criminal tendencies. Rick’s becoming more vicious every time he puts on the costume.

Rick’s a rebellious gestalt who doesn’t handle orders well, so he likes to work alone. His specialty is immobilizing large numbers of guards with huge lightning bolts. Rick’s something of a slacker and has flaked on a few assignments, and lately he’s finding it hard to find work because of this reputation.

STARFINDER

Starfinder is the self-proclaimed “world’s greatest discoverer”—his discoveries invariably involve robberies and the plunder of treasures. Starfinder is offended when he’s called a “thief” (he just “finds” things!) Starfinder was one of the world’s first super-criminals and is still one of the most famous.

Starfinder has no use for combat but he enjoys the chase. He puts together crimes with “motifs” in the hope that a superhero will figure out what he’s doing and hunt him down. His first crime spree involved the theft of precious gems with the name “Star”, from which he derives his name.

Starfinder loves being the fox, the thrill of pursuit, the physical and mental challenges it provides, and humiliating his pursuers. He is a tactical genius with a gift for elaborate preparations and using his teleportation abilities to lure heroes into booby traps. The only thing that Starfinder doesn’t enjoy about the hunt is when the hounds catch him.

Starfinder is a poster boy for a gestalt who’s driven by his obsessions. A known manic-depressive, he’s obsessive when he’s planning his crimes and finds true joy only in the middle of a heist. Whenever he’s been captured, Starfinder becomes an emotional wreck for a few months, unable or unwilling to do much of anything until the funk wears off.

Starfinder does work as a freelance thief. On these occasions, Starfinder charges an exorbitant fee and never works with others. The sole exception is Starfinder’s apprentice, a masked teenage girl nicknamed “Robber” who can become insubstantial at will. Robber’s abilities are unusual because even supervillain containment technology can’t restrain her; she’s the only known person who’s able to violate the containment fields of a Refrigerator.

Starfinder-like Villains: A number of villains have garnered acclaim as “Starfinder-like” by committing stylish theft crimes that rarely threaten innocent bystanders or cause property damage: Lau-

“So,” the psychiatrist said, carefully taking notes. “You want to be a gestalt?”

The patient, an uncertain looking man with a haunted face in the mid-40s – haunted either from bouts of drug use or years of perennial anxiety, the doctor couldn’t determine which yet – shifted uncomfortably in the chair. “I think I’m a candidate, don’t you?”

“Go on...” the psychiatrist said, his usual mantra for when a patient asked him a question.

“I know I’m a little lumpy, but I think I’d look okay in one of those costumes, don’t you? After a month or so in the gym? Maybe with one of those Abtronic machines like they advertise on television? You’ve seen the ads, right?”

“Go on...” the psychiatrist said

“I think it would be cool to be a gestalt, don’t you?” the patient asked.

“Go...” the doctor said, and then he stopped himself short. He dropped his pen and his notebook onto the floor, kicked it, and began to laugh.

“Are you okay, Doc?” the patient asked.

The laughter abruptly ended. The doctor rose from his chair and, with hands firmly clasped behind his back, he asked the patient in a low, panther-like growl, “What is the meaning of life?”

“I beg your —?” the patient replied, but as soon as he said it, a lump formed in the back of his throat, and like some unbidden thing compelled by the look in the doctor’s eyes, an answer regurgitated out of his mouth. “I don’t know,” he said.

“That’s not an answer,” the doctor replied. There was a strange, intense look in his eyes, a maleficent glare; he was giving the mysteries of the universe an Evil Eye and the patient just happened to be caught in the middle.

“I don’t know!” the patient declared, almost in tears.

“You stupid little moron, don’t you know anything? Why do you prattle on about nothing, when the universe is so full of mystery? Tell me! The meaning of life! What is it?”

“I... don’t... know!” the patient screamed. Thought had become breath— and it was impossible to think or breathe. He tried to answer. He tried to find a piece of his brain that would in some way satisfy the Question, only to realize that any answer he’d give would be glib or stupid and provoke more of the doctor’s anger.

The patient screamed incoherently and passed out.

The doctor coolly and dispassionately observed his patient for a minute. The receptionist came into the room, panicked, and phoned for an ambulance.

Lying there, silent and still (except for the occasional twitch), the patient’s stare seemed like a more effective answer to the question than anything he could have said. How we live our lives is far more powerful than the words we say, the psychiatrist thought, and he turned to his receptionist.

“Why are people so stupid?” he asked.

“I dunno, they just are,” the receptionist replied casually. Then she saw a look in her boss’s eye that she had never seen before—as if that answer was completely unsatisfactory and the question was the most important thing in the world.

“Tell me,” the doctor again insisted. ...

-- The Origin of the Questioner

reate, the Grand Poet of Crime, is a world-traveling thief who leaves poetic clues prior to his crimes (as a Poetry Gestalt, his poems are very good; a collection of these clues called *1001 Crimes* recently topped the *New York Times* Best Seller List). *The Puppet Show* are a pair of Punch and Judy dolls with telekinetic powers that commit mayhem on each other while robbing banks, jewelry stores, and gala gatherings blind. More malignant is *Avarice*, a Greed Gestalt who can absorb greedy people and integrate them into a colony creature. As more people are added, *Avarice* builds its strength to superhuman levels, eventually becoming strong enough to commit a major robbery. Once the job is complete, *Avarice* spits out the people it used in the robbery and divides the loot between them.

AMERICA'S FINEST

There are many superheroes in the world (which is a very good thing, given the number of supervillains) and sometimes they're even available to help other supers. Most remain active at a local level but some superheroes have a larger scope.

Noteworthy American ones include:



AMERICA MAN

The first superhero, the ultimate American, *America Man* was a proud and courageous fighter who could connect with the heart of even the most hardened and cynical

American with a glance. Yes, they called him an idealist, a boy scout and they snickered behind his back. But if their scorn ever caused him any grief, it never showed either on his face or in the impossible straightness with which he always carried himself. Only evil aggrieved him, only the sight of his country in pain, and that's what eventually matured (and darkened) his extraordinary good nature.

During his heyday, between 1989 and 1993 *America Man* was the premier superhero on the planet. Some even called all gestalts "America Men". He fought evil without question or hesitation, be it powerful villains like the Anti-American, opportunistic mercenaries like *Golden Gladiator*, or abominations like the *Blood Red King*. He was a sight to behold.

He declined membership in *Columbia* on numerous occasions and to this day it's widely believed that one of the deepest animosities in the Gestalt world lies between *America Man* and *Liberator*, the two preeminent symbols of American superheroism: the idealist and the pragmatist.

"My goal is to understand and appreciate this great country," *America Man* often said. "And to carry the torch of American inspiration as long as my fingers can hold it."

Yes, he often came across as naïve (if not bumbling) but few Americans could ever find it in their hearts to criticize him. Many non-Americans, however, held him in contempt as "the man who started the whole Gestalt mess in the first place".

The torch fell out of *America Man*'s hand in 1995, at the end of the Red August incident, when the great American champion said good-bye to his country. He has not been seen since.

"HELP"
DOES NOT MEAN
"SMOTHER"

For advice on
handling NPC
heroes, see
page 191.

THE AMERICAN TASK FORCE

Government
agencies have been
trying to put together
teams of gestalts to

serve as law enforcement, investigators, and security personnel.

Founded in 1996, the American Task Force is the superhuman enforcement arm of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. (They also get loaned out to the FBI.)

The team has attracted a lot of attention, although they've been undercut by the desertion of one of its members, and are secretly being manipulated by their coordinator *Eric Weiss* (aka the Magician). The ATF does a lot of good work but part of their mandate is to spy on superheroes and gather information for *Operation Strongbox*. They've also acquired a reputation (among villains) for being untrue to their word; the *Deregulators* hate them on both a personal and professional level.

Their members include:

American Avenger is a young patriotic strongman who can manipulate force fields. *American Avenger*'s father was an ATF agent who was killed by the *Moonshine Gestalt White Lightning*. This cemented his desire to get involved with the ATF and hunt Gestalts. *Avenger* is relaxed and affable (if perhaps a little bit too much of a "good ol' boy") out of costume but is extremely driven in the field, to the point of recklessness.

Big Red, a likeable firefighter Gestalt, is only an occasional member of the team, spending much of his time working for the FBI as a fire investigator. *Red* has a reputation as a "Boy Scout", which is an anomaly among the pragmatic members of the Task Force.

Chunin, the Gestalt of the journeyman ninja, also known as *Atemi*. *Chunin* is a pure gestalt who thinks of himself as a government employee and will do whatever his employer requests. His ultimate goal is to slay *Daimyo*, the *Tyranny League*'s ninja, and take his place as a *jonin*, or master ninja.

Gunslinger is a *Gunslinger Gestalt* with a Western motif. Able to summon any gun that he's ever seen (including fictional ones), *Gunslinger* is an amnesiac DEA agent who was nearly killed by New Jersey-based *Scarpachi* crime syndicate. Understand-



Who Are These Guys?

As mentioned in the credits, the ATF were PCs. An essay on how this campaign was organized can be found on page 296.

ably, he has a personal vendetta against underworld crime figures of all shapes and persuasions.

Speedstar is a teenage speedster who is the newest member of the ATF, becoming a full member after a year's apprenticeship. Speedstar is a spokesman for Mountain Dew and a rival with Shiva of the Hot Gods.

Wild Card, a self-absorbed Luck Gestalt, is a former stuntman whose alcoholism nearly killed him prior to receiving his powers. Wild Card is a former friend of Jim Goddard, the Stuntman of the Hollywood Knights, who married (and later divorced) Wild Card's ex-wife. Wild Card throws playing cards with deadly effect, and can use them to discern glimpses of the future.

Former members include:

Shifty was a pure gestalt shapechanger, who (despite being a Conformity Gestalt) was given to frequently mocking his teammates. Shifty was "an emotional sponge" when exposed to other people's strong emotional displays and left the team to receive psychological training to deal with the problem.

Superego is a Gestalt of Control Freaks who became obsessed with finding an answer to "the Gestalt problem" after most of the people in his hometown were killed by exposure to the Red Plague. Superego abandoned the team soon after its inception, causing a major scandal. Superego's present whereabouts is unknown; it's believed he's setting up an operation as a solo villain.

AMNESTY

A pure gestalt with a worldwide sphere of influence, *Amnesty* is a Guilt Gestalt who specializes in punishing human rights violators. Her powers include teleportation, intangibility, and psionics that can only be used against those guilty of atrocities. Amnesty is an unrepentant thorn in the side of government. Some American conservatives consider her to be a villain, if only for her unrepentant liberalism.

THE BOY SCOUT

The Boy Scout first appeared in the 1994 Gestalt Wave and has sometimes been called the "purest of the pure Gestalts". Like his namesake, he is dependable, trustworthy, and resourceful — and unwavering in his desire to help people. The Boy Scout appears to be a ten-year-old member of that organization, wearing traditional American scout garb covered in merit badges. There are few limitations to any of the Boy Scout's powers, provided he works in a field where he has the right merit badge.

The Boy Scout appears out of nowhere to aid people through life's smaller inconveniences. He won't show up to oppose the Tyranny League but he does show up when you've lost your dog or you've locked yourself out of your car or you can't get the barbecue started because you used an inferior brand of charcoal. However, when the Boy Scout helps

you, there's a little known side effect: you turn into a "good citizen" — a person with Boy Scout-like personality — for 48 hours.

The Boy Scout has been known to get into a scrap or two, usually when he tries to lecture teenage criminals about the errors of their ways. He has no known enemies, but the Blood Red King would like to see him (and all other symbols of virtue) dead or corrupted.

The Boy Scout is a friend of Baltimore's Anti-Crime Squad team of teenage superheroes and the Hollywood Knights.

COLUMBIA

When people think about superhero teams, they think about Columbia. With the exception of India's Garuda and the USMC Vanguard, no superhero team has lasted as long as the "eagle-clad protectors of liberty". Columbia was formed in late 1990 by Liberator, Reactor, and Thrillseeker to fight the major gestalt menaces of their day. Ever since Columbia has ridden a roller coaster of triumph, scandal, and tragedy. Up-and-coming superheroes try to emulate them. Up-and-coming supervillains want to kill them — a good fight against Columbia can legitimize a villain team, though it usually leads to incarceration.

Columbia is based in Washington DC. They are corporately, not governmentally, sponsored and receive most of its funding from merchandising and other marketing schemes.

The current membership of the team is:

Liberator is the Gestalt of the American Way (or at least its status quo). Known for his courage, dedication, and ability, he is also known for his manipulations, callous attitudes, and ruthlessness. Liberator will do anything to protect the American status quo, regardless of legal or ethical concerns. He runs Columbia as its own little potentate when he thinks it's needed (especially in the private incarceration of villains). For these and other reasons, Liberator is highly respected — and greatly despised. He has superhuman agility and fighting skills.

Carnival is an exuberant young woman. Once a street kid, she turned her life around and is now a flamboyant energy controller, a Light Gestalt, and a well-known supermodel. She has the reputation of a likeable bimbo but those who know her well have a higher opinion of her intellect. Carnival does a lot of charity work but keeps most of it behind the scenes.

Edge is sometimes comes across as Liberator's polar opposite; he's personable and laid back. Notorious for his practical jokes and for trying to unsettle his opponents with verbal barbs, Edge is a Gestalt of Determination. When he fails in an attack, he digs down deeper and become tougher and more skilled until he succeeds. Edge has superhuman strength which he uses with masterful precision. Extremely handsome and charismatic, Edge's smarmy charm makes him very popular with the media. Behind closed doors, Columbia's powerhouse is moody but

hides it as best as he can.

Kid Mercury is an abrasive physician with superhuman speed. He is the oldest person in Columbia (in spite of the “kid” moniker) and the least mature. Kid Mercury joined Columbia in 1995 but quit the team less than a year later. While away from the team he developed a drinking problem, which Liberator used to blackmail him into rejoining. Mercury is a reluctant member who hates Liberator’s guts with a passion.

Labyrinth is the Gestalt of Secrets. She’s widely considered the most powerful psionic in the world, and certainly the most famous. Labyrinth lives to discover people’s secrets, which makes most people very uncomfortable around her. Labyrinth was one of the original generation of pure Gestalts, but did not join Columbia until 1992—and never publicly explained her reasons for joining. Although some believe she has her own agenda, Labyrinth is as dedicated to Columbia – and the public good – as any member of the team. She’s also the implacable enemy of Influence and anyone else who abuses psionic abilities for personal gain.

Starbird is the most contentious of all the members of Columbia, an Anger Gestalt who can channel her rage to become an exceptional flyer and a powerful and versatile energy controller. She’s also the sister of the deceased activist Gestalt Freebird, who died when he was used as a human shield during the Gulf War. Starbird harbors very strong political beliefs, and has never been afraid to speak them, much to Liberator’s annoyance.

Former members of the team include:

Bombard was the stalwart master of energy and pyrotechnics. Always something of a loner, he was a member of the team for two years between 1995–1996, but being a superhero took its toll on his personal life, and he resigned after his wife filed for divorce. When Bombard failed to resolve his marital problems, he asked to rejoin the team, but Liberator rejected the request. Bombard committed suicide later that night.

Dr. Zenith. Female scientist with psionic powers who was an early member of Columbia; Dr. Zenith was dismissed from the team in 1994 after the death of her parents from lung cancer led to an obsession against the tobacco industry. Cygnus murdered Dr. Zenith in 1995.

Reactor. A quiet, studious young man, Reactor was a respected electronics expert and a charter member. Reactor always avoided the limelight, but within the ranks, he was the most liked member of the team. His death in 2000 at the hands of the Tyranny League

was a major blow to morale, especially to Columbia’s support staff, all of who considered him to be a close friend.

Rex, Gestalt of Adventure, was a superb martial artist and acrobat. Well known for his flamboyant and jovial nature, Rex’s arrival on the team in 1995 was a major media sensation. His popularity continued to climb until his tragic death in 2000 at the hands of

the Tyranny League. He and Reactor were extremely close friends.

Thrillseeker, a testosterone-driven martial artist, was a charter member of Columbia but he viewed the team as a convenient tool for his personal goals rather than something that he really belonged to and cared about. Thrillseeker was a pure gestalt who vanished in 1998 while looking for Dr. Power’s Northern Ontario base.

Utopia, Gestalt of Happiness, was a cheery, delightful young woman with psionic powers who joined Columbia in 1995. Tragically, she was transformed into a monstrous supervillain, the Lamia, by the Blood Red King. The team has unsuccessfully tried to track her down and change her back ever since. The Lamia is now a partner of the Night Huntsman.

Blossom (see Metro U.S.A., Miami) and *Kinestar* were both members for short periods of time.

THE FIRST NATION

Arizona is the home base for North America’s premier Native American superhero team, the First Nation. The First Nation is an amalgamation of superhuman Native Americans from across the continent who protect aboriginal peoples and intervene in disputes where it looks like they’re being bullied by the establishment. As a result, they’re not exactly popular, though they’ve never broken any laws. The exact roster is unknown and the team rotates its leadership. Those known to the general public include:

Hiawatha is a man who claims to be the Native American hero reborn and who ranks among America’s toughest superheroes.

Kachina is a Pueblo shapechanger and Trickster Gestalt.

Walking Woman is a Mohawk Speedster Gestalt who’s regarded as the team’s most radical activist.

Wakinyan, a Lakota Thunderbird (he’s a Thunder Gestalt).

Jim Thorpe Jr., is the reincarnation of the legendary twentieth century athlete.

But What Are They Really Like?

The GM can find game stats for Columbia in this book, starting on page 193



THE HOLLYWOOD KNIGHTS

The premier superhero team in Los Angeles is the Hollywood Knights. Founded in 2001, it very quickly established itself as one of the finest gestalt fighting forces in the nation. Billionaire and controversial author Foster Erickson founded the team to clean up his beloved Hollywood and find a cure for AIDS, the disease that ravaged him.

Originally led by Athena, the Knights have distinguished themselves admirably. The team roster includes:

Ricochet (real name Richard O'Shea) is the self-proclaimed fastest man on land. He was once one of NASCAR's biggest stars, but the life of a superhuman offered even bigger rewards. Now he's one of Nike's leading spokesmen and also does ads for Pizza Hut and numerous other corporations. In combat, Ricochet sometimes annoys his teammates by clearing a battlefield by himself before they could enter the fray. When Athena resigned, Ricochet succeeded her as team leader.

Displacer is an apprentice superhero, a ten-year-old kid whose main ability is to be where he

doesn't appear to be and displace incoming attacks to strike other targets.



Doc Toon is the costumed identity of Robert "Doc" Cross, a colorful RPG author (he's written several supplements for Steve Jackson Games) who became a living cartoon during a Gestalt Wave. Doc is the Gestalt of Cartoon Violence. He's a cartoon version of his former self, gifted with superhuman strength and stretching abilities, accompanied

by a lot of cartoon special effects when he uses his powers. Doc is noted for not being particularly serious, and has an exceptional strong libido (which gets exhibited in a very Tex Averyesque fashion whenever a beautiful woman is around). Recently, Doc married ex-porn star Justine Lord.

Golden Angel is a recent addition to the team, an avenging angel with a powerful sword. Angel is a devout Christian but is more than willing to use lethal force against supervillains who employ the same.

Paladin is FBI Special Agent Arthur Cromwell, who was sent by the Bureau to work with the team in neutralizing the Blood Red King. Agent Cromwell (the Paladin codename is rarely used) is a Gestalt of the Action-Adventure hero; he is extremely loud,



argumentative, intensely driven, and lives a life filled with tragedy and explosions. Cromwell is noted for his independence and recklessness, and even Athena has trouble keeping him under control whenever his temper flares or his enthusiasm bubbles over.

Peacekeeper is a Gestalt Protector of Buddhism, an orange-robed pure gestalt Buddhist Saint and a martial artist of considerable skill and wisdom. Peacekeeper runs a martial arts studio in Los Angeles. His mantra is “have few desires”.

Saga! is another recent addition to the team, a powerhouse who takes “naïve” to a whole new level. He’s a pure gestalt who’s incapable of viewing the world except through the guise of a Silver Age comic book; he doesn’t understand moral concepts unless they appeared in a comic book at the height of the Comics Code. In *Saga!*’s world-view, for instance, his teammate Surfer Joe isn’t gay, he’s just a friendly guy who runs around in swimwear.

Saga! is the archenemy of Armageddo, whom he calls “Dr. Megalon” (ironically using that name seems to give Armageddo added mad scientist abilities). He views “Dr. M” as more dangerous than Dr. Power, the BRK, and the Tyranny League combined.

Stuntman is an aspiring actor and professional stuntman; like his best friend Ricochet, he loves publicity. Stuntman is one of the more independent members of the Knights, which has led him into taking a mentor’s role with Baltimore’s Anti-Crime Squad. Stuntman is the definitive tough guy, a superb fighter (having studied with Athena and Peacekeeper) who is incredibly hard to hurt. He also has the ability to make people more susceptible to physical injury. One of the most respected people on the team, Stuntman sometimes holds them together in times of crisis. He drives a modified Dodge Viper known as the Stuntmobile (which supervillains take particular delight in trashing). He’s also an unabashed Hollywood liberal.

Surfer Joe is a Gestalt of Water. He is a pure gestalt and a strange one, a promiscuous gay surfer. He works as a newspaper reporter in his spare time and does a lot of civic work in Hollywood’s gay community. His libido, however, has sometimes been manipulated to the team’s detriment. Joe’s lifestyle has also raised the ire of social conservatives on more than one occasion.

The Warder is the team’s scientist, specializing in biology (though the team relies on him for general scientific tasks) and an energy controller of extraordinary power. The Warder is one of the most independent of the Knights. He runs an extensive personal lab and crimefighting operation that he shares with the team.

The Warder is fascinated by new scientific discoveries, especially by energy forms that he’s never seen before (which he seems to encounter with alarming regularity). He has an A.I. assistant, and his friend Gunther Strauss is a leading expert in Gestalt sciences as well as an outstanding generalist.

Athena is a reincarnation of the goddess of war and wisdom. She left Greece following an altercation

with the national government over the Bosnian conflict and several controversial political statements. Athena is a brilliant tactician but has a reputation as self-serving and arrogant. She is utterly dedicated to the destruction of the Blood Red King. She was the Knights’ original leader, but last year an undisclosed incident tore the team apart and Athena chose to resign. She is now a freelance superheroine, though she remains close to her old teammates and often advises the Knights. Many expect her to rejoin the team at some point in the near future.

THE JOURNEYMAN

The premier Sleuth Gestalt in the United States, *the Journeyman* and his sidekick, *Cornelia Hemmings*, wander the United States in search of insoluble mysteries and baffling criminal cases. An expert in forensics and criminal psychology with an uncanny deductive ability; he also uses a gun that fires paralysis darts to defend himself. Cornelia is a young woman (she calls the Journeyman “uncle”) who is an uncanny marksman, can perform retrocognition when in contact with objects that have been used to commit acts of violence and can calm down extremely agitated people.

The Journeyman is not well-loved by most police departments, as he has no compunctions about walking onto a crime scene and taking control. He also attracts criminal Gestalts such as the Questioner and Starfinder, who insist on testing his abilities.

PASTOR BROWN

William Phillip Brown is one of the most famous religious figures of the Gestalt age, a Baptist minister who was almost transformed into a vampire by the Blood Red King in 1994 and who credits God for his salvation. *Pastor Brown* is a Baptist minister who hunts the monsters who were created by the King; if he can get to them within 48 hours, he can reverse their transformation, otherwise, he kills them.

Pastor Brown’s powers make him an ideal weapon against the creations of the Blood Red King, but he has few (if any) powers against conventional attackers. The King has hired “normal” Gestalts to attempt to kill the Pastor, but on each occasion, superhero protection has allowed him to survive.

Pastor Brown’s monster-hunting career caught up with him in 2001 when he was arrested for killing the Viceroy, a vampire who was serving as the leader of Los Animales. He’s currently serving a six-year sentence in a medium security facility in California, although the courts have been allowed him to use his powers to cure the King’s victims if they’re brought to him and a judge approves the transportation order.

**Athena:
The Myth
Comes To
Life!**

The GM can find game stats for Athena on page 212.



POWERJACK

"The trouble with superheroes is that they think they're better than everyone! They're pathetic!"

- Powerjack

In 1989, billionaire Jack Lombard developed incredible superhuman strength. After seeing America Man in action, he decided to design a costume, go out in public, and display his muscles and good looks to earn the acclaim of the people. Lombard was an extraordinarily insecure man, despite having nearly anything a man could want.

Powerjack became San Francisco's foremost superhero following the First Gestalt Wave. He journeyed to Los Angeles, had a "misunderstanding" with Gary Corbin (the early Los Angeles superhero known as "The Physique"), and proved his superior strength in public. *Powerjack* made appearances in New York, Washington, and Los Angeles, always giving interviews to the press, always trying to create as big a spectacle as possible. But he tried too hard, and the press soured on him.

When the Second Gestalt Wave hit, a new strongman emerged – Trevor Griffin, AKA the Titan. Lombard paid his people to lure the NASA superhero up to San Francisco so they could have another "misunderstanding". But this time, everything went horribly wrong. The Titan was much stronger than *Powerjack*, and *Powerjack's* treachery made Trevor as angry as anyone has ever seen him. *Powerjack* received the beating of his life, and required extensive reconstructive surgery on his face.

Powerjack retired soon afterward, and his media empire has often railed against gestalts who become too popular, especially the Titan. Nonetheless, he's not lost any of his powers and has vowed to help San Francisco when the city needs him most. Despite his long inactivity and obvious bitterness, most people lump him in with the good guys. They may be mistaken.

THE TITAN

These days, when people think about superheroes, they inevitably think of Trevor Griffin, aka The Titan. There are many obvious reasons: he's tall, handsome, the strongest person on the planet, flies faster than a rocket, and has an exceptional media presence.

Trevor, however, doesn't have much in the way of an active superhero career, except to help out in emergencies. He doesn't wear a costume, just blue jeans and a T-shirt. He doesn't start fights against villains — fights tend to come to the Titan. Primarily he works for NASA as a delivery system and interacts with some of the alien cultures that have recently

contacted Earth. If a villain really annoys him, he'll actively track him down, perhaps at best Titan is a part-time superhero. He'd rather fly around, help people in need and enjoy life than fight. He also has a very strong urge to leave Earth and just go out and explore space but his friends and responsibilities usually keep him planet-bound.

Currently the most popular superhero on Earth, Titan enjoys good relations with most superheroes, although his relations with Columbia are mixed. Liberator has never forgiven him for turning down membership, however Trevor and Edge both share a friendly rivalry and a love for Florida's beaches. Trevor's closest superhero friends are the Hollywood Knights, especially the Warder, who saved his father from the Prodigal.

At the United Nations' request, Trevor is also a goodwill ambassador to the Ar'Turodain. His vast abilities and fighting spirit also make him one of the prime Gestalt candidates for an Ar'Kayadin gladiatorial kidnapping operation.



THE USMC VANGUARD

The world's foremost squad of military heroes; the United States Marine Corps Vanguard is an elite gestalt unit that serves as the United States' most active military force. They're very controversial since they were the first gestalts used in military operations, and many blame them for the widespread practice of using Gestalts in military special forces worldwide.

Colonel Robert Wallace formed the Vanguard in 1989; his Rogers Project sought experimental training methods to improve the physical performance of soldiers. When one of his subjects, Corporal Jonathan Clark, acquired superhuman abilities in the First Gestalt Wave, he was ecstatic. Clark performed several covert missions, including the abduction of Panama's Manuel Noriega, but the Gulf War brought the Vanguard into the public eye. Since then, the membership has grown and they have been involved in every major American military engagement.

The Vanguard avoids Gestalt issues, concentrating on their work: they hold most of the other gestalts, heroes and villains, in contempt. Their only public appearances are at the Copenhagen superhuman fighting tournament, which they view as a training exercise. The Vanguard do not see themselves as heroes but as soldiers, and have no compunction



Behold the Power of the Titan

The GM can find game stats for Titan on page 223.

about using lethal force – lethal force is part of the job.

The current Vanguard membership is:

Captain Jonathan Clark (codename Desert Storm) is the perfect soldier, unflappable, inspiring, and smart. He has a reputation as a “cold fish” and joined the Marines out of high school after a romantic relationship went wrong (he’s still extraordinarily bitter about it). His reputation for guardedness is well-deserved, as only a handful of people has ever gotten close to him on a personal level.

SSgt. Randolph Adams (codename Mine-sweeper) is the USMC Vanguard’s second member, a powerhouse Toughness Gestalt who can create walls of protective force and toughen his teammates’ bodies against attack. Adams (known to his friends as “Sarge”) is probably the most likeable member of the team. He’s also the first famous African-American gestalt, but has never been comfortable as a racial role model.

Sgt. Thomas Powell (codename Sawbones) is a combat medic with force field projection abilities. In his early years with the team, Powell was a rebellious recruit with a lot of attitude but has mellowed considerably. He’s still the hardest partier of the team and a compulsive womanizer.

Sgt. Christopher Bowman (codename Superbat) is even more intense than Jonathan Clark. Despite being born blind, Christopher was a champion athlete in high school. When the Second Gestalt Wave hit, Bowman’s attempts to compensate for his blindness led to the development of superhuman abilities. Among his many other talents, Christopher is a third degree black belt in karate.

Cpl. Rukvinder (Rick) Singh (codename Snafu). Rick has the blood of Sikh warriors in his veins, and he’s proud of it. Rick is liked by the group but has never quite connected with them; he’s an outsider who socializes more with attached non-gestalt soldiers than his teammates. He’s an avid historian and one

of the few people on the Vanguard team with whom Clark shares common interests. Rick is a Mechanics Gestalt who can sense and neutralize machinery.

Cpl. Bryon Williams (codename Yankee) is the motormouth of the Vanguard, a young man who loves to explore new lands and learn about other cultures. Williams is the son of Boston blue bloods but joined the Marines to avoid family politics after his parents died. Williams is the one member of the team who likes to socialize with other gestalts, but because of his military service and his telepathic abilities, supers don’t trust him. Williams is a Language Gestalt and a decent amateur psychologist even without his powers.

LCpl. Donnie Picardo (codename Gambler) is one of the team’s most recent arrivals. He’s become their good luck charm; friends within thirty meters of Donnie have a drastically reduced chance to be hit by an enemy attack. Donnie, however, is the most vulnerable member of the squad in a firefight and Clark worries that he’s going to be killed in their next major operation. Donnie is a young Texas Latino who mixes bluster with naiveté and is treated like the team mascot.

Pvt. Simon Morgan (codename Dirt, or more commonly Dirty Bastard) is a Stealth Gestalt and the Vanguard’s most recent recruit. It hasn’t worked out for the best. Simon combines the rebel attitude that Tom Powell displayed in the old days, combining a sneakiness with an underhandedness that Clark can barely stand. Morgan’s an exceptional (though highly unorthodox) hand to hand fighter. His Gestalt allows him to dig tunnels, turn himself invisible or become intangible. Morgan likes to antagonize people, especially Clark — and is heading for a major showdown with his commander.

Other people have belonged to the team but three names stand out above the rest:

Pvt. Manny O’Connor (posthumous codename Pit Bull) was a reckless young Gestalt who died in

GREAT BATTLES IN SUPERHUMAN HISTORY!

USMC VANGUARD VS. THE DOOMSMEN
SEPTEMBER 9, 2004, CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA

Two superhero teams had always stood out above the rest: Columbia and the USMC Vanguard. The Vanguard had always sat out of the typical superhero/supervillain wars, but occasionally, the fight would be taken to them.

The Doomsmen, a group of supervillains in the garb of traditional comic book villains (adding copyright violations to their other crimes) decided that beating the Vanguard would cement their reputation, so they planned an assault on the Vanguard during their training in Camp Pendleton.

The result was a massacre – of the Doomsmen. The villains tripped an alarm early and were softened by ordinary soldiers with heavy weapons before the Vanguard even arrived on the scene. Once the Vanguard showed up, they were cut to pieces with heavy weapons. One Doomsman attempted to fly away; he was shot and killed by cannonfire from an Apache helicopter.

It’s unlikely that novice supervillains will attempt to make a name for themselves by taking on the Vanguard at their home base, at least at any time in the near future.

the Gulf War, becoming the Vanguard's first fatality. O'Connor was not well known to his squad-mates at the time. Before every major operation, Clark leads the unit in prayer and always ends with "Remember Manny, Amen". O'Connor has become a symbol of both courage and caution to the squad.

Pvt. Jack Churchill (codename Royal) was an excellent soldier and an expert martial artist who could intercept and automatically decode any radio transmission. Jack died in a recent terrorist attack committed by Damm Al'Islam against the Vanguard.

Staff Sgt. Phillip Torrance (codename Honor) was a Courage Gestalt who radiated an aura of confidence, which made him the ideal soldier to lead a charge. Torrance is a likeable man with a great sense of humor, and he and Clark are close friends. However, Torrance was also a homosexual. In 1998, he chose to come out of the closet and was dismissed from the Vanguard over Clark's objections. Torrance now lives in San Francisco, where he was recently diagnosed as HIV-Positive.

The Three Seminal Events in the life of a Costumed Vigilante
(First attributed to Bronco the Urban Cowboy)

1. The first time they lose a fight.
2. The first time they bleed.
3. The first time they permanently injure or kill someone.

intrusion; it's actively trying to recruit a team of local defenders to bolster its defenses against attack.

Atlanta is probably most famous as the home of Arthur Cromwell, the FBI special agent who became an extremely controversial member of the Hollywood Knights (and had been known to return

to his old stomping grounds). its other active Gestalt is hardly less divisive: *Rising Flame*, a Fire Gestalt who is more of a vigilante than a superhero, given his tendency to give criminals second and third degree burns. Rising Flame is a young African-American male who has a big chip on his shoulder about people who victimize the poor. He's also a detective who specializes in tracking down scam artists.

Clipper was a well-respected flying hero who first appeared in 1994. He was a Good Samaritan Gestalt who patrolled the city and helped people in distress. Clipper was killed by the Tyranny League during their January

2006 attack.

Since the Clipper incident, most of Atlanta's supervillains went underground or were arrested in one of the largest criminal crackdowns in U.S. history. Among gestalts there are rumors of a man who calls himself *Overking* who's linked with Overcorp (see page 75). *The Klansman*, a Strongman Gestalt villain associated with the KKK, has also made several appearances in the Atlanta area, although since the Tyranny League came to town, he's been unwelcome even among Klan supporters.

METRO U.S.A.

There are numerous cities on Gestalt-Earth, and many of them (particularly in the United States) have at least one gestalt defender. Many local heroes provide assistance to visiting PCs, although some of them are very protective of their territory.

Heroes in this section could "poach" on territory claimed by PCs; the GM should make adjustments. If the PCs are based, for example, in Seattle, the GM can rule that the Challengers (the city's official team) either do not exist and never have existed, did exist but disbanded some time ago, exist in a different city (Las Vegas Challengers) or exist in the campaign city and are our heroes' rivals.

Local heroes usually don't deal with the same level of threat as national heroes. Many are sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce or local businesses and work with the police as deputies. Some communities have found local heroes more trouble than they're worth. There have been more than a few scandals that were caused when an overeager gestalt beat a criminal to death on their first outing as a super, however many of the ones who survive "the three seminal events of the costumed vigilante" have managed to successfully blend into the local mosaic and rank among the city's most respected citizens.

ATLANTA

Atlanta was recently the site of wide-scale devastation caused by the Tyranny League's attack on Project Capricorn, the US Army battlesuit program. As a result, Atlanta's very sensitive to Gestalt

BALTIMORE

Baltimore's most famous defender, White Lark, is a carefree flying woman who spends more time flying through the city and showing off her aerobatic skills than fighting crime. She is a brown belt in Tae Kwan Do and able to duplicate herself into four forms. She's also a champion glider ball player (see Athletics, page 184).

Baltimore is also the home of one of the world's youngest gestalt groups, the *Anti-Crime Squad*. This team of gestalts-in-training has attracted prominent sponsors and patrons, most notably Stuntman of the Hollywood Knights. The goal of the Anti-Crime Squad is to wipe out criminal activity in Maryland and Washington DC; they have dreams of growing up to be the world's finest superhero team.

Their members are:

The Coordinator is a nerdy teenage boy who uses a "crime detector" (a special computer program that he runs on his PC to detect future crimes). The Coordinator has no combat ability and does not get involved in field operations.

Gale is a spunky teenage girl with wind powers and the team's field commander. Though she's a very

bossy young lady, Gale has good combat instincts.

Steam is a hot-tempered Latino boy who can project scalding puffs of steam and who tends to be oversensitive to criticism.

Pirouette is a teenaged Ballerina Gestalt, a petite, quiet girl with superspeed. She has a crush on the Stuntman.

Pygmalion, a shy but determined teenage boy who can craft stone duplicates of anyone he sees, has limited control over his duplicates.

BOSTON

Boston has no formal team of superheroes, but there are three local costumed gestalts who occasionally band together to fight the forces of darkness when they appear in the city.

The oldest Boston-based superhero is *Xenon*, a flier in a NASA astronaut suit. Xenon is a Darkness Gestalt who enshrouds criminals in a pitch-black field ("the darkness of space") that drives them catatonic. Xenon has been captured twice, but each time the suit has been opened, there's been nothing inside even though Xenon has never shown signs of having teleportation powers.

The most decorated Bostonian Gestalt is *Argent*, Mitchell Grace. Mitchell is a fourth-generation Boston policeman and a Local Protector Gestalt. Grace is a model policeman, and crime rates have declined drastically on his beat—those who attempt to commit crimes in his territory become extraordinarily unlucky.

The newest of Boston's superheroes is *The Lighthouse*, a Navigation Gestalt who can compel people to follow him, he also uses lights, flash grenades, and a rifle armed with knockout darts to perform more traditional superheroics.

Boston's most prominent local villain is *The Spectator*, a psionic troublemaker who enjoys causing dissent and chaos, especially among the socially uptight. Other Boston villains: *The Bachelor*, a Kidnapping Gestalt with a romantic streak who's a real heartbreaker; *Mr. Olympus*, a nerdy Strongman Gestalt who commits crimes in the desperate hope of impressing Apollo enough that he'll be admitted to the Hot Gods; and *eMedia*, the so-called "living computer virus".

CHICAGO

Chicago is a hotbed of gestalt activity, although the only attempt to form a Chicago superhero team was one of the most spectacular failures in gestalt history.

The most experienced Chicago hero is *Cormorant*, a paragon who patrols the Great Lakes. Cormorant is well respected for her good deeds, although she sometimes tires of human company. Cormorant has heavy ecological interests and is extremely protective of bird habitats.

Cormorant is also the only remaining active

member of Chicago's first superhero team, *The Eternity Guard*. The Eternity Guard was assembled in 1994 by a Reason Gestalt, Dr. Percy Walcheszki, *Dr. Axiom*. Other members included *Molecula* (Dr. Axiom's wife, a transmutation Gestalt); *Cormorant*; *Rugged* (a Perfectionist Gestalt noted for his good looks and superhuman strength); *Clavius* (a Gestalt of Silence); and *Tesseract* (a "Gestalt of Contradictions"). This powerful team might have developed into an organization to equal Columbia, except...

...on Christmas Eve 1994, Dr. Axiom discovered that *Rugged* and his wife were having an affair. He got revenge by tricking *Molecula* into transforming both of them into non-Gestalts; but Dr. Axiom didn't anticipate that they'd encounter the villainous *Persecutor* during their transformation. *Rugged* and *Molecula* were killed, the team disbanded and Dr. Axiom is still in hiding, wanted for questioning in connection with their deaths. *Persecutor*, an unforgiving Guilt Gestalt, was executed by the state in 1995.

Fortunately, other Chicago heroes have stepped in to fill the breach caused by the Eternity Guard's break-up. The docks are the beat of the *Longshoreman* and *Golden Serpent*, a pair of rival vigilantes. *Golden Serpent* is a kickboxing detective who likes to bash heads, particularly among some of the more corrupt union officials and local politicians with ties to the criminal underworld. The *Longshoreman*, on the other hand, is a protector of union workers (although he has no tolerance for crime) and the two men have come to blows on numerous occasions.

Chicago's university and high-tech districts are the territory of *Nuclear*, a powerful energy controller and an idealistic graduate student at the Illinois Institute of Technology. *Nuclear* is the most prominent voice calling for the formation of a new Chicago superhero team.

Chicago is plagued by more than a few major villains. *Boss Strong* is the head of the local crime syndicate, though a few suspect he's a front man for an even more powerful (and mysterious) Crime Gestalt. *The Conspirator* is a Conspiracy Theory Gestalt who starts his own conspiracy theories by founding strange cults. *The Reckoning* is a librarian turned Fate Gestalt; he has travel powers that allows him to take people to places of great beauty and danger — where he strands them to face their deaths. Those few who survive (such as *Boss Strong* and *Clavius*) have an uncanny talent for drawing Gestalts in the next Wave. *Power Blue* is a Gestalt of the Corrupt Cop, who can possess any crooked cop and give them superpowers,

A more pragmatic threat is *Ion*, once an African-American nuclear technician, is now a body of living plasma who works as an assassin (he's *Nuclear*'s archenemy). *Lathe* is the daughter of *Boss Strong*'s greatest rival (now deceased), she disfigures anyone who displeases her, and she's hard to please.

The most unusual —and evil— gestalt in Chicago is the *Mercy Parade*. This is a Gestalt carnival that lures in children like a Pied Piper then steals

their youth. Any kid who cannot escape from the Parade within twenty-four hours is spat out as an old man.

DALLAS/FT. WORTH

Bull Braxton, the Cowboy Gestalt, spends most of his time outside the city in the cattlelands of the American West but makes Dallas his home. A friendly, agreeable fellow, he seems to embody Texas hospitality, even if many people wish he'd put on a shirt.

Braxton was the impetus for the founding of Texas's superhero team, *The Lone Star Rangers*, three years ago. This alliance of the state's greatest superheroes is comprised of Dallas's Bull Braxton; Houston's *National* and *Roughneck*; and *Aquifer* and *Endeavor* (a San Antonio-based heroine and hero). The team HQ is located in Austin but they most frequently congregate in Dallas.

Braxton is not the only Dallas-based superhero. *Hardsell*, a former Ranger, is a Shame Gestalt who mentally scans people for serious crimes. He then telepathically forces unpunished criminals to phone tips in to the police with details on the crime which (while falling short of a full confession) make it easy

for police detectives to successfully build a case against them. Then he makes them forget they sent the tip. This method, while certainly unethical, circumvents the possibility that the case will be thrown out in court due to coercion (telepathic influence is almost impossible to prove after the fact) or tainted evidence. Privately, Hardsell brags that he's the country's most effective vigilante and the statistics back up the boast.

Another famous Dallas hero is *the Maverick Man*, formerly known as *the Handler*. Active since 1994, the Handler is one of the toughest heroes alive and likes to prove it through the use of excessive force. He's slowed down in recent years; lately he's abandoned heroing to work as a spokesman for Big Tobacco, a job which has him spending much of his time in the Carolinas.

The Patroller, a controversial Local Protector Gestalt, also uses Dallas as a base. The Patroller patrols the US border, looking for illegal immigrants. He commonly beats his victims (even women and children) and many consider him an unstable fanatic.

Dallas attracts almost as many supervillains as San Francisco or Miami. *Element Master* is the name of a powerful but deluded former computer game programmer who, as Gestalt of the Elements, com-



bines weather control powers with flame powers and superhuman might. he lives in fantasy world where he lives like a king in a cloud fortress served by beautiful women (whom he kidnaps). *Alamo Smith* is a History Gestalt who can summon an army of Texas republic soldiers with the goal of restoring Texas's nation status. He also can, to the Rangers' annoyance, seize mental control over the National. *Big Oil* is a huge shambling oil slick that was released on the Day of Monsters (Bull Braxton, who coined its name, does not lack a sense of humor). The *Verve* is a former radio talk show host who believes that Texans have become too subdued and seeks to inflame people's hearts to show "true Texas spirit" (inevitably causing riots).

The most serious supervillain threat in Dallas is *Death Machine*, a man in modified Warmaker armor who is also making inroads as Weaponsmith's lieutenant in local crime (as Weaponsmith turns most of his attention toward California). Death Machine has recruited a cadre of ex-soldiers to serve as a strike force and is doing a good job at putting together a capable army of trained goons.

DENVER

Denver is a quiet place, but it does have a small superhero team, *D-Guard*, founded in 1997. D-Guard's leader is *The Big One*, a 30'-tall happy-go-lucky earth controller. (He's also called Mr. Big by his teammates). Other members of the team are: *Solar Knight*, a Sun Gestalt who wears high-tech armor that resembles a medieval knight's, and *Omnibus*, an Adaptability Gestalt who can split into four form. Each form can duplicate a different superhuman power, provided that he's made physical contact with someone who possesses it within the last 24 hours. A fourth member, *Cougar* (a woman with large claws and cat-like leaping ability) was shaken by the Columbine massacre and, after assessing how superheroes can serve as role models for teenage violence, quit the team in 2000.

There aren't many major villains who call Denver home, though a few (most notably Armageddo) have been known to vacation at nearby resorts. Denver's most famous bad guy is *The Rustbucket*, a robot that's driven by some unknown force to telekinetically assemble itself out of discarded metal objects in the city dump and terrorize the city. Since Denver began a rigorous recycling program in 2004, it hasn't reappeared.

DETROIT

Detroit is protected by four superheroes, none of whom like each other although they've been allies on several occasions. *The Hardliner* is a vigilante martial artist from the Second Gestalt Wave; he looks like an aging street person and is rarely able to shape a coherent sentence. If you're a good person, he'll ask you for a few bucks or maybe a smoke, but if you're a bad guy, he'll realize it and whup you.

A less active (but more conventional) super-

hero is *Redhawk*, a Wind Gestalt whose pristine manners and great looks provide a solid contrast to the Hardliner. Redhawk spends most of his time involved in public relations and charity work, becoming involved in crimefighting only in emergencies.

The most recent wave produced Detroit's two latest superheroines. There first is a Song Gestalt named *Chant*, a terrific blues singer who prefers vigilantism to performing. She is extremely vicious, especially when she's tracking down child molesters and juvenile porn artists – she rarely lets little details like the law stop her when she finds them.

The other new superheroine, *Lustra*, is much friendlier. Lustra has superhuman strength and flight that nearly puts her on par with New York City's Bravura, however when she's using her powers to rescue someone from a disaster, her strength almost reaches the Titan's level. Lustra is a major publicity hound who's trying to push herself to celebrity status (and has not-so-quietly petitioned for membership in Columbia).

Among Detroit's most notorious villains are *X-Mark* and *Gangland*. X-Mark becomes more powerful the closer he gets to a violent crime; in 2002, he caused a major riot that infused him with so much power, he nearly beat Titan in a head-to-head fight. Gangland is a supervillain team led by Crime Gestalt *Dr. Retrograde*, a who can create four Chain Gestalt super-gangsters (Burke, Drake, Big Chris, and Apple Eddie) all of whom dress like they're fresh out of the 1920s. Despite their odd appearance, the bad Doctor has used "the boys" to become major players in the local narcotics trade.

HOUSTON

Houston's proudest gestalt native son calls himself *the National*. He's a Local Protector Gestalt, who claims to embody the spirit of independence and the frontier that makes Texas great. He has moderate superhuman strength, is an exceptional runner (he can keep up with local traffic) and is an excellent shot with his rifle.

Houston has two other noteworthy gestalts. *Roughneck* is an Oil-Worker Gestalt who can sense the presence of oil reserves and boost the abilities of oil workers to superhuman levels; he's also pretty good in a fight. Roughneck and the National are very good friends. *Dynamo Jack* is a sultry teenaged powerhouse (some even call him "Titan, Junior" who's the hottest teen idol in the country. Not only is he on the cover of every teen magazine, he's got book deals, press tours, and an upcoming pop record.

Houston's first superhero, the Speed Demon Gestalt *Mustang*, vanished without explanation in 1994, but made two brief reappearances in 1996.

LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles has been the home of superhumans as well as movie stars since the beginning of the

Gestalt Age. The first and most famous of Los Angeles's gestalt community was Gary "*The Physique*" Corbin. The Physique was one of the first true Strongmen Gestalts and attracted a lot of media attention between 1990 and 1992. After a long absence, Corbin returned to the superhero community to serve as a personal trainer and advisor for the Hollywood Knights.

While the Knights are the most prominent gestalts in L.A., they aren't alone. The other major local team in the area is *Orange Crush*, located forty miles south of Los Angeles in Huntington Beach. Orange Crush patrols the Orange County area and serves as occasional back up for the Knights.

Their members are:

Krush is an energetic (if slightly dim-witted) surfer with superhuman strength who's an exceptional swimmer.

Buddy is an intelligent Gestalt dolphin who lives off Huntington Beach and patrols the shores in search of fish and people in distress.

Defiance, although not officially the leader of the team, is definitely the brains of the outfit and the one person in Orange Crush with any organizational skills. Defiance is a telekinetic paragon whose role model is Kinestar. She and Ricochet of the Hollywood Knights are currently an "item".

Engine, for all intents and purposes, appears to be a robot. It's unknown if Engine is a Gestalt, or whether somebody built him (or both, given the oddity of chain gestalts). Engine has no recollections of his origins. Engine fires powerful force beams and can fly.

Connor, known on his driver's license as Connor McEwen, is a surfer friend of Krush's and professional beach volleyball player. He's also a licensed security guard and although he's not a gestalt, he is an exceptional normal who dons body armor and wields a shotgun to fight alongside his friends. He pines for Defiance, but Defiance only has eyes for Ricochet.

There have been other superheroes in the Los Angeles area. *Lamprey* was a vigilante martial artist who was unmasked (and crippled) by Lao-Shi Khan in 1997 – he retired and now serves as an assistant coach of UCLA's wheelchair basketball team. *Streethawk* was an aggressive young motorcyclist and vigilante, who prowled most areas of Los Angeles in search of street crime. Los Animales murdered him in 2001. *The Tangent* is a young female crimefighter who projects lines of force in geometric patterns; however, she's only active during summer months.

Other Los Angeles superhumans are less interested in the superhero world, but have attained some prominence. *Justine Lord* is an ex-soft core porn star who can control animated cartoons and bring cartoon characters to life. She was trapped in an animated cartoon until rescued by the Hollywood Knights. She married Doc Toon in 2003. *Insight*, an Oracle Gestalt who's an anorexic kid who's barely in his teens, is also a guest of the Hollywood Knights. He's a priority target of the Leviathans.

Spire is a Gestalt of Flying who often soars through the Southern Californian skies, but rarely does

anything except ogle women on the beaches. *Brad Buck*, the so-called "handsomest man on the planet" is a Vanity Gestalt who frequents the Los Angeles party circuit, leeching off film executives and occasionally getting into fights. He's quite jealous of the media attention paid to the male Hollywood Knights (especially to Paladin and Stuntman).

Naturally, there are many supercriminals in the Los Angeles area: some of whom are minor annoyances like *Sultan* (a Gestalt of Lies who claims to be a Middle Eastern prince); *Howitzer* (a former Hollywood bodyguard turned Destruction Gestalt who's doing Weaponsmith's dirty work); *The Author* (a Gestalt of Fiction who can alter reality with a stroke of his pen), *Surfer K* (a masked man on a flying force field surfboard with telekinetic abilities, archetype unknown); *Catnap* (a cat burglar who can turn himself into any feline, and mentally control and boost the abilities of cats); *Atrocity* (a Guilt Gestalt who wields a pair of "psychic knives"); and *Devil May Care* (a Decadence Gestalt who looks like the classic medieval representation of the Devil).

Local gestalt menaces include the Firestarters; *Los Animales* (who will be detailed in *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*); Weaponsmith; and the Blood Red King. They are all known to bring their special brand of woe to the City of Angels.

It's one of the most dangerous places on Earth to be a hero.

MIAMI

Miami has quite a few Gestalt defenders. The most serious is *Blossom*, one of the few powered-armor engineers in the Gestalt world. This dour, determined woman fights narcotic smuggling on the Florida coast with a variety of gadgets. No one's sure if the gadgets are part of her Gestalt or if they'd work for everyone. She joined Columbia in 1998 but quit the team three months later.

The premier Cuban-American superhero is *El Exilado*, a Gestalt of Speed. El Exilado claims to be a distant relative of Fidel Castro who's exiled himself to Florida. El Exilado helps Cuban refugees in times of trouble.

Columbia's Edge hails from the nearby city of Fort Lauderdale, which is also home to a gestalt who often insults him in the local press: *Solar E*. E is a Sun Gestalt who fights crime, is a fixture at spring break parties and is very hard to beat at tanning contests. In truth, he and Edge are old buddies and the trash talk is just good natured ribbing between friends.

Miami's most infamous supervillain is *Cortez the Conqueror*, a man who affects a Conquistador motif and projects blasts of fire through a sword. Cortez sought control over smuggling and vice in Miami but quickly found himself out of his depth — he was a better fighter than he was an organizer — and the drug cartels quickly sold him out to Blossom. Cortez was incarcerated for three years, but recently escaped from prison and is attempting once again to become the Conquistador of Crime (with the benefit

of three additional years of studying the criminal world). Cortez's lieutenant is a young, mean Gestalt named *Hooker Phoenix*, he's a world-class Pankration Gestalt who specializes in bone-breaking maneuvers.

NEW YORK

The leading crimefighter in New York City is *Kinestar*, a product of the First Gestalt Wave. She's a trained detective with telekinetic powers and has an armored suit with gadgets. Kinestar is very respected by local citizens and by the NYPD, with whom she frequently collaborates.

Another crimefighter who gets a lot of attention, though for different reasons, is *Cosmic Man*. A former professional wrestler turned superhero, Cosmic Man suffers from serious delusions — he believes he's an alien orphan, the last survivor of his race, who was sent to Earth to become its champion and lead humanity by example to a new golden age. Most people think he's a nutcase but those who are willing to work within his fantasies discover that he's a reliable ally. Cosmic Man is a flying strongman who fires "blasts of Roentgen cosmic energy".

One of the newest (and quirkiest) superheroes is the *Cycle Psycho*, Gill Quigley. Gill is a Cycling Gestalt who has superhuman abilities when he's riding a bike. Gill works as a messenger but spends a lot of time patrolling Central Park, looking for trouble (and, on occasion, causing it).

Another pair of famous Gestalts (though they rarely work as superheroes) are *Brawl* and *Red Dog*. Brawl is Nick Hanson, a bouncer at a New York sports bar whose touch can make sober people drunk (or drunk people sober). Red Dog is former New York Giants star Tom Clarence, a Football Gestalt who was one of the first people ever thrown out of professional sports for being a Gestalt. These two old friends are considering putting together a superhero team in the Big Apple.

There are reports of a mysterious vigilante, a woman who looks like a human-sized version of the Statue of Liberty, who appears out of nowhere at crime scenes and burns criminals with her torch. At present, she is thought to be an urban myth — after all, not every report about gestalts is true.

Two costumed vigilantes are known to patrol the city; the mysterious black-clad *Agenda X*, a teleporter who hounds recently released convicts until he (or she) is sure they've reformed, and *Mask 72*, a non-Gestalt Gulf War hero who is an African-American vigilante with a shotgun and body armor that leads a vigilante posse. Mask 72 is very levelheaded, respected by his community and by local law enforcement.

New York City is also the home base for that wacky quartet who've been dubbed in the press as *The Legion of Super Models*, a team of gestalt models who travel the globe and somehow get involved in more weirdness than anyone else alive. The team is composed of *Bunny* (the clueless Bimbo Gestalt who is nearly impervious to damage, especially mental);

Michelle (a Bitchy Gestalt who has an uncanny ability to find a person's weak spot); *Fabulo* (the male model Machismo Gestalt); and *Nigel Bryce*, a Photography Gestalt who invariably takes most of the lumps on the team.

New York City has had many other superheroes over its history. *Bomber* was a powerful African-American Good Samaritan Gestalt who left New York City in 2001 to join the Panamanian superhero team Los Protectores as "Yanqui". Bomber's sidekick, the former teen hero *Slammer*, remains active in New York City as the Regional Protector of Harlem.

Kyle Foster is a NYPD forensics expert and Pharmacology Gestalt who was critically wounded while attempting to stop a 1997 daylight robbery by Scarlet Knight and the Magician. He has remained in a coma ever since. *Bronco the Urban Cowboy* was a costumed vigilante who generated a lot of publicity in 1994, including several appearances on David Letterman. Unfortunately, he went on a killing spree in a restaurant in 1995, and was convicted of multiple accounts of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Bronco claims that he was acting under mind con-



trol, but the courts rejected that defense. Kinestar, the loudest and most prominent voice of support, has been working to overturn the conviction for years.

Battlin' Bobby Blue appeared out of nowhere on the opening night of the musical *Put Up Your Dukes*. A boxer and private detective who often breaks into song, Bobby's convinced that it's still 1937 (despite all evidence to the contrary). This fiesty hero has a habit of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but also has incredible luck in escaping his many scrapes.

Perhaps even more tragic are the Big Apple's dead heroes. The Blood Red King killed New York City's first vigilante, Mistral, in 1990, and the Bronx Guard, its first superhero team, was murdered by the Tyranny League in 1996.

Karetaka is probably the poster child for fallen superheroes. This champion Karate Gestalt fought crime in the Bronx between 1995–1997, until he saw reports that members of a street gang (whom he had captured on two previous occasions) had raped and later murdered a twelve year old girl in a drive-by shooting. Karetaka went off the deep-end. He sneaked into the cell where they were being held, and murdered them. Then he broke into the prison records, tracked down every inmate guilty of a capital offense, and murdered them too.

This was the start of a vigilante killing spree that lasted for over a year. Forty alleged criminals were murdered before Karetaka's hiding place was uncovered by Agenda X and the vigilante was shot dead by a NYPD Special Forces unit. Since then, Karetaka has become a warning to any Gestalt who might fall prey to "the exterminator complex".

Brutal Youth was an extremely talented (if sadistic) martial artist: a club hopper and a petty criminal with mob ambitions who became champion of NYC's underground deathmatch circuit. Brutal considered himself unbeatable, until he accidentally stumbled across the location of the Tyranny League's New York City base. He attempted to blackmail them and learned how just good Daimyo could be in hand-to-hand combat. Daimyo hung his body from the Statue of Liberty.

Supervillains who frequent New York include *Celesto* (a burglar who commits a major robbery every July 20th, then lives off the proceeds for the rest of the year); *Saturday Knight* (a straight-laced accountant who becomes an out-of-control wild man on weekends); *The Possessor* (a Greed Gestalt who's contributed to the ruin of many on Wall Street), *Deuce Goose* (a retired superspeedster who led the West Broadway Dukes street gang); *MC-89* (a nasty gangsta rapper who's muscling into NYC street crime); *Skyscraper* (the self-proclaimed "world's biggest criminal"); and *Octavian*, a foppish mentalist who calls himself "Emperor of Gotham".

The most powerful villain to ever menace New York City may have been *Nom*, a Gestalt of Names who could alter a thing's properties by saying its name aloud and playing with the word. Kinestar found a rare

Amazon rain forest plant that had not been named. Unable to cope with an unnamed thing, Nom fell into a coma and is currently quivering away at an asylum for the criminally insane in upper New York State.

Many Tyranny Leaguers were originally villains in the New York area. The Tyranny League claims New York as their territory and has vowed to destroy any heroes who organize a team in "their" city.

PHILADELPHIA

The city of Brotherly Love has three famous native gestalts. The oldest of the three is *Sterling*, a seventy-year-old man and Gestalt Protector of the Elderly who has exceptional hand-to-hand combat skills. His powers let him know when a senior citizen is in trouble and allows him to appear out of nowhere to rescue them. He's gotten in trouble for punching out fraud artists or confronting the occasional relative who's overzealous about putting a parent in a nursing home.

Dr. Solio, a telepath/telekinetic of considerable ability, protects the city's African-American community. Solio does not work with legal authorities; his typical modus operandi is to track down criminals and then use psionics to force the criminals to confess and make restitution.

The youngest Gestalt is *Stallion*, a twenty-three year old Boxing Gestalt who's been honing his detective skills in order to become a full time crimefighter. Stallion is Philadelphia's most active Gestalt; he has asked Sterling to take him on as an apprentice, but Sterling told him he was too old to be anyone's mentor.

Philadelphia's most persistent criminal is *Accurse*, a Local Oppressor Gestalt who lives to see Philadelphians suffer. He does so through a combination of telekinetic sabotage and mind control. Two of his lieutenants, an acrobatic burglar named *Fulcrum* and the Pharmacy Gestalt *Dr. Millennium* (a foe of Dr. Solio who likes to drug people and then turn them into his mental slaves) have gone on to become major supervillains in their own right.

PORTLAND, OREGON

Portland has two prominent local gestalts. *Ironjack* is a lumberjack who can fell the thickest tree with a single blow, although he also plants trees to replace what he's harvested (which grow at an astonishing rate). Ironjack does his best to stay out of politics, but he's very protective of lumberjacks and millworkers in the state of Oregon and ended up on the wrong side of environmentalists on several occasions.

The other Portland gestalt is Ann George, AKA *Gorgeous*, whom the local press bills as "the Most Beautiful Woman on Earth". Ann's beauty is incredible; she can make anyone fall in love with her. Ann works as a private detective and is sometimes used by the local police in hostage situations; people who refuse to listen to other negotiators usually pay attention to Ann.

Enterprise is a pure gestalt, a Gestalt of Free Enterprise and a patron of Portland technological start-up firms. But he's no superhero – Enterprise has no respect for laws, and frequently offers insider investment tips or advice that allows firms to embezzle without being caught or break environmental laws; he's attacked IRS agents on numerous occasions and broken white-collar criminals out of jail or rearranged their records to facilitate an early release.

There have also been several sightings of *the Old Fool*, a spry but elderly man who lives on the slope of Mount St. Helens and wanders the mountains of the Cascade Range, helping people in trouble (cussing at them while he's giving them his help).

Very early in the history of gestalts, a woman calling herself *Destination* appeared in Portland and offered her services as a courier. She disappeared mysteriously in 1992; many suspect she slipped into a less public identity, though others suspect CounterMeasures was responsible.

SALT LAKE CITY

So what kind of Gestalt would live in Utah? *Ben Bastion* moved to Salt Lake City three years ago; he's a Gestalt of Faith (Mormon) who manifests a wide variety of powers when people demonstrating religious conviction surround him. He doesn't spend a lot of time as a crimefighter; he studies theology in preparation for a career as a missionary.

Ringtail is a more traditional vigilante, a trickster in a raccoon costume who patrols the streets. Salt Lake City's most famous supervillain is *The Tribune*, a deluded robber in Roman garb who robs banks "to collect taxes for Caesar". He and Ringtail are old enemies. A more serious threat is *the Full Moon Slayer*, an invisible serial killer who strikes on the full moon; he's killed one person each month for the last nineteen months.

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is one of America's most spectacular cities, and it attracts a spectacular breed of hero and villain. The city has never had its own superhero team, but it has no shortage of supers, good and bad, to make an interesting place that much more interesting.

The Bay City's most famous superhero is *Technarch*, a machine telepath who can link with and control machines. He would like to accelerate Earth's development into a technological paradise. Technarch works with the authorities to help eliminate antisocial elements, but he's not above doing some dirty work to get his hands on an interesting technological innovation. Technarch's own advanced technology includes a mechanical dragon HQ that flies over San Francisco. Technarch is really one step removed from being a master villain.

Less technological, but much more beloved, is *Granny*, Protector of the Elderly. This pure gestalt fits the role of the kindly old grandmother perfectly,



right down to the cookie recipes that she shares with those she rescues. Granny is a paragon who looks like a 95-year-old woman. She patrols San Francisco and throttles any wrongdoers she encounters. Granny is on very good terms with the Boy Scout and with the Warder of the Hollywood Knights.

Mad Mark, Gestalt of the Homeless, is actually a telepathic entity. He finds a worthy but down-on-his-luck individual, possesses him, and transforms him into a superhuman vigilante. Mad Mark acts like a schizophrenic, but he attacks only criminals. Mark rarely stays in a host for more than two months, and when he leaves, it purges the host of physical and mental disabilities so he can reenter society.

The last Gestalt Wave produced the extremely agile *Blue Lightning*, a happy-go-lucky Chinese-American teenager who casts lightning bolts and fights crime around Chinatown. He is joined by the Holiday Dragon Studio, a small gang of friendly vigilantes (six exceptional teenaged normals).

XTZ is an African-American heroine, a Summer Gestalt with fire and heat control powers who helps firefighters and victims of heat stroke. Her powers, unfortunately, are only active during the summer months; the rest of the year she's a exceptional normal.

The Witness is the city's most notorious non-combat Gestalt, a Curiosity Gestalt who searches for unusual sights and events, appears out of nowhere (with absolutely no respect for anyone's privacy),

Toys of the Technarch!

The GM can find game stats for Technarch and his Flying Dragon-Ship in this book on page 220.

Don't Give Me Liberty

Mainstream Libertarians have disavowed Mr. Liberty because of his rigidity; one commentator wryly suggested that he should have changed his name to "the Randroid".

makes a wry philosophical observation, then vanishes and moves on to the next sight.

Storm Warning was a Weather Gestalt and San Francisco's finest superhero for many years, until his recent death at the hands of the Leviathans. *Heroic* was a young sonic controller who patrolled San Jose between 1992 and 1994, and then vanished from sight without a trace. *Blitz* was a fighting Gestalt who retired when the press revealed his secret identity; he now lives in rural Montana, alone in a log cabin.

San Francisco is also the home of the Gestalt Club. Owned by Alain Duchamps, the Club is famous throughout the Gestalt underground as a safehouse for fugitive Gestalts, provided they don't have a violent reputation, and is often used as a contact point. Duchamps also facilitates employment opportunities for Gestalts (see page 308) for more details on this facility).

Mr. Liberty was a San Jose based Libertarian Gestalt. He fought crime, but refused to rescue bystanders or assist people in need. Instead, he harangued them over the need for self-reliance, declared his ridicule for people's victimization complex, and declared that any death that happened during a fight between supers was "Darwinism in Action". He spent more time arguing on Internet newsgroups than being a superhero, earning a reputation for never letting an argument die. Eventually, his flaming, self-righteous posts attracted the attention of Dissenter, who critically injured him in 2006.

San Francisco has many criminals. It's rumored that a major Gestalt figure in organized crime who's been dubbed *The Spider* uses the Bay Area as his base. Well-known San Francisco supervillains are *Sugar Sugar* (an aging hippie who robs banks and then lectures people on peace and love); and *Dr. Isosceles*, who can project force fields in perfect shapes, and wants to use the Gestalt phenomenon to find Plato's "perfect forms".

SEATTLE

The bastion of the Pacific Northwest is home to several heroes, who have recently banded together under the sponsorship of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce to form a superhero team, the *Seattle Challengers*.

The Challengers' leader *Flameheart*, Gestalt of Summer, is one of the nation's most prominent African-American heroes. He says he's an Olympic National Park forest ranger who was caught in a forest fire during a Gestalt wave and emerged with powers. Some say he made up the story for the press, whom he's been known to feed a line of bull once in awhile (he has a very sarcastic sense of humor). *Flameheart*'s been fighting crime for five years, and does it well.

The oldest member, *the Forester*, has been a Gestalt since the 1989 Gestalt wave. *Forester* has

the powers to heal plants and animals, and reduce or intensify rain in a large radius. *The Forester* is a very serious man, but his teammates, especially *Flameheart*, respect him greatly.

The third member of the Challengers, *Bearface Thompson*, is a former college football star who can transform himself into a giant with a bear's head, a form that possesses immense superhuman strength and toughness. His sense of humor is similar to *Flameheart*'s, and when they aren't trading barbs, the two men are close friends.

The last member of the team is Evelyn S. Long, *Eve of Destruction*, better known as "Eve" (or "Destructo Girl" to her friends). She's a former lawyer turned Destruction Gestalt who's only called into service in extreme situations; otherwise she works for the US government, using her powers to destroy toxic waste

AND THE REST...

This is, of course, only the tiniest fraction of America's costumed gestalt population. Other prominent American local superheroes include:

Aegis (Regional Protector Gestalt; Tampa, Florida)
The All-Stone (Gestalt of Stories, Austin, Texas)
The Bastard (Gestalt of Justice, Columbus Ohio)
Call of the Wild (Gestalt of the Badlands, South Dakota)
The Caretaker (Heritage Gestalt, Richmond, Virginia)
The Carpenter (Gestalt of Christianity, Louisville, Kentucky)
The Chorus (Gestalt of Contradictions, Athens, Georgia)
The Circuit (Gestalt of Machines, Indianapolis, Indiana)
Dice (Gambling Gestalt, Las Vegas, Nevada)
Doctor Nox (Justice Gestalt, Nashville Tennessee)
Doctor Veritas (Truth Gestalt, Buffalo, New York)
Dragonslayer (Gestalt of Medieval Knights, Wilmington, DE.)
Dreammaker (Hope Gestalt, Birmingham, Alabama)
Firebreaker (Weather Gestalt, Phoenix, Arizona)
Friendly Ed (Strongman Gestalt, Fairbanks, Alaska)
Gaslight (Guilt Gestalt; Las Vegas, Nevada)
Grenadier (Gun Gestalt, Bismark, North Dakota)
The Grim Ghost (Law Gestalt, Phoenix, Arizona)
Guard-One (Bodyguard Gestalt, San Diego, California)
The Human Tornado (Gestalt of Tornadoes, Omaha, Nebraska)
Igneous (Stone Gestalt, Casper Wyoming)
The Jayhawker (Flight Gestalt, Wichita, Kansas)
Jeu D'esprit (Trickster Gestalt, Camden NJ)
Lanakila (Regional Protector Gestalt, Honolulu, Hawaii)
Maid of the Mist (Regional Protector, Niagara Falls).
Nenewe (Gestalt of Animals (sharks), Hawaii)
Quartermain (Regional Protector, New Orleans, Louisiana)
Tim "Raw" Blaisdale (Gestalt of Beauty, Memphis, Tennessee)
Railgun (Regional Protector Gestalt, Cincinnati, Ohio)
Sand King (Lifeguard Gestalt, San Diego, California)
Smokescreen (Smoke Gestalt, Raleigh, Virginia)
The Squire (Regional Protector Gestalt, Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
Telamon (Statue Gestalt, Hartford, Connecticut)
Waveform (Science Gestalt, Louisville, Kentucky)

THE LEVIATHANS

Every action produces an equal and opposite reaction. The reaction to Gestalts is the Leviathans, a race of anti-Gestalts. Whereas Gestalts celebrate diversity, Leviathans desire rigid conformity. They are a hierarchy of creatures dedicated to destroying Gestalts, giants who lurk in the depths of human consciousness.

Leviathans are 13-foot tall giants with a third eye in their forehead, and mouths set in the palms of their hands. The third eye allows telepathy, while the mouths focus their telekinetic/ pyrokinetic powers.

Leviathans are extremely strong, able to ignore most of the damage that is done to them and nearly impossible to knock off their feet.

The Leviathans are very formal, pompous and arrogant. They work around the world, in China, in Russia, in Africa; they like to find places which are fearful of Gestalts, where the authorities are willing to help stir up anti-Gestalt sentiment, and use them to their purposes. In these countries, they promote the idea that Gestalts are a Western ideal, and that opposing Gestalts is a good way to protect one's traditional culture from a western invasion. It's a message that's gotten the Leviathans a lot of support in certain quarters, and the success of the Leviathans may come to haunt the world in the wars of the 21st Century.

The Leviathan King can travel between Earth and the Gestalt Dimension at will, capture unformed Gestalts and shape them into proto-Leviathans. When a Gestalt Wave hits, what should have been a Gestalt becomes a Leviathan instead.

At present, there's no organized movement among Gestalts to eliminate the Leviathan threat, but people have begun to take notice. Doctor Power is alarmed by their presence in the Gestalt Dimension and is investigating ways to create Gestalt Dimension portals so she can allocate resources to counter them, while Alain Duchamps has let it be known that he's willing to assist any Gestalt who wants to take the battle to "those three eyed motherless bastards".

Several Leviathans, notably *Torhane* (a Leviathan Knight who's a friend of Columbia) and *Ominos* (a unique female Gestalt who's the leader of the Psionic Seven supervillain team) have turned against the Leviathans and joined the Gestalt community. There are a handful of other active Rogue Leviathans (PCs who wish to play one may take the Rogue Leviathan Template). Beyond those, all Leviathans are inhumanly fanatical.

and radioactive material. ("If I can serve society ,with my Gestalt, anyone can," she's fond of saying.)

Seattle had one master villain, *Spiritwalker*, a mentalist who ran a lot of the crime in the Pacific Northwest. In 2003, Spiritwalker's hatred of local heroes got the best of him, and in the ensuing conflict, he was forced out of his host's body and trapped in the body of a dairy cow. It's believed he still inhabits the cow's mind, unable to escape. (The cow's milk doesn't have any noticeable effect on people).

A pair of duplicating villains currently plague Seattle: *Doppler* and *Elemental Woman*. Doppler is a speedster who can duplicate himself into (at least)

ROGUE LEVIATHAN

Template

Skills: Knowledge (tactics) 4, Notice 4, Sense Motive 4

Feats: Attack Specialization (psychic sword)

Powers: **Growth 8** (huge size; Continuous; Permanent), **Mental Blast 6** (Linked to Strike; Touch Range), **Protection 4** (power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Sensory Shield 3** (all senses), **Strike 6** (psychic sword; mighty), **Super Senses 4** (detect gestalt [acute, analytical, ranged]), **Super Strength 1**, **Teleport 3**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 1 + Powers 64 – Drawbacks 2 = 66 Total

eight counterparts, all of whom can see through each other's senses and teleport to the location of any of their duplicates. Elemental Woman splits into the four classical elemental forms. The "duplicating duo" has provided a serious challenge for the Challengers, and has impressed the Tyranny League enough that there's been serious talk about bringing them into their ranks.

WASHINGTON DC

Washington DC is the home of Columbia and the ATF but there are other gestalts. The President is protected by two heroes: *Resistance* (a woman who can boost anyone's defenses to damage and mental attacks, including telepathy and mind control) and *Distorter* (a man who can make people appear in places where they are actually not located). They work for the US Secret Service, and are paid one million dollars a year to perform "the riskiest job in America".

Congress, not to be outdone, has its own two protectors: *Hardcore* (a Show-Off Gestalt/paragon who gets stronger when he gets a lot of attention) and *Extreme* (a young speedster who quotes poetry as he runs). Both men are fixtures at the more raucous Washington parties, have ties to the youth wing of the Republican Party and have made no secret about their political ambitions. Some Democrats have nicknamed them "The Republican Guard".

There are numerous rumors of FBI and CIA related Gestalts, and a trio codenamed *Brain*, *Beauty*, and *Brawn* are alleged to work for the CIA. The Pentagon is also said be working on a super-soldier program (a rumor which is not entirely false, as some members of the Vanguard can attest) and has supposedly built a special A.I. unit named *Scenario*, whose function is to advise on military preparedness and test billions of conflict scenarios. When asked about its existence, one high-ranking general laughed and told the press that it was actually called "Hal".

Two vigilantes patrol Washington's crime-stricken streets. One is a big African-American man in a Baltimore Orioles uniform who calls himself *Sluggo Pete*; he wields a metal baseball bat and is adept enough to knock bullets out of the air or take out a dozen gang members in a matter of seconds. But Pete is not a killer and is usually content to leave

RAY RIORDAN'S EXTENDED HAMMAKER

APRIL 12, 2007

Sometimes, one wonders about the soul of a Gestalt and how so many heroes have managed to stay on "the good side" against such overwhelming odds.

Yeah, we've had our share of fallen heroes: Bronco, Karetaka, Overdrive, and more than a few other "heroes" are suspect. But last week something horrible happened. And after the tragedy and the media feeding-frenzy that followed, I came to realize that there is a bright side.

I don't mean any disrespect to Derek Langdon, even though I find his newly-found martyrdom overdone and more politically inspired than genuine. By all accounts, he was a professional, well liked by his colleagues, and his murder is one of the most disgusting things that the Gestalt community has seen in some time. The one thing that heroes don't like is people who strike at them out of costume. Families, friends, and support personnel are considered "civilians", and they stand behind a very harshly drawn line. It's a line that heroes don't like crossed, and villains who cross it get treated differently than, say, Starfinder or Armageddo. Derek Langdon was a civilian. His murderer called him a criminal. And what was his "crime", that warranted his execution?

He was the head of marketing for Edge cologne, "fragrance of champions".

He was the first victim of a Dawn Brothers campaign against people involved in marketing products related to superheroes. His killer, codenamed "Z" (even Gestalt-haters like the Dawn Brothers have surrendered themselves to the melodrama) is a corn-fed Iowa poster boy for the NRA named Jeff Quinville, who vowed to hit Gestalt heroes where it hurts them most – in their bank accounts, breaking the pins of corporate sponsorship that many superheroes rely on to conduct their campaigns. It's the highest profile killing that the Dawn Brothers have ever committed, and it's got the entire Gestalt community in an uproar.

"Not even the Tyranny League has sunk this low." Edge does not usually make public statements in times of crisis, but the criticism of superhero marketing following Langdon's death has to be intensely painful to Edge, who's still dealing with Columbia's failure in the January incident in Atlanta. At a press conference two days ago, he said: "We inform all of our licensors that there's an element of danger in handling us as clients, but usually we expect that it's the people involved with villain-related merchandise that are in danger. This is a new and disturbing development. I can't tell you how sick I feel."

This sounded like a heartfelt display of grief to me. How surprising, to find the media criticizing Edge for not showing enough emotion. For not having a reaction.

Yesterday, Edge gave the only reaction that mattered. He and Columbia tracked down Quinville and his cell of murdering thugs. Agent Z is in the hospital, in serious but stable condition, and his lawyers are flaming mad. They're claiming that Edge used excessive force in the arrest.

I'm flaming mad too. I wish that Edge had killed the son of a bitch. I don't like feeling this way. I don't like giving into hatred. Passion is the curse of the age; all you have to do is look at the Internet to see how reckless the human intellect can be. But some lives are so despicable you just wish that someone would end them.

And the fact that Edge didn't kill this murderous, smirking farmboy when he could have – and probably should have – makes me admire him all the more. He lives on the edge but he hasn't fallen over it. And there are a lot of Gestalts like that. That's the bright side I mentioned. Appreciate it while you can, folks, because if the Dawn Brothers, the Tyranny League, and the Leviathans accelerate their killing sprees, we're going to see a lot fewer Edges and a lot more Karetakas.

criminals battered and beaten for the police to pick up.

Washington's other vigilante is much less gentle. *The Daemon* is a silent, ruthless killer whose *modus operandi* is to tie a steel chain around his victim's neck and hang them from lampposts, spray-painting the word "Daemon" on their chests. The Daemon targets criminals who have escaped justice on legal technicalities.

Most criminals in Washington DC are from out of town. *N-Thewz* is the name of a hip-hop musician who's also a Strongman Gestalt; he runs a small-time drug operation that preys on tourists. Occasionally, visitors to Washington's monuments are transformed into the *Founding Father*, an orator in Revolutionary-era garb that rants for several hours about public apathy and constitutional abuse before returning to normal. No one knows what happens to cause the Founding Father to appear, although there have been quite a few robberies that just happen to coincide with his appearance, including the theft of several national treasures.

A.D.V.E.R.S.A.R.I.E.S. INC.

Adversarial organizations are the staples of many campaign worlds. In Gestalt-Earth they're less important than superpowered villains but they can still be a nuisance.

Most organizations operate under stealth and attack supers using traps and subterfuge, though they occasionally field a force of trained agents who use conventional weapons often grenades to soften up supers, followed by coordinated heavy weapons fire, to give heroes a decent battle.

THE BLOOD OF ISLAM (DAMM AL-ISLAM)

A radical Islamic terrorist group, angered by Western policies in the Middle East (and, some say, decreased Western dependence on Middle East oil), has been actively causing terror in the United States. The Blood of Islam has been attempting to undermine developments in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and get radicals elected in Palestine and Kurdistan. It sees itself as the worldwide Islamic movement and has made alliances with nearly every Islamic terrorist organization.

To protest Turkey's membership in NATO, the Blood has been urging the young Kurdistan government to annex Kurd lands in southern Turkey and create a greater Kurdistan. They're also conducted a bombing campaign against military bases and personnel in the United States and have attempted to execute the *fatwa* against the USMC Vanguard. They also have an ongoing vendetta against Ricochet of the Hollywood Knights, who has spoiled their plans on

several occasions.

Leadership of *Damm Al'Islam* (or as Edge calls them, "Damning All Islam") varies but it's believed they're being financed by radicals in Saudi Arabia and working through Afghanistan's Taliban organization, as their public attitudes toward women certainly reflect the Taliban's misogynistic streak. They've also been known to target superheroines if they show a lot of flesh (and are popular in certain Islamic communities, particularly Lustra and Toronto's Skylight).

COUNTERMEASURES

The not-so-secret arm of the US Security Council on Superhuman Activities, CounterMeasures' mandate was to investigate any known paranormal and find ways to neutralize them. This organization was allegedly disbanded in 1991, following the Security-Gate scandal but it's rumored that former members are active in other US government security agencies and trying to revive its agenda.

CounterMeasures was never a very effective organization; they're responsible for a few failed murder attempts and smear campaigns against pro-Gestalt political candidates. Nonetheless, they are the most hated anti-Gestalt organization in history, and many Gestalts harbor suspicions that they never really went out of business. When there's a conspiracy theory that involves Gestalts, you can wager that CounterMeasures will be mentioned sometime.

THE DAWN BROTHERS

"We are brothers at the dawn of a new world, a bad world, determined to hold back the storm, or die trying."

A small but dedicated cadre of assassins, who use high-tech weaponry to hunt superpowered beings, the Dawn Brothers focus on killing solo heroes and small superhero teams, although they also attack villains. The Dawn Brothers' goal is the elimination of Gestalts. They are associated with American militia groups and it's possible they're funded either by a prominent corporation or by the US government as a black box project that everyone's forgotten about.

The Dawn Brothers work in pairs. They scout a target for months, doing their best to uncover its identity (and as many other secrets as possible). If successful, they'll lay a trap or an ambush for the target in a situation where they'll either die or be forced to publicly reveal their secret identity. Once the hunt becomes known to the target, the Brothers will pull out all the stops, killing or kidnapping loved ones, with the ultimate goal of getting the super so upset that they'll blindly stumble into a trap.

In spite of their similar goals, there is no known connection between the Leviathans and the Dawn Brothers; the Dawn Brothers treat Leviathans as just another Gestalt lunacy, while the Leviathans leave the Dawn Brothers alone – unless they're the ones being targeted.

THE NEW LUDDITES

The New Luddites (a name bestowed on them by the Press; they call themselves the Nova Guard) view the growth of technology associated with Gestalts as detrimental. The Luddites grew out of several environmental groups and are usually labeled left-wing extremists, although since First Contact was made with the Ar'Turodain, anti-alien xenophobes have also joined their cause.

The New Luddites view recent technological advances as unwelcome and wish to do something about them. Ironically, they've taken to arming themselves with experimental weaponry. Their actions are mostly industrial espionage — letter bombs, gas bombs, etc. — against whatever corporation has angered them. The New Luddites originally promised to keep violence to a minimum, but since media attention first focused on them in 1999, they've become, in the words of Ray Riordan, "drunk with publicity".

The New Luddites have made alliances with supervillains and are not above hiring mercenaries such as the Psionic Seven to do their dirty work.

OVERCORP

A major industrial conglomerate that sprang up almost overnight in 2001, Overcorp is a rising star in high tech fields. Overcorp is based in Atlanta and its CEO, S.P. Randall, is a wealthy playboy who likes expensive parties and throwing a lot of cash at charities and political interests.

Overcorp is also an organization that will stop at nothing to control the next generation of industrial technology, especially in electronics. They're one of the leading researchers of battlesuits and cybernetic technology — and if they don't develop it themselves, they'll get their hands on it one way or another.

Overcorp's most recent push has been toward getting hold of alien technology. It's said that Randall would kill to get his hands on an Ar'Turodain warp pod, and Overcorp has been courting the Ar'Kayadin for nearly a year.

Overcorp's real master is rumored to be a man named Overking, an exceptional engineer and a psionic mastermind in battle armor. Whether Overking is Randall, or someone close to him, remains a mystery.

Overcorp's guards are the Overguard, exceptional normals in very good battle armor. Their prototype advanced combat armor, designed for Project Capricorn (the United States Armed Forces' battlesuit program) was destroyed in early 2006 by the Tyranny League.

More Traditional Comic Book Tech, Brought to You By Overcorp!

If you would like to take the technology level of Gestalt-Earth to a higher level (but still appropriate to four-color comics) this is a good organization to develop. Low-powered battlesuit technology from other *M&M* books can be used as a line of standard Over-Armor, while high-powered battlesuits can be the basis of prototypes. Of course, the existence of such armor will draw a response from the Tyranny League.

Thanks to Sean Patrick Fannon for inspiring Overcorp and the character of S.P. Randall.

UNUSUAL GESTALTS

While most gestalts tend to be “normal” by superhero world standards, there are some really strange superhumans out there.

Harry Campbell, Glasgow, Scotland, UK., Gestalt of Eternal Youth. Harry is immortal, and has the Gestalt ability to restore full youth and vigor to a single person each day, a restoration that lasts 24 hours (at which time they revert back to their normal age).

Harry has sold the use of his power (for only a small fee) to legendary Glasgow Rangers football star Willie “Ageless Wonder” Shore, keeping Glasgow at the top of the Scottish First Division. Harry’s a football fanatic and is happy to make a little money from his powers on the side. Unfortunately for Harry, Willie gets loud and obnoxious when he’s drunk (a frequent event with Willie) and has told a number of people about his secret source of youth – people who are interested in a piece of the action. Harry is unaware that he’s in increasing danger...

Skebios Chirovopasi, Zimbabwe, Gestalt of Butterflies. This African sculptor can control butterflies, making them perform complex tricks for him. Skebios travels from town to town, performing with his butterfly carnival, although he has had one tragic accident – in 1998, he mentally linked thousands of butterflies together and accidentally created a colony creature, Berepeswa, a giant malevolent butterfly-man who was destroyed by Soulkeeper.

Perry Dornan, New York City, New York, USA., Gestalt of Efficiency. Perry has the ability to cause people around him to focus more efficiently and effectively on their tasks. People around Perry suddenly remember their schedules with perfect clarity, know which tasks they require their attention, and remain focused on the task for as long as he’s present. As long as they are working around Perry, employees can go without food, water, sleep, or bathroom breaks, with no deleterious effects.

Perry was a manager for a New York ad firm. He was never happy with the efficiency of his colleagues until he developed his Gestalt talent. He became the ultimate slavedriver; his employees are productive and creative, and they don’t even ask for more pay! However, labor laws did get the better of him, and after a lengthy court battle, he was terminated from his job on the grounds of forcing people to engage in unlawful work habits.

Perry has parlayed the publicity from the incident into National prominence, and is going to run for Congress as “the only man who can make the federal bureaucracy work for your tax dollars.”

Paolo Estaban, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Gestalt of Skin. Paolo is a fifty-year-old man who has the ability to vary skin color and eliminate (or cause) blemishes via touch. He runs a posh resort on the Copacabana, and uses his Gestalt powers as a gimmick to attract tourists by offering every guest the perfect tan. Word of his talent has also spread into the dermatological community and he has helped treat severe cases of

acne and psoriasis. He has also helped repair scalp damage and dramatically improved chances of hair regrowth in some men and even treated severe cases of melanoma (though he can only shrink, not eliminate, the cancer).

It’s amazing how rich you can become from the intelligent use of minor Gestalt abilities.

Paolo has used his abilities as an attack power but only once. He touched a man who tried to rob him and closed all of his pores, while forcing his sweat glands to produce massive quantities of perspiration simultaneously, breaking every blood vessel near the surface of the man’s skin. The resulting pressure saw the robber die from massive internal hemorrhaging — the world’s first reported case of terminal acne. Paolo was acquitted on manslaughter charges and resumed his business. The notoriety from the incident has proven to be good publicity.

Douglas Fir, north of Port Alice, British Columbia, Canada. Gestalt of Old Growth Forests. Douglas Fir isn’t a human being, but a powerful psionic tree in an old growth forest on Vancouver Island. Douglas is a powerful protector of his woods, able to project his consciousness into any old growth tree and channel his powers into the tree to protect the woods. He is not a stern guardian except when threatened. Environmentalists describe it as having a delightful, if offbeat sense of humor.

Douglas Fir has kept loggers out of his woods and polarized the environmental movement in Western Canada (not that it needed any more polarization to begin with!). Douglas Fir has said that all he wants is to be left alone. Doctor Power is said to have visited Douglas and found him “charming”.

The Head, Easter Island. Following the 1997 gestalt wave, one of the giant heads on this Polynesian Island rose from the soil and now flies around Polynesia, using telekinetic eye-beams to fight evil. No one has ever been able to communicate with it, even with telepathy. The Head seems to like helping children.

Michelle Jackman, Washington DC. Gestalt of Defense Attorneys. Michelle practiced criminal law in New York, where her extraordinary eye for legal detail always found a way to get her clients off the hook. Eventually, she began to win cases that no lawyer should possibly win, and was able to persuade even the most implacable judges that her clients were innocent. She figured out she was a Gestalt.

Michelle began to receive a lot of publicity for her Gestalt talent. She successfully defended Armageddo on two occasions in very high-profile cases. On several occasions, state attorney generals fought to have her disbarred, but Michelle successfully overturned any legal action that threatened her career.

Eventually, the Tyranny League came to Jackman and demanded that she file a class action suit on their behalf (and any other supervillain who would pay the Tyranny League’s price) to get a pardon. Michelle realized that this suit would give free rein to some of the world’s worst criminals, and could only be achieved by the overturning of some

of society's most important laws. She also realized that she couldn't escape the League. She committed suicide rather than endanger society.

Alexi Kharlimov, Kiev, Ukraine, Gestalt of Wishes. Ever since 1989, once per year, on his birthday (September 22) Alexi can grant one wish to a single person who asks him. There do seem to be power limits to the wish he can grant (world peace did not break out when his sister wished for it in 1990), and he has the option of saying no. But some of the wishes that he's granted are truly miraculous, such as curing cancer victims and raising the dead.

Alexi instinctively learned of his ability in 1989, and by 1993, it became public knowledge. Naturally, Alexi became an extremely sought-after commodity and was forced into hiding in 1995. His current whereabouts are unknown. It is believed he spent some time in the Gestalt Club in San Francisco.

Red "Mr. Addiction" Lewis, Detroit, Gestalt of Addiction. This man's touch makes people crave whatever mild addiction or psychological compulsion they're most interested in. Red once used his talents to commit robberies but after receiving a serious beating from the Hardliner, he gave up any idea of becoming a supervillain. Now, in exchange for a guarantee of privacy and a small stipend, he works at a Detroit detox facility where he uses his powers to accelerate the addiction cycle and break physical addiction.

The Milkman, Kenora, Ontario, Canada, Gestalt of Milk. Every morning in Kenora Ontario, since February 24, 1994, a mysterious white milk truck appears out of nowhere at 6:12 a.m. and delivers bottles of milk to households within a one-mile radius, free of charge. When the milk has been tested, it's been found to be low-fat, tasty, and extremely nutritious. Examinations of humans and animals who drink this milk show improved health. Laboratory attempts to reproduce this milk have yielded normal milk.

The Milkman rarely speaks with anyone, except a few paperboys and early risers with whom he is polite but highly formal. The Milkman is obviously a pure gestalt. No one knows where he goes when he finishes his deliveries.

Ali Ahmed Mohammed, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Gestalt of Cleanliness. Mohammed's skin and raiment remain unmarked by dirt, stain, or other weather, regardless of where he goes; and his touch can remove the soil from others. However, unless people are used to receiving his powers, they cause a strong allergic reaction, as the receiver becomes immobilized while body fluids and wastes rush out of the body in order to speed the purges. Most recipients break down into uncontrolled weeping and/or sneezing but some people have experienced stronger reactions. Repeated touches eliminate the allergic reactions and work as a dramatically effective curative and enhancement of the immune system.

Ali was a janitor. He's a highly religious Sunni Muslim and often does volunteer work to help pilgrims, which has given rise to the belief that he's a holy man and not just a righteous person. Ali was

very free with his gift until recently, when a woman nearly died choking on her own bile. Now he's reconsidering its use.

The Prince of Colors, New York City, Gestalt of Performance Art. The Prince of Colors is a pure gestalt, a powerful telepath who looks like a humanoid (male) shape of ever-changing colors. The Prince of Colors offers Gestalt performance art involving telepathy and image creation. *T-Muse*, which ran for three years, was his most famous work; an exercise where the Prince of Colors linked an audience together telepathically and had them create a work of art as a collective talent. Unfortunately, the finished art became a collector's item, resulting in lawsuits over ownership and *T-Muse's* cancellation. The Prince's last show, *Umbra*, was much darker, a play where he brought people's shadows to life and the shadows became characters in a survival drama based on *Lord of the Flies*. During the third performance in 2002, the Prince was attacked by Leviathans, leapt into a shadow, and escaped. He hasn't been seen since.

Santa Claus, North Pole, International Waters, Gestalt of Christmas Gift-giving. Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. This "jolly old elf" and Catholic Saint is an entity who gives gifts to the worthy and coal to the unworthy every December 25. Santa's criterion for determining worthiness and unworthiness is unknown; he probably has a ranking system that he calculates on a database at his North Pole workshop.

The Gestalt Santa has been active since the



2001 Gestalt Wave. Santa lives in the Gestalt Dimension in a Fantasyscape (see page 163) called Christmasland. This land contains extremely bright stars, a charming old Bavarian manor with a reindeer pen (with eight tiny reindeer, one with a glowing nose), a workshop full of elves, and a constant background of Christmas music (often with appropriate visual accompaniment).

The only known visitors to the area were Armageddo (who held Santa hostage, in the belief that "he who controls Christmas controls the world!") and the Hollywood Knights, who rescued Santa from Armageddo in a Christmas Eve brawl in Santa's workshop in 2002.

Malcolm Styles, Cincinnati, Ohio, Gestalt of Recording. Malcolm has the Gestalt ability to replay anything that has ever been recorded. He can set his VCR and produce any episode of any television show he wants; he can put film into a projector and it can show any film that has ever been shot.

Malcolm has found himself greatly in demand by film historians, and is making a small fortune restoring old films to their original broadcast quality. He's also responsible for the restored version of Orson Welles' *Magnificent Ambersons*, recovering several lost films by D.W. Griffith, the original version of Stroheim's *Greed* and the complete run of BBC's *Dr. Who*. Malcolm also has listened to the lost eighteen minutes of the Nixon tapes but has never made them public. Malcolm tries to keep a low profile with his powers.

Anna Vanderhagen, Amsterdam, Holland, Gestalt of Cranes. Anna is an eight-year-old Dutch girl who has loved the bird for as long as she can remember. During the last Gestalt Wave, she developed a mental link with cranes. She can control them and can fly as long as she's in physical contact with a crane. Anyone in physical contact with her while she's flying also receives the benefits of flight.

Unfortunately, Dutch authorities, fearing for Anna's safety, an attitude encouraged by Anna's neurotic mother, have attempted to keep Anna from flying. Her mother has gone as far as trying to have every crane nest in Amsterdam destroyed, a legal maneuver blocked by animal rights groups and by Gouden Fantoom, the silent but powerful Gestalt protector of Holland, who has taken Anna's side in the argument.

Diane Webster, Augusta Georgia, USA, Gestalt of Childbirth. Diane's ultrasound scan indicated that she was going to give birth to a healthy baby girl. She did. And she also gave birth to 28 boys and 37 other girls during the same childbirth. No one predicted this number of children and the childbirth did not adversely affect her.

Diane's husband soon divorced her and gave her custody of the children. She could not afford to raise her family, even with the money she got from the tabloids. She refused to turn her children over to the state, and eventually won a lawsuit against local authorities who tried to take her kids by force. The children are now 15 months old, and Diane is raising them with the help of the local neighborhood, who have made

themselves surrogate parents, and a lot of cash from television talk show appearances and tabloids.

Diane has been quoted on several occasions as saying that she'd like to be a mother again.

STRANGE GESTALT PHENOMENA

In addition to odd Gestalts, there are the occasional odd phenomena that can only be explained as either the work of unknown Gestalts or random emissions from the Gestalt Dimension itself. Sample phenomena include:

Constellation Images. Since the First Gestalt Wave occurred in 1989, there have been three occasions when the night sky turned into images of the classic constellations, complete with connector lines. These images lasted for five minutes then disappeared. They did not coincide with any known event or pattern.

The Dead Zone. There is a two-square-kilometer section in Nigeria where anyone who enters it immediately dies — for superhumans, the effect takes longer but even they aren't immune. Discovered in 1994, the zone has no effect on plant life.

Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance. On March 11, 2002, Brooklyn came to a stop for two hours when the entire population was filled with the urge to sing, dance, and perform elaborately choreographed musical numbers with each other. No psionic influence was detected. Even Labyrinth, who arrived soon after the phenomena occurred, had no idea what caused it.

Hiroshima's Shadows. On the anniversary of the atomic bomb, several shadows have reportedly come to life and wept. This has never been confirmed on film, and many dismiss this as an urban legend.

The Liberty Bell. The Tyranny League further damaged the Liberty Bell in a 2002 attack. On July 4, 2003 all damage on the bell vanished for one day, and the Bell rang of its own accord. At midnight on July 5, the Bell stopped ringing and the cracks reappeared.

The Lucky Rainbow of Seattle. At least once a year, a rainbow appears in Seattle, usually in spring, which is tangible and can be followed to its end. There is no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow, but those who bathe in its light have reported receiving extraordinary amounts of good fortune. The rainbow is an arcing polygon, about six meters in diameter. In 1996, a 22-year-old man was killed attempting to climb the rainbow when it vanished while he was a hundred feet in the air. Since then, the police have cordoned off the rainbow.

London Calling. On November 5, 1993, a year after the death of the eccentric British villain Guy Fawkes, the clothing of every man and woman in London was transformed into early 17th-Century garb, and did not return to normal. The loss of keys and wallets caused a serious disruption, but thankfully this phenomenon has not reoccurred.

Perfect Beasts. Rumors say that in seven corners of the world live the Seven Perfect Beasts, wild creatures who are the perfect embodiment of their

species. These beasts consist of: a Bear; a Shark; an Anaconda; a Lion; a Hippopotamus; a Cougar; and a Jaguar. Anyone who slays a Perfect Beast acquires powers, but who knows what the ecological impact will come from this struggle of Man against Nature?

Pinaji, India. In the city of Pinaji, anyone who enters the city instantly gains the ability to make complex mathematical calculations in their heads and know the exact time. These talents disappear when a person leaves the city. Whatever happens to people who enter Pinaji, it also seems to have a slight restorative effect on autism and stroke victims.

A not-entirely-dissimilar phenomenon occurs in the Jordanian town of *Umm Al-Jimal*, where everyone who enters the city knows the name, date of birth, and place of birth of anyone they encounter within the city limits.

Swiss Misses. On August 5, 1996, every woman in Switzerland disappeared for 48 hours. They reappeared on August 7, showing no ill effects but having no memory of the two lost days.

LOST WORLDS

Unlike other campaign worlds, some of which have had superhuman forces present in some fashion since the dawn of time, the recent emergence of the Gestalt phenomena precludes traditional superhero lost worlds. However...

There is a Gestalt phenomena called *Gothingham*, the Gothic City, a metropolis on the eastern seaboard of the United States which can be reached at random times by traveling down certain rundown streets in New York City. The people who enter Gotham report that it looks like it was ripped directly out of *film noir*, so much that everything has a slightly sepia toned appearance and its citizens act like slightly exaggerated stereotypes of people who lived in 1930s. It has colorful crime bosses with disfigured faces, gentleman playboys who become two-fisted heroes, haunted mansions and churches, and gargoyles which come to life and patrol the streets at night (along with a hundred-foot-tall art deco statue of Atlas that talks back to tourists and occasionally puts down the globe to help those in trouble.)

Clothing and technology brought into Gotham are converted to gear and apparel appropriate to pulp novels. Anything or anyone that originated in Gotham that is brought out of the city fades from existence as soon as it crosses the city border, and any item brought into the city reverts to its normal form once it's outside city limits.

Experts believe that Gotham actually exists in the Gestalt Dimension, and that people who enter the city are actually entering a Fantasycape. This has yet to be definitively proven, but certainly this – and many other mythic places – could exist within the Gestalt. Some people in Gotham have mentioned the neighboring city of *Heliotopia*, City of Marvels, but no one can confirm entering it.

Beyond the Fantasycapecs, Catarata's nascent

undersea city (see page 85), the city of Kuumahali (see page 107) and Orbit City (see page 178) fill something of the niche of the isolated "Lost World" enclave.

PROMINENT NON-GESTALT NPCs

In a world of superheroes, you're going to find some extraordinary non-supers who are friends, confidantes, and rivals of the PCs. Some non-superhuman NPCs who are shaking things up in the world of Gestalt include:

Boudoricco, Superhero Fashion Designer: Caucasian male, 33. Boudoricco is based in Philadelphia. He designs costumes for superhumans, mostly for heroes, though a few villains who haven't been charged with major offenses or convicted of minor ones also employ his services and guarantees discretion on delivery. Boudoricco is one of the most flamboyant designers, combining superhero chic and modern fabric with clothing styles that suggest Renaissance Italy or the court of Elizabeth I. "Gestalts are the Renaissance Men of this new Renaissance of humanity" is one of his favorite sayings. He's gotten the contract to design "formal dress uniforms" for Columbia, elaborate new costumes that the team would only wear on formal occasions. They have not been unveiled.

Boudoricco has also been linked romantically with Columbia's Carnival, although they're really just friends. Boudoricco lives a hedonistic lifestyle.

Tom Ferguson, Sculptor. African-American male, 34. Ferguson is a hustler but he's got talent. Tom specializes in abstract recreations of Gestalt battles which he sells to private collectors, heroes and villains. Ferguson works in steel and glass. He's been commissioned to do a large sculpture for the front of Columbia HQ.

Ferguson is a lonely artist, a manic-depressive with suicidal tendencies. It requires constant praise to motivate him, and the slightest criticism sends him into a funk. Tom's worried that Columbia will cancel his latest contract, that all his commissions will dry up, and that everything he's done to further his career will fall apart. He's also hiding the fact that he's been contacted to do art for the Tyranny League.

Lily Gaverick, Superhero groupie. Caucasian female, 25. Lily's an unemployed web page designer with too much money and too much time on her hands. She likes to follow superheroes around the country, take pictures of them (preferably in their casual moments), and then post them on her web site. Her devotion to her web activity borders on stalking. Her private hobby is pursuing sexual relations with handsome male superheroes, and she keeps a private journal describing her conquests (eight so far). When she hits a dozen, she plans to go public and make a fortune.

Luke Mulstead, Genius criminal attorney. Though his skills are not quite at a gestalt level, he's secretly on retainer to the Tyranny League to defend their "pets" (young supervillains they're mentoring

Creator's Credit

Doctor Gunther Strauss is the creation of Geoff Somers and used with permission.

in the hope that one day, they'll be League-quality). This lanky, obnoxious, young Chicago native is amoral and proud of it. He gets a sick satisfaction out of smearing a superhero's reputation on the stand and getting clients released on the most astonishingly obscure technicalities. He's always surrounded by several paroled mercenary supervillains for protection and struts and gloats his way through a crowd in every situation. However, Railgun has vowed that he won't survive the year, and Kinestar wants to put him behind bars *very* badly....

Ray Tiordan, Gestalt Journalist and entrepreneur. Caucasian male, 36. When the First Gestalt Wave hit, Journalism student Ray Riordan knew that his opportunity for success had arrived and that these superhumans would shape the destiny of man. Riordan did everything he could to get close to them and to raise money to back the creation of a Gestalt cable television network. It didn't work out as well as he hoped; he never got control of GTV, and the programming's more tabloid than he wanted. But he's got an hour each week (*This Week In The Gestalt Dimension*) where he can produce the program *he* thinks the world needs.

Riordan is considered one of the world's experts in Gestalts; he's a trivia expert with a photographic memory who knows every rumor and every confirmed appearance of every Gestalt. He's a driven, energetic, and friendly man, but that friendship hides a certain ruthlessness in pursuing a personal agenda. He wants to found a media empire, and GTV would only be the start.

Gunther Strauss, Gestalt Sciences Expert. Caucasian male, 57. Gunther is one of the world's most renowned experts on Gestalt sciences and psionics, and is often called upon to examine cases of unusual Gestalts. He's an eccentric with a bit of an absent mind. He's a good friend of the Hollywood Knights.

Colonel Winslow T. Warmington, Air Force Superhuman Liaison. African-American male, 43. Of all of the people who work with superhumans in the military, Warmington is probably the most progressive. Warmington wants to put together a squad of flying Gestalts whose aerial abilities will put them on par with jet fighters in terms of range and firepower. Despite the success of the Vanguard in the Marine Corps, Warmington has had to fight anti-Gestalt paranoia in the armed services every step of the way. However, if the USAF Alpha Corps comes to fruition by the end of the current year, it will be Warmington's triumph.

Warmington is a driven individual, a retired test pilot who thinks of his Gestalts as family, and tends to overly associate himself with Gestalt causes.

GESTALTS AROUND THE WORLD

America isn't the only nation on earth that's been affected by the Gestalt phenomena. The Gestalt affects every continent, concentrating on heavily industrialized, urban, and suburban societies. Gestalts are ten to twenty times more likely to appear in such areas than in rural or underdeveloped areas. The largest concentrations of Gestalt activity are in the United States, Europe,

Canada, Japan, and Brazil; Mexico, China, and India are rapidly becoming hotbeds of the Gestalt phenomenon.

Most major nations have national Gestalt teams; they're similar to the USMC Vanguard team and wear military-style uniforms, loose-fitting athletic clothes or tights with a military motif. Only in areas where comic books have insinuated into the popular culture do Gestalts take on superhero trappings. However, with the high media profile of the United States and the penetration (some say "contamination") of American culture worldwide, the superhero motif is on the increase.

The most prominent international Gestalts hook into a nation's heroic pulp mythology or favorite images. National champions and resurrected deities from regional myth are universally found Gestalt types, but most Gestalts are not as stereotypical as portrayed by the Western media.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Gestalts varies worldwide depending on many complex factors, including industrialization level, population density, and national psychology. Cultural changes have seen India and China close the "Gestalt gap" with the United States over the last two Gestalt waves, and their Gestalt populations may exceed the United States after the next wave.

On page 81 is a much simplified version of the Measurer's census of Gestalts. Data does not include statistics on chain gestalts or Leviathans. There are several oddities on the list: Denmark's Gestalt high population is largely due to the presence of Victor Eismann, Israel has a lot of Gestalts because of immigration from Eastern Europe and America, and no one's sure why Iceland has as many Gestalts as it does.

NORTH AMERICA

CANADA

Canada's Gestalt community has been colored by the presence of one supervillain: Dr. Theresa Power. This villain has dogged almost every Canadian superhero for the last seven years, and is responsible for the spectacular failure of many Canadian superheroes and superhero teams.

National Heroes: The first Canadian superhero was *Crucible*, a powerful pure gestalt who appeared in the first wave and declared herself the Protector Gestalt of Canada. She had advanced telepathic abilities (usable only on Canadian citizens), advanced teleportation abilities (also usable only on Canadian soil), and the ability to transmute metal. She was responsible for the death of Dr. Power's father Matthias. In November 1997, in order to save the people of Toronto from Dr. Power's mass-suicide machine, she surrendered herself into the villain's custody. She hasn't been seen since.

WORLDWIDE GESTALT POPULATION SURVEY

	Proportion	Estimated		Proportion	Estimated
North America			<i>Russia</i>	1:60,000	2250
<i>Canada</i>	1:60,000	500	<i>Turkey</i>	1:100,000	625
<i>Cuba</i>	1:200,000	60	<i>Yugoslavia</i>	1:80,000	240
<i>Haiti</i>	1:300,000	25			
<i>Jamaica</i>	1:200,000	15	Middle East		
<i>Mexico</i>	1:150,000	800	<i>Egypt</i>	1:200,000	800
<i>United States</i>	1:50,000	6,500	<i>Iran</i>	1:200,000	900
			<i>Iraq</i>	1:200,000	120
Central America	1:200,000	200	<i>Israel</i>	1:100,000	70
			<i>Jordan</i>	1:200,000	50
South America			<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	1:200,000	110
<i>Argentina</i>	1:200,000	150	<i>Syria</i>	1:200,000	125
<i>Brazil</i>	1:200,000	800	<i>Yemen</i>	1:200,000	70
<i>Chile</i>	1:250,000	80			
<i>Colombia</i>	1:200,000	225	Africa		
<i>Peru</i>	1:200,000	120	<i>Saharan Africa</i>	1:1,000,000	80
<i>Venezuela</i>	1:200,000	120	<i>Central Africa</i>	1:300,000	1200
			<i>Ethiopia</i>	1:200,000	325
Western Europe			<i>South Africa</i>	1:150,000	320
<i>Austria</i>	1:50,000	200			
<i>Denmark</i>	1:60,000	150	Asia		
<i>France</i>	1:50,000	1400	<i>Afghanistan</i>	1:300,000	75
<i>Germany</i>	1:50,000	1400	<i>China</i>	1:200,000	6,200
<i>Iceland</i>	1:20,000	20	<i>India</i>	1:300,000	4,500
<i>Ireland</i>	1:50,000	120	<i>Indochina</i>	1:300,000	640
<i>Italy</i>	1:50,000	1100	<i>Indonesia</i>	1:300,000	800
<i>Netherlands/Belgium</i>	1:50,000	500	<i>Japan</i>	1:50,000	3,000
<i>Norway</i>	1:60,000	150	<i>North Korea</i>	1:300,000	66
<i>Spain and Portugal</i>	1:50,000	1000	<i>Pakistan</i>	1:300,000	250
<i>Sweden</i>	1:50,000	250	<i>Philippines</i>	1:300,000	320
<i>Switzerland</i>	1:50,000	100	<i>South Korea</i>	1:60,000	900
<i>United Kingdom</i>	1:50,000	1,300	<i>Taiwan</i>	1,100,000	250
Eastern Europe			Oceania		
<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	1:60,000	350	<i>Australia</i>	1:60,000	350
<i>Greece</i>	1:60,000	200	<i>New Zealand</i>	1:60,000	75
<i>Poland</i>	1:60,000	600			
<i>Romania</i>	1:60,000	250			

Estimated World Population 45,000–55,000

Crucible's disappearance stripped Canada of its central protector and left a hole that many have tried to fill. *Sergeant Terry Manning*, a member of the Lake of the Woods RCMP, was the most noteworthy product of the Second Gestalt Wave, a Travel Gestalt with superhuman running and teleportation abilities. After Crucible's disappearance, the media tried to push him into a public capacity he neither enjoyed nor wanted. Thanks to one too many comparisons with several prominent Television Mounties, he retired from the force in 1999 and became a bush pilot in Northern Ontario.

In 1997, Canada's first superteam was founded in Calgary. *The Stampeders* were a group of confident heroes who saw themselves as the Gestalt equivalent of the early RCMP, bringing order to the chaos of the Gestalt frontier. Their members were: *Brilliance* (a Light

Gestalt); *The Blacksmith* (a Gestalt of Smelting who could separate metals by touch and make any metal stronger or sharper than normally possible); *Pride* (a self-opinionated powerhouse); and the unfortunately named *Ballbuster* (archetype unknown though many who've seen him in action have pegged him as "the Gestalt of Fighting Like a Cheap, Dirty Bastard").

The team's problems started when they were sued over their name by the local CFL football team in 1997. Tension over the lawsuit, coupled with several humiliating defeats led to deteriorating relations within the team. They finally broke up in 1998. *Brilliance* was captured by Dr. Power in 1999 and hasn't been seen since; the *Blacksmith* retired and moved to Edmonton, where he runs a knife shop; *Pride* moved to Regina, where he assists the RCMP in crimefighting; and the embittered *Ballbus-*

Pick and Choose

There are a lot of characters here and an almost dizzying assortment of names. This section is probably best used in the following ways:

A Name Resource

Do you just want a name for a German supervillain that's different than a painful cliché, like "The Wall"? This section should give you some good examples.

International Villains

Do you want to throw a foreign villain into a mercenary team. Look through the names listed here, and stat him up. At least he'll have a bit of a backstory.

PC from Abroad

Does a player want to take the role of a foreign super in America? Let him look through this section and see if there are names and concepts that he likes!

ter became a mercenary supervillain (he's at large in Western Canada and the American Northwest.)

Toronto's 2001 attempt at a superhero team also met with failure. *The Good Men* was a team of idealists who wanted to become Canada's Columbia. Their leader was *Sheltie*, a female Dog Gestalt and pack leader, other members included: *Cornerstone*, a Gestalt whose powers aid faithful Christians and harmed non-Christians; *Craig Easley* (no codename, a Jamaican-born Sprinter Gestalt); *Hydroplane* (a Gestalt of Electromagnetism); *Leonine* (a Muscle Gestalt); *Canadian Shield* (Gestalt Protector of Central Canada); and *Pax Warrior* (former UN Peacekeeper and Canadian Armed Forces captain who could summon weapons and turn people against advocates of violence).

Initially quite successful, in November 2003 Easley told the Toronto Sun that: "The Good Men are unstoppable" and "Dr. Power had better watch her butt". A day later, the Doctor dispatched a dozen superpowered minions and destroyed the Good Men's headquarters while they were away. Sheltie retaliated immediately, tracking the minions to a base on the outskirts of Oshawa, Ontario. Unfortunately the base was a trap. Leonine's back was broken while fighting Silverfist, and Easley and Hydroplane were killed.

The Good Men broke up immediately. Sheltie, convinced she was personally responsible for the deaths, became a recluse. Cornerstone left the superhero scene to start a Christian television network. Leonine recently had experimental bionic surgery. (If he successfully recovers, there's a standing offer for him to move to Ottawa and work as a bodyguard for the Prime Minister). Pax Warrior returned to peacekeeping but was reported Missing In Action in Kurdistan in June 2004. Canadian Shield retired to raise a family, but it's obvious that he hasn't beaten the "superhero bug" yet, as he often goes back into costume and fights crime in the Toronto area (it's rumored he'd like to put together a new team).

Recently, the newly formed *True North*, a Winnipeg-based RCMP superhero team, has received favorable publicity. It's led by an enthusiastic flying energy controller who calls himself *Canadian Crusader*, an idealist with ambitions of becoming the premier superhuman symbol of Canadian unity and reconciliation between Canada's often fractious regions. Its other members are: *Turnabout* (an inertia controller); *Lacrosse*, an Ojibwa Indian Athletic Gestalt who can fire lacrosse balls with interesting effects; and *Bellweather*, the most powerful Weather Gestalt in North America, who recently shocked the team by announcing he was leaving Canada to become a member of Columbia.

Villains: Toronto's major supervillain threats come from four independent villains: *Arctic*, a powerful Winter Gestalt who's an embittered ex-city engineer; *Delphi*, Canada's self-proclaimed "premier Thief Gestalt"; *Blackwood* "Master of Shadows", who can summon agents out of shadows to do his bidding; and *Manifesto*, a Gestalt of Propaganda who sells

his mind poisoning abilities to the highest bidder. There's talk that these four villains may unite to form a very powerful supervillain team.

One supervillain team that has remained north of the 49th Parallel is *Merc Six*, a six-man mercenary squad that specializes in industrial espionage and terror for hire. Merc Six is based in Alberta but has been active throughout Canada from Vancouver to Halifax. Its leader is *Alan Throne* (a Marksman Gestalt); the other permanent members include *Trojan* (a Strongman Gestalt who gets sensitive to jokes that compares his name to that of a popular prophylactic); *Scabbard* (a Swordsman Gestalt); and *Horizon* (a Contortionist Gestalt who can elongate his form); the other two slots in Merc Six change as frequently as the seasons.

Regional Supers: Toronto's superhero darling is *Skylight*, a flamboyant flying woman who's heavily influenced by Columbia's Carnival. Like most Canadian heroes, she's also had several encounters with the minions of Dr. Power. First appearing in 1998, she initially refused to join the Good Men, but after the Oshawa incident, she offered to help Sheltie put the team back together. Sheltie wanted no part of superheroing, but they remain close friends. One of Sheltie's dogs, an exceptionally intelligent German shepherd named *Beau Maxwell*, became Skylight's companion and used his advanced canine abilities on several cases. Skylight initially came across as a bumbling exhibitionist, but has picked up the tricks of the trade and is well on her way to becoming a first-rate detective.

The Steelsman is based in Hamilton but active through the Windsor-Quebec corridor, who emerged in the latest gestalt wave. A Gestalt of Metals, he's able to transform himself into living Grade-9 titanium steel. He has a psychokinetic link with the metals in the surrounding area, in normal situations, he's on par with most Strongmen Gestalts, but when he's near large quantities of steel, he gets substantially stronger (as do the metals around him). Since he fought Silverfist to an effective draw (they were inside a Hamilton steel mill, where his strength was the equal of Power's strongest bodyguard) he's become something of a media darling, which has certainly fed his already healthy ego.

Vancouver's champion is *Captain Vancouver*, who claims to be the historical Captain George Vancouver, a late 18th-Century explorer and mariner. The historical Captain George, however, did not have the ability to command people with the sound of his voice, command ghostly lookouts to see through walls, or summon phantom soldiers to flog criminals when they're beaten. The Captain is very heroic, but his antiquated attitudes (mostly to women and Irish, and to a lesser extent, First Nations peoples) can be repugnant. One of the people who refuse to work with him is *Heritage*, a Musqueam First Nations gestalt who's patrolled the waters near Vancouver since the 1994 Gestalt Wave. Initially, he only demonstrated water control powers, but a 2001 attack from Dr. Power triggered a host of new powers associated

Credit Where It's Due

Hydroplane is based on a concept that was suggested by Tom McCarthy, while Canadian Shield is based on a character played by Phil Dunn.

with local Indian myths: weather control, animal form, superhuman strength and endurance, and the ability to call powerful spirits out of native carvings. Only Bellweather and Ténacité rival him for the title of “Canada’s most powerful superhero”.

Heritage, however, rarely appears in the city. Vancouver’s most active superhero is *Lion Singh Khalsa*, who gained fame as the first Indo-Canadian to become a star in the CFL, and now a Regional Defender Gestalt whose battlecry instills fear in the hearts of his enemies. He’s often joined by *Bernie O’Neill*, a social worker and Optimism Gestalt who makes people feel better about themselves and the future. The Lion’s arch-nemesis is *Red Morgan*, a physical powerhouse. His other major enemy is a Smuggler Gestalt with the cheeky nickname of *B.C. Bud*, protector of B.C.’s illegal marijuana grow-ops.

Vancouver’s Chinese community is plagued by the *Dragon of the Woods*, a Gestalt of Night who’s allied with Hong Kong’s Weng Chiang. The Dragon’s activities include narcotics smuggling and the development of new drugs; Vancouver’s Chinatown is the first place they appear.

Ookpik, the owl-woman of the North, is the protector of Canada’s northern wilderness. She hunts criminals, kills them, and then feasts on them. It’s said that even Doctor Power fears her.

Longshadow is a retired American archvillain, now based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Longshadow can become a living shadow; he worked as a cat burglar and industrial spy from 1992–1997 in New York City. Retirement has mellowed Longshadow, and he now actually fights crime, though he’s still wanted by American authorities.

Newfoundland’s favorite son is *Johnny Bridgewell*, a Mariner Gestalt. He’s the Robin Hood of the fisheries, a wanted criminal who sinks foreign ships that overfish in the Grand Banks.

Dieppe is a product of the 1994 Gestalt Wave, a one-armed World War II survivor. He’s an Ottawa-based gestalt with one terrifying power; he can make people mentally relive the failed 1942 invasion of Dieppe (a botched precursor to D-Day where thousands of Canadian soldiers were massacred). He initially used his powers to force people to give him food; when he was arrested, the public outcry was so great that he received a pardon. Dieppe now travels as a guest lecturer in Canadian public schools, using his power to make students really understand what he went through. He’s a symbol of the war dead who raises funds for veteran-related charities, especially around Remembrance Day. He also fights crime. Although he’s one of Canada’s oldest gestalts, Doctor Power has never tried to eliminate him.

Quebec: *La Belle Province* has its own brand of superheroes, and most of its heroes and villains stay close to home. The first Quebec superhero was a flyer named *Navigateur*, a shy man who only became a superhero because his friends pushed him into it. *Navigateur* died of pneumonia in 1993. The first Quebec supervillain was *Destructeur* (“The Destroy-

er”) a mild-mannered schoolteacher who became a destructive monster whenever he got drunk. Quebec police tracked down *Destructeur* in his civilian ID, captured him, and kept him drugged for three years to keep his powers in check, a practice that outraged civil libertarians. When the case reached the Supreme Court in 1996, it almost caused a constitutional crisis, but *Destructeur* developed an immunity to the drug and broke free of his confinement before the court delivered its verdict. *Destructeur* has remained in monster form ever since and now terrorizes townships in the St. Lawrence Valley.

The longest-serving Quebec Gestalt is *Le Coursier*, a Speed Gestalt who protects Montreal. *Le Coursier* is an outspoken Federalist (a man who wants Quebec to remain part of Canada) and actively campaigned during the 1996 referendum which saw Quebec remain in Canada by a narrow margin. This outraged many Quebecers, and after the 1997 gestalt wave, a team of Quebec nationalists was formed. *Souveraineté* (“Sovereignty”) is a superhero team composed of *Le Quebecker* (“the Quebecker”); *Renard* (Fox, a Trickster Gestalt); *Ténacité* (“Tenacity”, “The Edge of Quebec”, a Gestalt of Determination); *Concurrent* (“the Competitor”, former female Olympic swimmer, a Competition Gestalt); and *Navigateur II* (a female flyer who honored the memory of the deceased hero). Doctor Power’s forces attacked this team in 2003, in a battle in downtown Montreal which saw nearly a billion dollars in damage.

In the aftermath, it was revealed that *Le Quebecker* was not a Gestalt, just a well-groomed public relations figurehead. The scandal shook the team to the point of near-collapse, but support from some of Quebec’s pro-sovereigntist papers generated a sympathetic backlash. The team has begun to appear in public again, with a new (and definitely superhuman) *Le Quebecker* in charge. Despite the scandal, they’re one of the most powerful teams of superhumans in North America, perhaps ranking behind the Hollywood Knights as the third most capable hero team on the continent. Another confrontation with Power’s contingent is definitely in the cards.

Brûlure (“Burning”) is an Arson Gestalt and mercenary who travels around North America. *Brûlure* is known for his sense of self-importance; he thinks of himself as one of the world’s most powerful energy controllers (he isn’t) and also views himself as “Quebec’s ambassador to the world supervillain community”. Most people think he’s one of Canada’s bigger nutcases.

Finesse, AKA Henri Dumaourier, is Quebec’s newest master villain, a product of the most recent Gestalt Wave. He has the ability to boost twelve people at a time to superhuman performance levels, but they have to agree to serve him unquestioningly for a year and they lose their powers if they disobey him. He’s using his gang of superpowered thugs to infiltrate the Montreal Police Department and Montreal’s crime families, and has begun a takeover of Quebec’s underworld. He’s probably the most

What Carnival Says about Skylight: “I hate it when people call someone a ‘clone’ of another superhero. ‘Light’s a way better detective than me, and I love the dog. All the comparisons are totally unfair. I’ve gotten together with her and Chama! at Copenhagen, and it really clicks when the three of us get together. I don’t know if we’re “gestalt twins” —or triplets—but we really rock.”

Significant Timeline

Diversion: 1996 Referendum?

In our world, the last Quebec sovereignty referendum was held in 1995. On Gestalt-Earth, an unknown party tampered with the timing, though the percentages for "Oui" and "Non" were almost identical.

dangerous of Quebec's native villains, though he's acquired enemies such as...

Cerebral, a Quebec City-based Gestalt, is the least political hero in Quebec. He's a Renaissance Man Gestalt, detective, chemist, linguist, and poet. He also designs some of the world's toughest crossword puzzles. He's Canada's answer to the Journeyman, a man who solves crimes as an intellectual challenge.

Quebec's leading villainess is *Belette* ("the Weasel"), a very daring and brilliant thief. She and *Cerebral* have a love-hate relationship; she likes to leave completed versions of *Cerebral*'s crossword puzzles at the scenes of her crimes. *Belette*'s chief rival in crime is *La Directrice* ("the Matron"), a bitter misanthrope who runs a teenaged girl's school for crime and has begun recruiting Gestalt students, including *Gel D'hiver* ("Winter Frost", a Figure Skating Gestalt) and *Joiallier* ("The Jeweler", a Jewelry Gestalt).

MEXICO

Heroes: In Mexico, gestalts are called Los Campeones ("The Champions") because of their media presence and the good deeds of early Mexican gestalts. Easily, the most famous Campeón is *El Milagro*, a strongman with astonishing leaping prowess and the ability to make children incredibly happy in his presence. *El Milagro* revealed himself on the same day that America Man made his first public appearance. He devotes most of his life to helping

children. He's trained several protégés: his most powerful student is *Ascensión*, the Shining Saint, a former Roman Catholic priest whose bond with the Gestalt of Labor grants him vast telekinetic powers. An attack by the Tyranny League on his home village (which Imperator believed was hiding one of Dr. Astra's scientific caches) deeply shook him, and he recently announced that he was leaving Mexico to join Columbia.

There are two other famous vigilantes in Mexico City who are sometimes rivals. One is *Angel Azul* ("the Blue Angel"), a superpowered biker-vigilante who fights corruption in Mexico City and helps the poor in the barrios. The other is a former mercenary turned street-Samaritan, *Pegador*, widely considered to be the most amazing marksman in the world.

Misericordia ("Mercy") is an old woman; like Amnesty, she has the ability to nurse the poor and the downtrodden with her touch. Unlike Amnesty, she avoids politics, preferring to stay out of the limelight whenever possible. Yet despite her best efforts, she has not escaped media scrutiny or public acclaim.

Mexico's best known super-soldier is *El Capitan Voladura* ("Captain Blaster"), a Sun Gestalt/energy controller who's a captain in the Mexican army. Originally an army flunkey, he's become an advocate for social justice in recent years.

Calaca is a skeleton king who appears throughout Mexico once every year on Día de los Muertos ("The Day of the Dead"). He searches for the mothers of dead



Creator's Credit

El Comandante is the creation of the late Elizabeth Wolcott and is used with her permission.

children and arranges for them to meet their children's ghosts at dusk by their grave sites. Those who encounter him become filled with drunken wildness until they forget they met him (except for mothers, whom Calaca treats with the utmost respect).

Another unusual gestalt is *Catarata* ("Waterfall"), an amphibious man who lives off the coast of Guadalajara and who is rumored to be building an undersea city for aquatic gestalts. Catarata is a secretive gestalt who strongly dislikes media scrutiny. Because of this, some have attributed some very sinister motives to Catarata's project.

Villains: Mexico's most infamous villain is *Pirata del Cielo* ("Sky Pirate", a flying supervillain, based in Southern Mexico). Sky Pirate flies at incredible speeds and becomes intangible at will (powers which he can share with his minions). Sky Pirate's gang likes to break into passing aircraft, rob the passengers, and occasionally take hostages.

Mexico's premier martial artist is the wandering street fighter *Cazador*, a strongman who seems to adapt his style to match that of his opponent. His facial features always seem to blur, he's never been seen in a completely motionless state. Cazador is a supervillain who likes to pick fights for little reason, and leaves behind a trail of hospitalized and crippled opponents.

The troubled province of Chiapas is championed by *El Comandante*, "the Commander. This is a Gestalt of Mexican Masked Wrestlers-turned-popular-revolutionary. Despite his arguably comical motif, El Comandante is a fierce fighter. Prior to bonding with his gestalt, he led several raids against municipalities in Chiapas and earned the ire of the Mexican government. However, he also helped broker a cease-fire in 1996 and remains a minor political figure who commands a small but loyal cadre of personal militia.

THE CARIBBEAN

In recent years, the task of many Caribbean supers has been to clean up after hurricanes, though grinding poverty and the ongoing conflict in Haiti remain concerns of the Gestalt community. Still, the heroic spirit that exemplifies the best that gestalts have to offer is very much present here.

Jamaica: Jamaica, the large British colony, has the most prosperous gestalt community in the region. *Speed Freak* is the most famous of this country's superhuman native sons, a product of the Second Gestalt Wave. The Freak has issued an open challenge to any gestalt who thinks they can beat him in a footrace on his native soil (he's lost only once, to Ricochet).

Speed Freak's major rival is *Jack Rappaport*, a Rastafarian Gestalt and musician who is the leader of a small cult. His powers relax people who are experiencing stress which is useful in fighting angry supervillains.

Maroon ("the Runaway") claims to be the best

fighter in the Caribbean. An exceptional hand-to-hand fighter who seems almost impervious to weapons fire, Maroon spends much of his time assisting laborers in the island's poorer communities. He's also a friend of *Grandy Nanny*, a legendary 18th-Century Jamaican sorceress who was a key opponent of the British slave trade; this reincarnation is a protector of Jamaican women.

Cuba: The policy of the Castro government is to conscript gestalts into civil or military service (and keep those who won't cooperate under strict control). Cuba's two official gestalt protectors are *Fiel* ("Faithful") and *Revolucion* ("the Revolution") whose abilities are superstrength and fire powers respectively. One Havana crimefighter in Havana who's not associated with the government is the popular vigilante *Valiente* ("Valiant").

The actions of Cubans in the United States is a source of controversy, especially among Cuban exiles in Florida. One such expatriate is the mercenary villain *Muerte* ("Death"), though his lackluster record suggests that the name is a gross overstatement.

Haiti: Haiti's most notorious gestalt is Pierre Mondieu, a brutal man better known in the west as *Frere* ("The Brother"). He's a Black Magic Gestalt who transforms people into zombies to do his bidding. He's also been accused of cannibalism (even of other gestalts, to steal their power) and other grotesque crimes.

CENTRAL AMERICA

One of the earliest controversies on Gestalt-Earth was the use of American supers in the Panama Invasion of 1990. As elsewhere, gestalts in the region remain a source of contention.

Heroes: During America's 1989 siege of Manuel Noriega), a native super who called himself *Jinete* ("Cavalryman") made his first appearance. He had been a rebel fighting against Noriega after his forces had murdered his brother. But he had no love of foreigners, so when Noriega was captured, Jinete made a public appearance to forestall an American occupation. He swore to wipe out corruption and vowed that an American invasion would never happen again. To this end, he founded a team who would be a private force to defend the Panamanian constitution and the Panamanian people. By 1992, *Los Protectores* ("the Protectors") had become the largest and most powerful team of superheroes in Central America.

In 1995, Jinete learned that he had contracted terminal cancer, and passed leadership of the team onto *Pastor* ("the Shepherd"). *Jinete* passed away in early 1996 and (despite his many conflicts with the Panamanian government) received a funeral fit for a head of state. Pastor was a good man, but proved too weak-willed to keep the team from becoming embroiled in political corruption. Rather than watch it fall apart, *Sabio* ("the Wise", a young martial artist/gad-geteer) wrested control from the Pastor, and proved to be an exceptional leader and an even harsher thorn in the sides of corrupt officials than Jinete had been.

The team is now composed of: *Sabio, Madreperla* ("Mother of Pearl", a woman who can summon four "sons" which are actually telekinetic martial arts constructs), *Yanqui* ("the Yankee", a telepathic Good Samaritan Gestalt, formerly a superhero based in New York City known as Bomber); *Subterfugio* ("Deception", Gestalt of Shadows); *Destellar* ("Sudden Flash", a light controller); *Voluntad* (a Determination Gestalt who's a dirty infighting/infiltration specialist); *Felicidad* (Happiness, a psionic flyer); and *Varonil* ("Manly", a macho strongman). Much of their time is spent fighting superhuman Colombian and Venezuelan mercenaries who frequently cross the southern border and exposing corrupt politicians and judges.

Los Protectores has made Central America a better place to live, but their list of enemies is probably longer than any other team on the planet. Regrettably, a number of agencies of the US government are on that list of enemies, agencies that would just love to engineer some reason to go down there and, in the words of one CIA director, "teach them that our apple pie is their humble pie".

Nicaragua is home to one of the world's most famous superheroines, Amnesty, who has attracted gestalts with a similar social and political agenda: *Pregonar* ("the Hawk") is a gestalt who seeks and punishes those who violate agreements while *Rosquilla* ("the Rose") is a Gestalt of Compassion who aids victims of persecution.

Two gestalts emerged to help people after 1998's Hurricane Mitch. *Ceramica* ("Ceramics") makes living ceramic dolls that he gives away to guard people's homes in Managua. These dolls helped rebuild homes and other pieces of broken infrastructure. *Fuga* ("Flight") is a Flying Gestalt who's currently hiding from local gangs.

The Nicaraguan national champion is a Strongman Gestalt named *Grandeza* ("Greatness"). In his teenaged days, Grandez participated in several brutal massacres; as a result, he feels anything but "great" and is terrified at the prospect that his past crimes may be brought to light.

Honduras has cultivated its own local supers. *Martillo* ("the Hammer") is a Stone Gestalt who's on good terms with American heroes, while *Araña* ("the Spider") is a deformed freak who kills criminals with spider venom. Despite their differences, the two men are occasional partners.

Villains: In 1995, a powerful American supervillain *Vaughn Landers* (the already grandiose "Quantum King") dressed up as the archvillain *Mesías* ("the Messiah") and attempted to take over Honduras and El Salvador by force. He killed several Honduran cabinet members, but his coup ended in an embarrassing failure – Landers was defeated by a combination of Martillo, Los Protectores, and the Honduran army — he was shot with repeated tank rounds and killed. Since then, "Mesías" has become common slang in Latin America for an invading American super (usually with connotations of extreme incompetence).

There are more than a few gestalt bandit lead-

ers who plague Central America, and numerous villains seem to find their way to Panama and beyond from South America.

SOUTH AMERICA

ARGENTINA

Heroes: Argentina has numerous known gestalts: The most powerful superhuman is *Desafiador* ("Defy!"); living outside the law, this Gestalt of Individual Potential is an avowed anarchist who uses his gravity control powers to protect the common people and bedevil the authorities. Argentina's best known vigilantes are Buenos Aires' protectors, *El Lobo Grande* ("the Big Wolf", yet another vigilante who uses that name); and the eccentric gestalt detective/inventor *Habilidad* ("Skill").

There are local protector gestalts in several of the larger cities: *Justicia* ("Justice") is a leather clad vigilante/ martial artist who patrols the night streets in La Plata. *Cohete* ("Rocket") is a popular Speed Gestalt who lives in Cordoba and boasts that "she's the fastest woman alive".

Villains: *Inferno Del Luna Nueva* ("Inferno of the New Moon") is a burning demon that appears every new moon in Buenos Aires. He attacks three people at random before vanishing and no one knows why. *Ejecutante* ("the Performer") is a decadent villain given to kidnapping and impersonating local celebrities, performing scandalous actions to destroy their reputations, and then releasing them to face the consequences. *Rason* ("Reason") specializes in puzzles, playing games with police, government, the media, and vigilantes. Rason rarely hurts people, and has achieved celebrity status equal to many heroes.

Neuros is the name given to a third-generation neo-Nazi chemist, a man who is considered to be the world's leading expert on biochemical engineering. It's believed he's building a bodyguard of elite biochemical engineered soldiers. The ultimate goal of this project is a mystery.

Mandos ("the Commander") is either a conqueror in a flying tank or a living flying tank. Either way, he's a major threat to the nation's security. He's attacked government installations on three occasions, and been driven away each time, yet no one weapon has seemed to penetrate its armor. Mandos is able to disappear at will, thwarting all attempts to pursue or track its location.

Even more disturbing is the arrival of a militant faction of Ar'Kayadin from the planet Vettar, who have offered to help the Argentine government form a new empire in South America if they'd accept their generous help. Thus far, no one's said "no" to them....

BRAZIL

The greatest emerging power of South America

is Brazil. Most of Brazil's numerous gestalts aren't colorful US-style adventurers, just people who use their powers to become celebrities. The most famous example of this is Sergio Ribeiro who's given himself the title *Supremo Lutador* ("Supreme Fighter") an extremely brutal *judoka* who wanders the world looking for competition. After placing highly in the last two Copenhagen tournaments, he's become a cult figure to many martial arts fans in the West.

Heroes: The most popular Western-style superhero in Brazil is the graceful martial arts master and soap opera star *Arrocho* ("Dancer"). *Chama!* ("Flame") is a popular superheroine who flies around Rio de Janeiro, displaying pyrotechnics when she isn't fighting crime. She and Carnival have cultivated a friendship, that's helped make Columbia a very popular team in Brazil.

Os Mensageiros is a team of vigilantes in black who patrol the *favelas* (the hillside squatter districts that form sub-communities) of Rio. Originally, there was thought to be only one *mensagerio*, however lately over a half-dozen versions of him have appeared at the same time, in the same place. These incredibly swift masters of Brazilian martial arts claim to be the ghosts of children who worked as messengers for local drug lords. They target corrupt policemen and intervene in gang wars.

Argamassa ("Concrete") is a Rio-based Strongman Gestalt who emerged during the last Gestalt Wave. He's a decent crimefighter, but also has a reputation as a ladies' man which has made him the source of several scandals.

Sócio Tambor ("the Drum Club") is a team of young teenage gestalts based in Salvador. They are more interested in helping street kids (or playing drums) than fighting crime, though they will intervene when they see arguments start to get ugly. The leader is *Padastro* ("the Stepfather") a Capoeira Gestalt, and an excellent singer and dancer who's on the verge of a (solo) music career.

There are three other members in the club. *Braçal* ("Arm") is an Anti-Bullying Gestalt with superhuman strength — he's the most active crimefighter in the group and says he'll join the police when he's older. *Praia* ("Beach") a Swimming Gestalt, is an amateur lifeguard and the only person who's ever beaten *Padastro* in a *Capoeira* match. *Igreja* ("Church") is a Religion (Catholic) Gestalt who has the ability to heal and provide nourishment (he encourages church-going and is well-liked by the local bishops).

There is a Gestalt Defender of the Amazon, a living cloud of darkness that swallows construction crews and prevents the destruction of the rain forest. Several mercenary gestalts have tried unsuccessfully to destroy it. The cloud has even spawned its own cult of worshippers.

And, of course, although he's not believed to be a Gestalt (or god), the soccer great *Pele* is often called the one true Gestalt of "Futebol" and treated with greater admiration than any Gestalt, which is only natural — even the Gestalts of Brazil worship him.

Villains: For a brief time in 1995, the govern-

ment of Brazil was taken over by a psionic who called himself *Sinistrado* before he was killed by government troops. It's recently been confirmed that he telepathically fooled the soldiers into believing he was slain and is hiding somewhere in the Amazon, planning his revenge.

The most prominent Gestalt cult is based in rural Brazil, where a man known as *Luzente* ("Brilliance") leads *Adoração Luzente* (which roughly translates as "Worship of Light"). He's taken advantage of Brazil's recent economic upheaval to found a new religion, based on charity, light, and sun worship, and the idea that Gestalts are emissaries of the higher beings of light and darkness and deserve worship. Traditional religions, even those used to sharing devotion with local cults, find it suspect; *Adoração Luzente* utterly rejects accommodation with other faiths. Some speculate that the cult is actually a front for the Hot Gods' Apollo to found a rival religion to Christianity.

COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA, AND ECUADOR

When criminals amass large fortunes, they need protection. At the northern tip of South America, the success of the Medellin cocaine cartels in the early '90s spawned the creation of one of the world's most brutal supervillain teams— *Los Vecinos* ("the Neighbors"). Led by the martial artist/master tactician *El Patron* ("the Patron"), this eight member squad included *Sombra* ("Shadow"); *Cocaina* ("Cocaine"); *Ametralladora* ("Machine-Gun", an invisible assassin who later emigrated to America to become "Gunner" of Los Animales); *Infalible*; *Forzudo* ("Brawny"); *Petrificador* ("Petrifier", a Basilisk Gestalt); and *Escorpion* ("the Scorpion").

Dispatched to eliminate their enemies throughout the Western Hemisphere, these less-than-friendly "neighbors" collided three times with Columbia: first in Miami, next in Washington, and finally in Medellin in 1994, when a controversial Columbia raid shattered the drug lords' control over the region. Most of Los Vecinos were incarcerated; eventually they escaped (or were released) and all members are currently at large, working as enforcers for political factions that have brutalized the nation in recent years.

The Medellin cartels stopped using dedicated gestalt strike teams after 1994, however, the druglords still frequently employ at least one superhuman gunman, a man with no name who's been dubbed *Mercenario*. Meanwhile, ex-Vecinos members are drifting north, into the employ of various local strongmen. Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez recently assembled a team of gestalts to protect the people from an invasion of the USMC Vanguard, which he claims is imminent. Chavez steers clear of publicly associating with ex-supervillains, however, some of his team may be "rebranded" members of Los Vecinos with new costumes and codenames.

Though its bad guys are the most famous, Colombia does have more benign gestalts. *Ferocidad* ("Ferocity") is the nation's favorite son; he's a Soccer

Gestalt based in Bogota who trains with Colombia's national team, works with children, and fights crime in Colombia's capital.

Ecuador is the home of the most famous superhero in South America, *Corazon* ("Heart"). Corazon is a Local Protector Gestalt who gained global prominence by saving the life of former US President Jimmy Carter during a 1994 trip to South America; he foiled an assassination attempt by the Venezuelan mercenary supervillains *Maximo* ("Ultimate") and *Cuchilla* ("Razor"), a fight that nearly cost the young hero his life. Corazon has a habit of inadvertently getting involved in high profile cases, though by all accounts, he is a very private, personable, and humble man.

Much less humble is the renegade Achuar Tribal Warrior Gestalt *Juunt* ("Big"), a giant who murdered thirty men in the village of Conambo for sport after his gestalt emerged in 1996. Juunt terrorized his village for years until he was forced out by a combination of other village warriors and Corazon. Since then Juunt has become a mercenary-for-hire in South America, although he prefers hunting in the wild and bullying small tribes to life in the big city. Juunt can channel his strength through firearms, with devastating results. He's a powerhouse, even by the brawny standards of Strongman Gestalts, and he's attracted the attention of many criminal organizations in South America, North America, and Europe.

The villains garner most of the attention in this part of the world, but there are numerous local heroes who work in towns and villages. Corazon calls them "the true heart of the region."

PERU, BOLIVIA, AND CHILE

While the superheroes of western South America are not as prominent as on other parts of the continent, it's not unrepresented. Peru, once home of the Incas, is especially noteworthy.

Sayri ("Serpent") is the Gestalt Protector of Lima; she mentally controls an army of snakes that stalk the city looking for violent crime. The efficiency of Sayri's serpentine legions is almost frightening; although given the city's size, crime still runs rampant in the *pueblos jóvenes*, the hillside shantytowns. One gang frequently targeted by Sayrmi has taken the defiant nickname "*culebra socialista*" (the snakes of socialism).

Condor is the defender of the Andes. A product of the 1994 Gestalt Wave, she's a giant talking condor who patrols the mountains, and aircraft have learned to give her a wide berth. Condor's well known to local naturalists, though she has a very demanding personality. She has never had any involvement with the Menagerie.

Yupanqui ("Honored") is an Inca Gestalt who's obsessed with that culture. His obsession includes having spent six years raising millions of dollars to build a new city in classical Incan style; he's suspected of involvement in several large armed robberies, but nothing has been proven and no charges have ever

been laid against him.

Alberto ("*Dinamita*") Marza is a member of the almost-defunct *Sendero Luminoso* ("Shining Path") terrorist group. Alberto had the ability to cause anything to explode by touching it, for his touch created an invisible "bomb" that would explode whenever he wanted it. He was badly injured by Condor in 1995 and has only recently reappeared.

EUROPE

FRANCE

Although comic book superheroes are not a particularly French institution, France's Gestalts were quick to adopt comic book dress after the First Gestalt Wave, and it's a habit they've never broken. The leader in French Gestalt fashion was the first French superhero, *Triomphe*, a Patriotism Gestalt. Triomphe retired from active duty in 1997, although he still makes appearances around the country on Bastille Day.

Heroes: France's superheroic burden has been taken over by two superhero teams: *Les Protectors*, a private group based in Lyons, and *Garde National*, a government team based in Paris.

Les Protectors, the older and smaller of the two teams, is led by *Soleil* (Gestalt of the Sun) and includes *Lever* ("the Lifter", a Gestalt of Circus Strongmen); *Bruit* ("Noise", a female trumpet player with sound control abilities); and *Bricoleur* ("he who cobbles things together", a Construction Gestalt who can make anything he wants out of discarded pieces of rubbish). They patrol Lyons, but are willing to travel to other trouble spots within France and perform good deeds for a small stipend.

Garde National are public servants; officially they're a branch of the French Air Force on permanent loan to the Paris Police Department. Their leader is *Reverbant* ("Recoil"), a Physics Gestalt who plays games with inertia. Other members include the Weather Gestalt *Torrent*; the Strongman Gestalt *Puissance* ("Power"); the savate expert *Bonne Homme* ("Good Man"); the psionic *Volonte* ("Willpower"); and *Gelure* ("Frostbite", the so-called "Gestalt of the Mountain Cold").

Marseilles is the home of the obsessed vigilante *Pinache*, a moody young man determined to rid his city of crime.

Villains: France's most infamous supervillain team is *Lendermain* ("The Day After"), a group of terrorists who want to turn France into a new monarchy under their control. They've modelled themselves on America's Tyranny League. Their leader is *Monarque*, a formidable mentalist; his teammates are *Hydrogene* ("Hydrogen"), a woman with an explosive gas form and France's first public supervillain; *Faucon Rouge* ("Red Falcon") a flying man with steel talons; *Rajeunir* ("the Rejuvenator", a speedster who can also give other people superhuman speed and reflexes), and *Beau Homme*, ("the Handsome Man"), a savate expert

Creator's Credit

Bricoleur's name was suggested by Rob Heinsoo.

who's able to exploit the weak spot in anything, be it a kick that can rupture steel-plate armor or a remark that destroys a person's ego.

Marseilles is the home of some freakish villains, most of whom form Pinache's personal rogue's gallery. They include: *Le Connoisseur*, a superhuman thief; *Ricaner* ("Giggle"), a criminal who uses laughing gas as a trademark; *Insecte* (a man who is obsessed with insects and treasures with an insect motif); *Desordre* ("Confusion", a Babble Gestalt who makes people speak gibberish, then charges them a fee to restore their ability to communicate); and *Dissonance*, a psionic troublemaker who likes to start fights.

Others: There are many non-heroic Gestalts, especially in Paris, where there's a club in one of the more fashionable neighborhoods that is allegedly "Gestalts only" — *Uniques Europa*. An outrageously dressed woman who calls herself *Esclave du Mode* ("Slave to Fashion") runs the club. One of the gestalts who does frequent the club is *Impulsif* ("Impulsive"), an empathic singer whose wild lifestyle has gotten him in trouble on several occasions.

In recent years, France has been the scene of many political protests. A hooded gestalt woman — *L'Agitateur* ("The Agitator") has been at the center of many of them.

GERMANY

Germany, whose language gave the world the term "Gestalt", ironically does not refer to them by that name. They call them *Die Jenseitigen* ("The Beyonds"). Few countries fear and idolize their Gestalts as much as Germany; the number of publications dedicated to Gestalts is double that of the United States.

Heroes: Germany has been a hotbed of Gestalt activity since the first wave. The first prominent German Gestalt was the Munich superhero Jürgen Baumeister, later known as *Der Herausforderer* ("Challenger"), a Weather Gestalt with superhuman strength. Baumeister first revealed himself publicly in late 1989, when he helped tear down the Berlin Wall. He was responsible for several mild German winters in the early 1990s, until French and Russian protests (they claimed that the unnatural German winters were adversely affecting the regional climate) forced him to stop. *Der Herausforderer* is still the predominant German superhero and a widely respected national symbol, though he publicly retired in 1995 and now only answers to the name Baumeister. He's spent the last three years in seclusion, which has only heightened the mystique and cult of personality that surrounds him.

The first German supervillain was *Wirbelwind* ("Whirlwind"), a speedster/thief who plagued Berlin for two years, until the second wave of Gestalts brought a pair of heroes into conflict with him. One was *Heinrich von Holtzkamp*, an aristocratic strongman. The other was *Kieferbrecher* ("Jawbreaker"), a Street-Fighting Gestalt. The two heroes didn't exactly get along; they had three very public fights before they finally teamed up to bring in *Wirbelwind*. As

von Holtzkamp said, "Rarely have two people who despise each other so completely worked so well together." They also teamed up to capture several other German supervillains: *Der Würger* ("The Strangler"), *Der Widder* ("The Ram", a greedy Hunting Gestalt), and *Der Schwarze Rabe* ("Black Crow", a night flyer). Their rivalry and occasional partnership continues to the present day.

The 1997 gestalt wave increased the number of German heroes and villains, and led to the formation of the first dedicated German superhero and supervillain teams. *Projekt: Eisenherz* ("Project: Valiant") was a Berlin based hero squad: it was led by a Woodsman Gestalt named *Der Jäger* ("The Hunter"), and also included *Das Geschoss* ("The Missile", a Flying Gestalt), *Der Himmelsstürmer* ("Sky Blue", a rival Flying Gestalt), *Der Rote Ritter* ("The Red Knight", an aristocrat Gestalt swordsman with mind control powers), and *Eichenherz* (a female powerhouse whose name means "strong as an oak").

The team fought people like *Der Widder* and other products of the first wave, until the arrival of perhaps the most evil villain team ever assembled: *Die Dämonen* ("The Demons"). This team of nightmares in human form lived in a terrible black castle, the *Schloss Schreckenstein*, and preyed primarily on children. This team was led by *Satan* (a diabolical mastermind who drained people's souls), and included *Ungeheuer* ("The Ogre", a monstrous strongman), *Massaker* ("Massacre", a mentalist who turned innocent people into brutal murderers), *Sarg* ("Coffin", a man who filled people with the fear of death), *Die Hexe* ("the Witch", a Hag Gestalt) and *Der Schrafrichter* ("The Executioner", a Gestalt with a big, bloody battle-axe).

By 1998, every superhero in Germany (and many of Germany's supervillains) had had enough of *Die Dämonen*, so they decided to unite and deal with "this team of *Blutkönigen*" (Germany's name for the Blood Red King) once and for all. *Projekt: Eisenherz* was the strike team that reached the castle first. During the battle, the *Schloss Schreckenstein* vanished. No one is sure why this happened; most assume that one of *Hexe's* spells backfired. Gestalt legend, however, claims that the teams will battle for the rest of time. This battle is known as *der Ewige Krieg*, "The Forever War". "When *der Ewige Krieg* ends" has become a saying which means "the end of the world" or "that's never going to never happen". A number of heroes have attempted to track down the whereabouts of the *Schloss Schreckenstein*, but it appears to be lost in the Gestalt Dimension.

The only person who escaped the holocaust was a little girl in a red cloak. This girl was also a Gestalt, the pure gestalt *Rotkäppchen* (German for "Little Red Riding Hood") who now wanders Germany carrying a basket of food for her lost grandmother. She's also capable of summoning *Der Jäger* to protect her whenever she's in trouble. *Rotkäppchen* claims to know nothing about the eternal battle, however, the *Schloss Schreckenstein* has reappeared

four times since the Die Dämonen/Projekt: Eisenherz battle, and on each occasion, Red Riding Hood was nearby. Der Jäger only reappears for a minute each time he's summoned, and hasn't had much to say except that the battle between Projekt: Eisenherz and Die Dämonen is still continuing. The only other person who reappeared since the battle was *Der Schrafrichter*, who ran out of the castle during one of its reappearances, and then fell prey to Hexe's "enchantment" and was mentally forced to reenter the castle before it vanished again.

For his assistance in fighting Die Dämonen, *Der Widder* received a pardon, but he lapsed back into a life of crime. Unfortunately, he suffered his relapse at the same moment as the 2001 Gestalt Wave, during the first appearance of *Das Geisterschiff*, a flying 19th Century schooner that appears at crime scenes. Its ghostly crew loves to grab evildoers and press them into service aboard ship. Der Widder now serves as lookout on that vigilante vessel. The crew of the *Das Geisterschiff* is sometimes set loose to go into the world and wreak ghostly havoc on places that the ship views as guilty of great wickedness (usually where gruesome murders have occurred).

Vier Vereint (Four United, VV) is much less grim. This team is composed of four young heroes: *Victor V.*, *Großmeister* ("Grandmaster"), *Kunterbunter Jung* ("All-Colors Boy"), and *Rudolf* (no codename). They patrol Frankfurt and Stuttgart during the day and party hard and play in a rock band at night. These four teenagers have the widest media exposure of all German superheroes (the devotion of German teenage girls to Vier Vereint puts their American counterparts' infatuation with Dynamo Jack to shame). It's obvious that this devotion has gone to Vier Vereint's heads; they were dedicated crimefighters at the start of their career, but now they prefer modeling and making music videos to fighting injustice.

Dusseldorf's Gestalt protector is a little more traditional than Vier Vereint, though perhaps he's even more overbearing. He's *Schoepfergeist* ("The Genius"), the insufferably smug solver of crimes and foiler of supervillain plans.

Fighting bigotry and resurgent fascism is the goal of *Nie Wieder* ("Never Again"). This Berlin-based team is led by *Weiße Rose* ("White Rose"), an Anti-bigotry Gestalt, a woman whose power grows in proportion to the amount of hate that's around her), and includes: *Altmeister* ("Past Master", an eighty-year-old German SS trooper who cannot die until he has atoned for his past sins); *Der Entfessler* ("Escape Artist") an Escape Artist Gestalt; and Karsten Scharping, AKA *Der Champion*, a former heavyweight boxing champion. Nie Wieder defeated the skinhead team during their 2004 attack on a Dusseldorff synagogue and the villains are now held in the Orbital Containment Facility. (Germany's first Refrigerator is being built in a small town south of Weimar, but an attack by Der Kolloss destroyed most of the installation and set back its completion by several years).

The most famous of Germany's new gen-

eration of heroes is Hanz Werner, better known as *Weltraumfarer*. He's a flyer who can survive in space and fly at light speed, and volunteered with the European Space Agency to help advance their space program. He's also incredibly handsome, and quite the ladies' man. He was a good friend of Heinrich von Holtzkamp until von Holtzkamp caught him cheating with his wife. The subsequent battle, in which Werner nearly died, caused one of the most sensational scandals in European Gestalt history

Villains: Currently, the most powerful German supervillain teams is *Der Kolloss* ("The Colossus"). Der Kolloss was founded by a supervillain of the same name, but he was captured shortly after the team was founded and placed in confinement in Earth orbit. The team is now composed of *Goliath* (a twenty-foot-tall powerhouse who is Der Kolloss's twin brother), *Der Waffenmeister* (a Weapons Gestalt), *Leinwand*, a living piece of canvas that takes on the characteristics of anyone whose picture is painted on its surface, although usually with a limited, 2D version of the person's abilities, *Rauhreif*, an Ice Gestalt, and *Schande* ("Shame"), a Guilt Gestalt with telepathic talents.

Since their team's founder was captured, Der Kolloss has gotten smarter and stayed relatively low-key; they're robbers with an eye for art, not conquerors or activists. No one knows which member is the current boss of the team; some say Goliath, others say that Der Kolloss telepathically still commands them from orbit. The most recent rumors say that a woman who calls herself *Die Leitung* ("The Controller") is the real mastermind behind the team. It's also unknown who paints Leinwand prior to its missions.

Der Kolloss, though despised, is a traditional supervillain team, dedicated to robbery and the occasional act of mayhem. The Bonn based supervillain team *Reinkultur* ("Pure Culture"), on the other hand, is much more problematic: they're a collection of skinheads, ultra-nationalists, neo-fascists and racists who make frequent attacks against foreigners (especially Jews and non-Caucasians) and other elements that they blame for the decline in German culture. While they claim they aren't Nazis, the fact that their leader calls himself *Knobelbecher* (slang for "army boots") belies the claim. Other members of this gang include: *Stürmer* ("Assaulting Man"), *Der Hammer* ("The Hammer"), and *Kettenhund* ("Watchdog") – they're allied with several neo-fascist gangs across Germany, who are encouraged to look up to Knobelbecher as a new German God. As Kieferbruch puts it: "If it looks like a Fourth Reich, talks like a Fourth Reich, and smells like a Fourth Reich, it needs to be punched a little harder."

Germany's latest master villain is *Der Zerstörer* ("The Destroyer"), a megalomaniac in battle armor who boasts that he's one of the world's premier makers of robots and battlesuits. He has yet to really prove himself.

There are a number of German villains who have made their careers as mercenaries across

Europe: *Lawine* ("Avalanche") is a master of Earth. *Todestoss* ("Deathblow") is an assassin with an uncanny ability to find a person's weak spot; *Atomkraft* ("Atomic Power") is able to completely control radiation; and *Der Vollender* ("Perfection Man") is a supervillain consultant, a genius who hires himself to criminal organizations and villain teams to analyze their abilities and suggest better plans and tactics.

The Future: The German government's two pet Gestalt projects are putting together a state-sponsored national defense team and a second team dedicated to helping with major engineering projects. The second team would be open to any European Gestalt, which has caused some controversy. Jürgen Baumeister has been asked to head the first project but has not given the government an answer.

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

England was the home of one of the world's first supervillains, *Guy Fawkes*, a man who dressed in early 17th-Century garb and tried to blow up Parliament on several occasions. He died in 1992, shot by a military assault team while planting a nuclear device in the House of Lords.

Guy Fawkes's major enemies were *Peerless* (an MI-5 Gestalt of Soldiers), *Invincible* (a Toughness Gestalt), and *Gord Champion* (a street-savvy Acrobatics Gestalt). These heroes, dubbed by the press as the "*Triple Alliance*", helped keep the peace until 1996, when the *Destruction Society* was formed.

Led by the sonic powered killer *Vibrato*, this team of homicidal maniacs and mythological-motif killers included: *Fay Wanderer* (a spiteful five-inch-tall pixie girl), *Demogorgon* (a demonic killer), *Firbolg* (a giant), *Carcass Jones* (a Carrion Gestalt whose powers increase if she's recently been around dead bodies), and *Intruder* (a Gestalt of the Earth with stone and plant control powers). Following the lead of the Tyranny League, the Society tried to eliminate many of Britain's greatest heroes: they murdered *Peerless* in 1996, *Gord Champion* in 1997, and repeatedly killed *Invincible*. The staunch hero had the annoying habit of coming back from the dead, so in 2000 the Society knocked him unconscious, opened up a hole six kilometers deep, dumped him in, and sealed the fissure above him. *Invincible* still lives, but what can being trapped deep beneath the surface of the earth do to the human mind, even a gestalt's?

Other heroes emerged to fill the void, most notably the twin brothers *Lurker* and *Showman* (a pair of physical powerhouses with darkness and light control abilities respectively), who repeatedly eluded the Society's attempts to kill them. In 1998, they decided to deal with Britain's answer to the Tyranny League by recruiting and training their own superhero team, the *London Crusade*. The Crusade consists of the twins plus the *Ambassador* (a man who claims to be a Prince of the Seelie), the Scottish strongman *Caber*, *Peerless II* (a woman who has taken the name of the famous British super-soldier; like her

namesake, *Peerless* is a capable martial artist and weapons expert with telekinetic abilities), *Channel*, a female water controller, and *The Archivist*, a reserved temporal controller who is hiding dark secrets from his teammates.

Heroes: While these two teams comprise the major Gestalt players in England (at the moment), they aren't the only ones. *Protectorix* is a flying woman who can control birds, magnifying and focusing their cries to generate powerful sonic blasts. She's London's sworn protector, and is also an enemy of the Destruction Society. She and *Lurker* were once lovers, but their relationship ended badly. Birmingham's favorite Gestalt, *Bellisarius*, is a weaponsmaster who's highly resistant to weapons fire. He can also teach anyone how to use any weapon instantly. Leeds' guardian is *The Airman*, a Flying Gestalt who wears an RAF captain's uniform and does not suffer insults at all.

The island of Jersey is home to a man who is called, simply, *Jersey*. He's a Regional Protector Gestalt with superhuman strength, flying powers, and a fondness for rugby.

The British Isles have also been visited by a pair of unpredictable individuals, a man and a woman who have been dubbed "the Intrepids" by *Lurker* and *Showman*. The senior member of the pair is an eccentric middle-aged gentleman in Edwardian dress named *Colin*, who has extraordinary technical skills. The junior member is a younger, athletic woman named *LaCourt*. The Intrepids have shown up three times during the Gestalt era. The first time, in 1991, was to shut down a device that they claimed would have caused England to be swallowed into Faerie. (Colin seemed more concerned about the damage to Faerie than the damage to England.)

The second time, in 1996, was when an antique loom in London went out of control and wove a nearly indestructible thread that strangled people. On this occasion, *LaCourt* had a robot cat named *Puzzlewillow* constantly draped around her shoulders.

Their third appearance, in 2003, was prompted by a gang of football hooligans who had gotten completely out of control and were engaging in murderous rampages against the elderly. On their third visit, they were accompanied by a seven-year-old boy named *Brian*, a boy who demonstrated extremely powerful psionic abilities. The one time when they were asked where they come from, *LaCourt* laughed and said "Tomorrow."

Villains: The most recent Gestalt waves have also revitalized Britain's villain community. There is one major quasi-mystical villain in Britain, *The Stormcrow*, a criminal mastermind who uses crows and ravens as his spies. The Stormcrow has been stealing or buying items and properties with occult associations.

There is also an eccentric woman named *Gloriana* who claims to be Queen Elizabeth I, she has somehow managed to recruit a gang of henchmen

The Papacy and Gestalts

The Pope has been attacked twice by Gestalts, first by The Dark in 1999, and then by a man in a medieval executioner's outfit named Monsieur Guillotine (he turned out to be a young French Catholic priest who had been transformed into a villain by the Blood Red King) in 2003.

More disturbingly, the Blood Red King made a personal appearance in St. Peter's Square when Pope John Paul II died in 2005.

who dress up in Elizabethan garb and commit robberies. Their most famous target was a Shakespeare First Folio, which Gloriana wanted to burn to protest Shakespeare's historical association with the original Queen's lover, the treacherous Earl of Essex.

Britain's answer to the Blood Red King is the ominous figure called *The Dark*. The Dark specializes in finding people who have big dreams and filling them with cynicism and bitterness. Each time the Dark succeeds at ending the dream of a great dreamer, he gets a little more powerful.

Wales is home to *Hearne*, the Master of the Wild Hunt. Hearne kidnaps people and takes them to his home, a shadowy woodland Fantasyscape in the Gestalt Dimension known as the Wold. Here they are hunted down by wild dogs or enslaved to its other inhabitants, the dryads. Hearne cannot, however, touch a virgin.

Scotland: Scotland has a small superhero team based in Glasgow. *The Rebellion* (also known as the Scots Rebellion) was founded in 2001. It's a club of five Gestalts who make themselves available to anyone in Scotland who has a problem with Gestalts. *The Myth*, the leader of the team, is a young man who seems to cast spells and command elemental forces; *Blake Portent* is a Time Gestalt; *Railplane* is a Speed Gestalt; *Atomic Clansman* is an engineer in a suit of power-armor with a Scots theme; and *Rose Lamont* (no codename) is an Animal (Veterinarian) Gestalt who is able to summon, control, or heal any animal.

Edinburgh has a single protector, *Argyle*, who is Caber's twin brother. He and Caber can transfer strength back and forth between each other, but they had a quarrel at their mother's funeral three years ago and haven't spoken with each other since.

Scotland's complement of supervillains is pretty slim. *The Brassman*, a Gestalt of Metals (described by one opponent as "Jericho Bronze on steroids") is the most powerful and notorious wrongdoer. He was a criminal mastermind whose plan to establish a Scottish criminal empire was foiled by the Rebellion who's become obsessed with their defeat. His bodyguard is *Brutus*, a Highland wrestling champion who can psionically command people to fight the closest target. Brassman's other two operatives are the *Coroner*, a Gestalt of Poisons who controls the local drug trade (and who harbors his own criminal ambitions) and *Lover's Lane*, Gestalt of Sexuality and Seduction.

Other Scots villains include *Hunting Stewart*, a Gestalt of Treasures who becomes more powerful when he holds old Scots artifacts; *Babel*, a Gestalt of Languages and a robber of banks who distracts people by jumbling their thoughts into a hundred languages simultaneously, and *Culloden*, a ghostly soldier who attacks English interests throughout Scotland and hunts descendents of the Duke of Cumberland (whose harsh judgments after the 1745 Highland Rebellion still haunt Scotland).

Ireland: Across the water from Britain, there

are Irish Gestalts. Tim Shaw, the *Dublin Hammer*, is an Irish strongman and the self-proclaimed protector of the city. *Sean McMullen*, who boasts he's the "toughest man alive", is another Dublin-based Gestalt, a policeman whose body shatters nearly anything that strikes him without hurting him. Sean has never considered a costume or chosen a codename.

One of the most notable villains is the Neopagan Gestalt Samantha Caldwell, aka *Cauldron*. Cauldron's gestalt powers allow her to make nearly anything appear in her pot. She became a reluctant supervillain in 2001 when she refused to surrender her cauldron to the authorities, after the pot accidentally summoned a demon that ravaged the countryside.

HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

Holland has very little in the way of Gestalt criminal activity. Its most famous Gestalt protector, *Gouden Fantoom* ("Golden Ghost") silently patrols Amsterdam while Brussels is protected by *Hagelstorm* ("Hail Storm"), a weather controller who can summon huge hailstones.

Another pure gestalt protector of Holland, *Wandelaar*, wanders throughout the Netherlands and Belgium. He has only one telepathic power, the power to make people realize the truth, and he seeks people who live their lives in self-deception to cure them of their delusions.

The most powerful fighter in Holland is probably *Veldtenu* ("Battle Dress"), an eternally emaciated Dutch soldier who wanders the countryside doing chores in exchange for room and board. Veldtenu is no superhero; he hurts or kills people who refuse to provide him with suitable hospitality.

ITALY

Italy's most infamous superhero is the mysterious vigilante *Sangu*, a man in red robes with exceptional martial arts skills and the unusual ability to take someone who's been murdered and bring him back to life by transferring the life force from his or her killer (who must be present) into the victim. As this also results in the murderer's death, the murderer rarely agrees to do this voluntarily.

Orso ("The Bear") is a much more popular hero. He's a big (nearly seven-feet tall) strongman who does strength demonstrations on the streets of Rome for fun and occasional profit. Orso isn't much of a fighter, and while he occasionally gets into superhero-style brawls, it's obvious that his heart isn't into them. Orso recently met a kid who's determined to become his assistant, *Pugile*, a teenage Boxing Gestalt. Orso isn't sure he needs or wants a sidekick, but Pugile is very insistent....

Preihera ("Prayer") is the unofficial superhero of the Vatican. She's an empathic nun whose presence provides peace and solace. Lately, she has been spending a lot of her time with the Pope, providing

counsel. Some people credit her as a key influence on the Vatican's 1991 Declaration of Souls, the landmark proclamation on Gestalt spirituality.

Italy has no known native master villains, nor any major supervillain teams. Its most infamous supervillain is the shapechanging assassin *Proiettile* ("Bullet") who works for anyone who can match her price and who has been known to work for several Sicilian crime families.

SCANDINAVIA

Heroes: How could there not be superheroes in the lands of sagas? The gestalts of Northern Europe are a quiet lot, but still capable. The most well-known is *Norrskén* ("Northern Lights"), a "gestalt of the Northern Lights" who emerged in the Second Gestalt Wave. *Norrskén's* powers are actually unrelated to lights or auroras; he's an Illusion Gestalt who works with the Stockholm city government to bolster the local travel industry (the name's meant to attract tourists, though he fights crime as well).

Norrskén also supervises a pair of teenaged Gestalt protégés. *Värdighet* ("Dignity") is a young man that gives people who have reached the lowest point in their lives superhuman abilities and *Räddning* ("Rescue") is a woman who lives to save people from danger. She's likely to become the most prominent Scandinavian Gestalt of her generation. She's gained a lot of attention by dating the prominent Danish superhero *Kraftværk* ("Powerhouse"), though the world —and *Norrskén*— don't realize they've already secretly eloped.

Villains: Northern Europe's most famous team is also its most infamous: *Hæder* ("Glory", the team is also known as *Team Alpha*). They're based near Stockholm but rarely spend time there. They're a team of political loose cannons with a far-left agenda who intervene in world hot spots on a whim, seeking to eliminate political evils, and usually making the problem worse. The team is led by *Uveir* ("Storm", a Weather Gestalt), and also includes *Black Agnes* (a British Hag Gestalt), *Kosucu* ("Sprinter", a Turkish Athletics Gestalt), *Kuguar* ("Cougar"), *Munter* ("Joyful"), *Roar* (Gestalt of Bears), *Soka* ("Rope", a Basque Regional Protector Gestalt), *Uovervindelig* ("Invincible"), and *Vanvid* ("Frenzy"). Their actions include attempted kidnapping of Balkan leaders accused of genocide (though they supported Serbs during the late 1990s) and assaults on members of the World Bank, who are accused of hurting the world economy with their policies.

Iceland: Iceland's gestalts meet annually as a secret society called *Bandalag* ("The Coalition") and hold an annual private competition to determine the nation's most physically capable Gestalt. The winner is given the title *Forsprakki* ("The Champion") and is recognized by the Icelandic government as the nation's official superhero, though no one knows the true identity of anyone in the *Bandalag* except for the members themselves. The *Bandalag* have all

vowed to work together to defend Iceland, while *Forsprakki* represents Iceland abroad. (Fortunately, there are not many supervillains in Iceland.)

Victor Eismann is the most prominent gestalt in Scandinavia. He's an incredibly powerful man who lives in a castle outside Copenhagen and runs the annual Copenhagen Gestalt Competition (see page 185).

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

Spain: The official superhero team of Spain is *Guardia Blanca* ("the White Guard"), which is assigned to protect the King, but usually allowed to do typical superhero work. The leader of the team is *Caballero* ("Knight"), a soldier in medieval knight's garb who can summon a flaming sword. His teammates are *Roca* ("The Rock", a Gestalt of the Mountains), *Envergadura* ("Wingspan", a winged man who can make other people temporarily sprout wings), *Criolectricidad* ("Cryo-electricity", a man with a very cold body temperature who can project waves of "cold electricity" that can either freeze people or shut down their nervous systems) and *Maestra* ("Teacher"), the most powerful person on the team, if only because her power is the ability to duplicate the powers of whomever she's facing, but a little better.

Villains: Spain's villains are a varied lot. *Toro*, the ghost bull who tracks down and kills anyone who has ever attended a bullfight, received international attention — until it turned out to be an illusion perpetrated by a telepathic scam artist (whose identity is still a mystery). *Demencia* is an Insanity Gestalt whose goal is to drive as many people as possible insane (though he'll occasionally take large sums of money from those who wish to avoid this fate). *Estatua* is a thirty-foot-tall statue (of Apollo) that comes to life periodically and attacks people, typically during celebrations. *Diablillo* is a criminal mastermind from Barcelona who feeds periodically on human hearts to give himself superhuman abilities.

El Cid claims to be the reincarnation of the high-legendary Spanish military hero who uses his mental powers to conscript innocent bystanders into his army and transform them into 11th-Century soldiers. His army wanders around the countryside looking for trouble but usually end up causing more problems than they solve.

Incendio ("Fire") is a traitorous former member of *Guardia Blanca* who infiltrated the team and tried to take the king hostage. Defeated but not captured, he's vowed revenge on the Spanish monarchy and his former teammates.

Portugal: Portugal doesn't have a traditional superhero team, but it has the next best thing: *Anna Sorres*, an 11-year-old girl who can speak a "magic word", "*Acordar!*" ("Awaken") to summon five superheroes to defend the country in times of trouble, who work together as a nearly flawless team. The heroes are: *Escudo* ("Shield", a Leadership Gestalt),

Interferencia ("Interference", who's actually a Strongman Gestalt), *Vontade* ("Will", Gestalt of Mind Over Matter), *Inteligência* ("Intelligence", an expert in many scientific fields, especially in the study of the human brain), and *Destino* ("Destiny", a telepath with precognitive abilities.) In times of extreme need, they can combine to form a giant superhero, Acordar.

Portugal's major supervillain, although he doesn't see himself in that role, is *Desconhecido* ("The Stranger"). This self-appointed "teacher of the masses" wanders Portugal in many guises, performing horrible tests on people to determine if they're good or evil. If they're good, they receive a reward, though it rarely seems like appropriate compensation for the torment they've endured. If they're evil, he destroys them in a gruesome manner.

GREECE

A number of recreated mythic deities—Apollo, Athena, and Circe—originated in Greece but immigrated elsewhere. A few gestalts are active in the Greek army but have kept a low profile. Macedonia remains a hot spot, made worse by Balkan gestalts active in the region. Beyond these noteworthies, Greek supers function as supers do elsewhere, but with a decidedly Greek style.

Heroes: *Proagonistes* ("Champion"), the gestalt protector of Athens, was long considered Greece's most prominent superhero. He's certainly its most ca-

pable hand-to-hand combatant; his powers reach exceptional levels on Athenian soil. *Proagonistes* is also a living library of Athenian philosophy, and history and his insights have proved invaluable in classical studies. He's helped by his best friend, *Biomechanos*, a man who is able to transform his body parts into machinery and merge with modern technology.

Proagonistes set a trend for superhero names being in Ancient—not Modern—Greek to encourage Greeks to learn the pure form of their language. Other Greek Gestalts followed this trend, but the most recent wave of Gestalts has rejected it.

The most prominent Gestalt from the 1994 wave was *Kosmas Eratis* ("Kosmas the Lover"), a charismatic but rude young man who fought and seduced his way across Athens. He and *Proagonistes* are another pair of openly hostile European Gestalt heroes who have come to blows on several occasions. The sailing Gestalt *Georgios Pilotos* ("Georgios the Pilot") followed Eratis's naming trend, as has *Stratis Katayitha* ("Stratis the Thunderstorm"), a Weather Gestalt. Eratis is the current darling of the Greek media.

In the last five years, two distinct and rival Gestalt movements have emerged in Greece, the *Palios* (Old) movement and the *Kenooryios* (New) movement. The *Palios* movement is restrained, consciously heroic, and Christian. The *Kenooryios* movement is unrestrained, sexual as well as heroic, heavily influenced by Apollo as well as by "wild" European heroes such as Lebensville and Weltraumfarer.



The latest Gestalt Wave produced a handsome young man with wax wings named *Icarus*. Icarus is a Flying Gestalt who ignores the internal politics of Greek heroes and founded the Icarus Society for gestalts who wish to safely enjoy the use of their flying powers. Also produced by the latest wave are a trio of women who are probably the most active heroes in Greece today: *Aellopos* ("Storm-swift") is a female speedster with weather control powers who is a freelance superheroine; her partners are *Penthesilea*, a Turkish woman who claims to be the Queen of the Amazons and *Ambrotos* ("Divine") is a mentalist who can see into the future.

Villains: Greece's most infamous supervillains are *Kokkinos Flaga* ("The Red Flame", leader of a terrorist organization with the same name), and *Dynatos*, a Strongman Gestalt who may be the strongest man in Europe. *Exorios* ("Exile") is a more conventional villain, a thief who uses mind control to force guards, police and superheroes to wander away from their post; he's a world traveller with no compunctions against joining forces with mercenary villains ("even Americans").

EASTERN EUROPE

Hungary is noteworthy for one unusual Gestalt, a person known as *Valószínűtlen* ("Mr. Improbable") around whom improbable things frequently occur. There are rumors that he is actually an agent of a mysterious alien race; no one is sure where they originated but Internet gestalt experts seem to accept them as fact.

Tamadas ("Aggression") was a Hungarian gestalt from the First Gestalt Wave who, when trying to incite a mob in Prague to violence in 1995, failed to impress them and promptly dropped dead on the spot.

Hruza ("Terror") is a Czech Republic Vengeance Gestalt who can be hired to use his illusion powers to terrorize anyone who is deserving of an act of vengeance. *Svalovy* ("Muscular") is the premier powerhouse of the Czech Republic. While not as strong as many Strongman Gestalts, he compensates by utilizing his strength over broad areas. He's a Good Samaritan Gestalt who helps people in need, always giving them physical fitness tips before he leaves.

Vulpe ("the Fox") is a Romanian Gestalt, the trickster protector of Bucharest. An old hag who calls herself *Noroc* ("Fortune") is the protector of gypsies, a pure gestalt who's alleged to have magic powers.

Gora ("Mountain") is the most prominent Gestalt in Poland. He's a giant with the ability to make up to eight other people grow to giant size if they take a vow to defend Polish soil. His sidekick is *Zelazo* ("Iron"), a former Olympic hockey player who's a talented normal boosted by the chain Gestalt process.

Other Polish Gestalts include: *Robotnik*, a Gestalt of Heavy Labor who fights crime and helps teamsters in Odansk; *Lokomotywa* ("Locomotive"), a powerful speedster who's the hero of Krakow; *Zamaganie* ("Struggle"), a Gestalt associated with Marxist groups who mysteriously vanished in 2002.

Some suspect he was killed by the Leviathans.

RUSSIA

No nation on Earth has had as tumultuous a history with Gestalts as Russia. Once the core of the Soviet Union, Russia is the nation that tried hardest to control its Gestalt population – and failed utterly. The history of Gestalts in Russia is a story of a secret war for dominance that's only recently ended, and has undoubtedly contributed to the dramatic decline of this once powerful nation.

History: The first wave of Gestalts brought the first attempt to regulate them. In 1990, Russia formed the *Komitet Zlodej* ("The Committee Against Evil Crimes") which accused Gestalts of being responsible for the collapse of the east bloc. Two Gestalts who testified before Komitet, a strongman named *Pobornik* ("Champion") and *Spaga* ("Sword", an Orator Gestalt), had openly advocated nationalism for ethnic groups. They were arrested, convicted, and executed as enemies of the state.

But the chaos of the collapse of the Soviet Empire made this an empty gesture. No other Gestalts were arrested, and several members of the Komitet were killed in retaliation for Pobornik and Spaga's deaths. Russia hung on the brink of civil war. That's when Pobornik's wife, herself a Gestalt named *Mama Lyubov* ("Mother Love", a Maternity Gestalt) publicly intervened and risked her own life to negotiate a peace settlement between the government and Russia's Gestalt community. Komitet Zlodej lost its grip on power and was disbanded in 1992.

There were some powerful Gestalts in the first wave, but none were as influential as Igor Mironov, a petty Soviet bureaucrat who gained a superhuman intellect and gave himself the codename *Vlastitel* ("The Authority"). Vlastitel is a manipulator who formulated a twenty-year plan to take over Russia and reunite the former Soviet Union into an even greater empire than before. Almost from the start, he saw other Russian gestalts as enemies who would hinder his plans, and needed to be eliminated or suborned. He encouraged Komitet Zlodej to execute Pobornik, in hopes of generating a small war between gestalts and humans that would cull the Gestalt herd.

But eliminating his enemies was not Vlastitel's primary goal. He used his genius to gather acclaim and influence, and although Mironov took a back seat to the emerging Boris Yeltsin, his influence grew enormously during the 90s. Vlastitel built up a secret network throughout Russia and the former Soviet Union, extending his influence into the military, the police service, and the underworld, while Igor Mironov maintained an openly benevolent guise.

Other noteworthy first wave Gestalts were Moscow's superheroes *Ruskiy Znak* ("The Icon of Russia", a moody strongman); *Gamayun*, a talking blue bird that has extraordinary prophetic abilities; *Muzikant* ("The Musician"), a man who can do extraordinary things with any musical instrument; *Vorovka* ("The Thief"),

a woman who became known as Russia's answer to Starfinder; and *Kavalerist* ("Cavalryman"), a Regional Protector Gestalt of Moscow with flight and super-speed abilities — *Kavalerist* was a friend of Pobornik's, and he was the Gestalt who murdered the members of *Komitet*.

Beyond Moscow, the most famous gestalt hero was *Severn* ("Northerner", a pure gestalt protector of those burdened by winter).

After the Lyubov incident, the military started looking at Gestalt recruits. By 1991, they had enlisted four Russian super-soldiers, who received the code-names: *Volk* ("Wolf"), *Medved* ("the Bear"), *Vestnik* ("the Messenger"), and *Vodyanoi* ("Water Demon").

The example set by early Russian supervillains and by American villains such as the Devastators and the Blood Red King led to the creation of a Western-style Moscow superhero team, *Rukovodstvo* ("Leadership"). Led by *Kavalerist*, *Rukovodstvo* fought crime with distinction for several years, until they started accepting bribes from Russian mob bosses and turned the team against the people they swore to protect. Incidents of *Rukovodstvo* team members committing random acts of violence began to circulate in the press and the people came to view them as violent thugs.

The government did little to stop *Rukovodstvo* (there were too many local officials in *Kavalerist*'s pocket) but their reign of violence did spawn opposition from two fronts. The first was the creation of *Narodniy Vybor* ("The People's Choice") a counter-Gestalt vigilante group that had its roots in extreme nationalism. The second was the formation of a non-violent Gestalt group: *Chyestnost* ("Integrity"). Led by Mama Lyubov, this superhero team grew over the years to include *Vestnik* (who had resigned from the army), *Muzikant*, and *Mechta* ("Dream", a Gestalt of Sleep) among others. This team became a brotherhood of Good Samaritans who stayed away from crimefighting, but traveled from door to door looking to perform good deeds for the common people: repairing rooftops and homes, shoveling snow, caring for the sick, helping upgrade factories and farms, and rescuing people during emergencies. *Chyestnost* attracted a large number of Gestalts, at its peak in 1999, it numbered over a dozen superhumans.

By the end of 1999, it had become obvious that *Rukovodstvo* had lost almost all their heroic ideals. One member, the crossbowman *Pero* ("Feather") left the team in disgust. His body was found two days later in a Moscow alley. It was widely believed that *Rukovodstvo* had murdered their former team member, although *Vlastitel* was actually responsible for the deed.

The year 1999 was tumultuous for Russia and *Vlastitel* was glad to take advantage of it. He manipulated *Rukovodstvo*, goading *Kavalerist* into more frequent and reckless acts of violence, particularly against *Chyestnost*, the targets of harassment and scorn for their vow of non-violence. *Vlastitel* also manipulated *Narodniy Vybor*, and their rage grew

to a boiling point. The civil war in Chechnya and an economic downturn did nothing to help the situation.

Everything exploded on April 3, 1999, when *Narodniy Vybor* struck against *Rukovodstvo*, blowing up their headquarters with a huge bomb. Most of *Rukovodstvo* were trapped inside. Three members and over a dozen non-Gestalt support personnel were killed. A badly injured *Kavalerist* fled the city and swore revenge against the people of Moscow, whom he blamed for the attack.

Chyestnost (though they deplored the violence) welcomed the fall of *Rukovodstvo*. But *Narodniy Vybor* was not finished; having eliminated one Gestalt threat, they decided to attack a second, and on April 5, they set off a second bomb in *Chyestnost*'s headquarters. Six gestalts perished, including Mama Lyubov, the mother of Russian Gestalts.

Moscow was in an uproar. There was rioting for three days until the army finally calmed the situation (with considerable loss of life). In the end, known members of *Narodniy Vybor* were captured, convicted, and imprisoned, and the survivors of *Chyestnost* reassembled the team. But *Chyestnost* never again achieved the same level of effectiveness as they had under Mama Lyubov. As a gesture of contrition, *Smalchak* the Daredevil, one of the survivors of the *Rukovodstvo* massacre, offered his services to his former rivals but was refused. He wandered into the Arctic and has not been seen since. *Muzikant* took over as leader of *Chyestnost*, and it became an organization whose primary task was helping old military Gestalts (such as *Medved*) retreat to find a more peaceful and productive way of life (although the team has remained very popular).

Seeing the emergence of more new Gestalts than even he could manipulate, *Vlastitel* finally decided to take action to set them at each other's throats, starting with the Gestalts in the Russian military. But before he could implement his plan, the most recent Gestalt Wave brought a new factor into play: *Maskrobat*, the Masked Acrobat. This incredibly agile and smart teenage gestalt was a Gestalt of Detectives. The actions of *Narodniy Vybor* had always bothered him, and he decided to investigate the *Chyestnost* massacre to see if there was anything that hadn't been uncovered about it. He discovered *Vlastitel* at the center of a vast web of violence and corruption.

By 2003, the outlaw *Kavalerist* had been forced to pledge his allegiance to *Vlastitel*. The mastermind used the former hero as an *agent provocateur*, in exchange for attacks against *Vlastitel*'s enemies; *Kavalerist* would receive an eventual pardon and serve *Vlastitel* as his unofficial lieutenant. But *Maskrobat* was relentless in tracking down *Kavalerist*, and (with a bit of help from the Partizan) he beat the former hero in a long, hard fight in a Moscow back alley.

After the fight, *Maskrobat* managed to persuade *Kavalerist* to turn against *Vlastitel*, and together they brought him down. *Vlastitel* is now in prison; *Kavalerist* received a pardon and is now

officially a superhero again, although an extremely unpopular one (especially with other gestalts).

Heroes: Some cynically call Russia “a land without heroes” but the one man who proves the lie is Mikail Bure, better known as *Plazmova Solnttze* (“Plasma Sun”, mistranslated as “Plasma Star” in the West). A man of unblemished character, Mikhail’s ability to fly in space at faster-than-light speeds made him the ultimate Cosmonaut, even more valuable to the Russian space program than Titan or Ted Chess became to NASA. Unfortunately, over the years he’s gradually lost his interest in Earth and now spends much of his time living in the sun’s chromosphere, the one place where he feels truly comfortable.

But there were breakthroughs for Gestalts in other areas. *Vasily Malkov*, a Mining Gestalt, took over as mayor of the Siberian mining town of Prokopyevsk and made substantial reforms, increasing Russia’s efficiency and competitiveness. Grigory Sidorov, an Economics Gestalt, helped engineer major improvements in the Russian economy. Although crime remains a problem, gestalts made impacts in areas that escaped the notice of Vlastitel. And while major cities remained under the control of Vlastitel’s network, Local Protector Gestalts helped maintain peace and stability in some of the smaller towns and border regions.

Iskatelnitza (“Seeker”), Protectorix of Russia, attempted to establish herself as the premier gestalt

of Moscow but a pair of accidents involving her powers (caused by Kavalerist with Vlastitel pulling the strings) led to her exile from Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2005. Undeterred, she’s become active in the Ukraine and Belarus, where she often battles armies of zombies that rise out of the ground around the Chernobyl nuclear plant (courtesy of Chernabog).

Villains: The most hated villain from the first wave of Russian Gestalts is Polnoch (“Midnight”) a pure Gestalt of Corruption. Polnoch’s power allows him to transform people so they act on their desires without restraint. Polnoch fought against Komitet alongside other Russian Gestalts, but after Lyubov’s intervention, he showed his true colors by leaving the alliance to pursue a villainous career. Recently he has received a boost in power (adding darkness to his telepathic abilities) and renamed himself *Chernobog*, after the demon of Russian folklore.

Despite Polnoch (and one of the larger populations in the Gestalt world) Russia managed to avoid major problems - until the Second Gestalt Wave occurred, and the genie completely escaped from the bottle. A large population of bonded Gestalts emerged, and almost immediately decided to wreak havoc. The first was *Charodey* (“The Sorcerer”), who used his pseudo-mystical powers to attempt a blatant takeover of the Duma, the Russian Parliament. Twelve men were transformed into toads before Charodey was finally driven away.

The turmoil of 1999 was soon followed by a



dramatic rise in the number of supervillains. Kavalierist was joined by a new generation of Russian super-criminals. *Raskayanie* ("The Dispossessor") is a Gestalt of Loneliness and bane of the materially successful. *Skitatsya* ("Wander") is a telepath who forces people to give up their lives in pursuit of idle dreams. The anti-military Terrorist Gestalt *Zaijak* ("Kill-Devil") launched an assassination campaign against Russian soldiers. The twins *Zavtra* and *Vchera* ("Tomorrow" and "Yesterday") are a pair of temporal controllers who oppose Russian parapsychology experiments (for unknown reasons). *Trulich* ("the Mourner") is Russia's answer to Lament, a pure gestalt who lives to make people experience grief.

The Ar'Kayadin: In 1999, the Ar'Kayadin made first contact with Earth, and in 2001, the Ar'Kayadin mother ship was allowed to be stationed in Siberia. Early expectations of a warm Ar'Kayadin/Russian relationship were dashed by a combination of American and United Nations pressure and by perceived insults by Boris Yeltsin toward the Ar'Kayadin ambassador. There were some fears that the Ar'Kayadin would become involved in Chechnya, but these were dashed by an angry Kremlin reaction to a report of a meeting between the Ar'Kayadin and Chechen leaders. Even so, the Ar'Kayadin presence is still welcome in Moscow and is seen as a symbol of Russian power and influence.

Chechnya: Chechnya has been a thorn in Russia's side since the mid-1990s. In 1999, a force of over thirty battle-hardened military Gestalts, led by Kinzhal, was dispatched to rout the Chechen army (while telepaths uprooted resistance cells). Chechnya surrendered and was forced to rejoin Russia.

The Chechen conflict has occupied much of Moscow's attention and the fighting gestalts of the war: *Kinzhal* ("Dagger"), *Silach* ("Strong-Man"), *Grozny Voik* ("Terrible Warrior"), and *Yarost* ("Rage") are among Russia's most celebrated heroes.

However, many of these heroes were not as heroic as the press made them out to be. Grozny Voik is especially notorious for his brutality. By 2002, he had relocated to St. Petersburg, where he found work with the OMON police faction (a violent paramilitary group) and became a symbol of terror among the local gangs and rival factions.

In the last year, things have started to go the other way for Russia. Superhuman Chechen assassins have made a counterattack, targeting Russian telepaths. When these telepaths are eliminated, the rebels hope they'll have a much freer hand to conduct operations, especially inside Russia.

More disturbingly for Russia, Georgia and the Ukraine, breakaway republics with pro-Russian governments, have moved away from the Russian sphere and are looking toward Europe and open democracy. Inch by inch, Russia's grip on the region is starting to loosen, if not slip. The troubles are far from over.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Gestalts and the Middle east are a dubious mix. While many people in the region dismiss Western gestalts as "devils" they have no problem honoring their native sons, especially those who show respect for Islam.

Saudi Arabia: The foremost Gestalt in the Middle East is *Lulu' al-Islam*, Saudi Gestalt of Hospitality and Protection whose name translates into the far less silly sounding "Pearl of Islam". Poet, historian and philosopher, he helped bridge acceptance of Gestalts by the Islamic world during the early days. He's the spokesman for Gestalts in the Islamic world, a close friend of the Saudi Royal Family, and an Arab goodwill ambassador to the West.

The Pearl has a number of protégés whom he trains to use their powers for the benefit of the common people. His greatest student is *Kahraba* ("Electricity"), AKA Ibrahim Faisal, a Saudi air force major who can control electricity; his ability to create an electrical force field to protect his aircraft and hypercharge his missiles may make him the deadliest fighter pilot on Earth.

The Pearl pays greatest homage toward *Sheik Abdul Al-Duwaar* ("The Circle"), a theologian and a Philosopher Gestalt who lives in Saudi Arabia and spends his time wandering the desert. He is able to bestow great powers on people, but only for twenty-four hours, and only if they can best him in a contest of riddles or a theological debate.

Mecca is sacred to all Islamic Gestalts, but its Gestalt Protector is *Qasr* ("Castle"), a giant who is nearly invincible within the city limits.

Egypt: Those who wander in the deserts of southern Egypt have reported encounters with *El Khider* ("The Green Man"), a courteous knight who helps those who are lost in the lands beyond the Nile. Coptic Christians in the area identify him with St. George, their most popular saint.

Al-Kaf ("The Open Hand") is the Gestalt protector of Cairo. He's a mentalist who can look into the past to spot any act of cruelty that took place in a particular location and rectify it. He's also a capable wrestler and judoist, having trained for several years in Iran and Japan. He is sometimes assisted by a woman who calls herself *Naum*, a Sleep Gestalt whose powers have proven useful in subduing the enemies of the people (who often experience revelatory dreams while asleep that inspire them to turn away from crime).

Sudan: The Sudan is home to *Birzeeq* ("The Hippopotamus"), a talking animal Gestalt similar to the Menagerie but much more benign. The Hippopotamus is an Oracle Gestalt with an unusual manner; he eats the person who wishes a prophecy, then spits them out unharmed along with a prophecy.

Taaleb al-Qamar ("Student of the Moon") is a guardian of the night in the city of Khartoum who creates darkness in proportion to the wickedness of the hearts of the men surrounding him. Unfortu-

nately, neither Gestalt has made much progress in stopping the civil war that's wracked the region over the last decade.

Algeria: Algeria is a current hot spot in the Gestalt world. *Qasees al-Harb* ("Priest of War") was a Soldier Gestalt who was a member of the rebel leadership; he was killed during the civil war in 1998. His place is now represented by *Ibn al-Fahd* ("Son of the Leopard"), a very fast and deadly gestalt whose powers get a temporary boost when a Muslim has shed blood and by *Rajl al-Assad* ("The Lion Man"), a talking lion statue whose mastery of the Qu'ran is flawless.

Iraq: Iraq's most famous team of gestalts was the so-called "Jihad Squad", a superhuman unit of the Republican Guard that were wiped out in the Gulf War by the USMC Vanguard. Its sole known survivor is *Dharaba al-Maghreb* ("Scourge of the West"), a Fire Gestalt who's often referred to by the Vanguard as "Mr. Unfinished Business". Dharaba's reputation for ruthlessness and cruelty is well deserved; he's terrorized both the legitimate government of Iraq (which was installed by the allies after the Gulf War) and the Kurds. He has made no secret that he'd like to reunite the country and become the next Saddam Hussein.

If it seems like most of the known gestalts in the Middle East are male – your eyes do not deceive you. Because of the efforts of the Pearl and others, it's acceptable for a man to openly be a Gestalt in the Muslim world. However, a Gestalt is a symbol of empowerment and women are still discouraged from publicly displaying such power. Egypt, Jordan,

and Qatar are notable exceptions to this rule.

Israel and Palestine: When one thinks of the Middle East, one thinks of Israel, Palestine, and the troubles of the Holy Land. They have not abated on Gestalt-Earth. Things might have completely disintegrated if it weren't for two Gestalts: the Israelite Time Gestalt *Brakeet* ("Thunderbolt") and the Palestinian Healing Gestalt *Huzn al-Qurmzi* ("Crimson Sorrow"), who worked together to curb terrorism and cultivate friendship between their peoples. Brakeet's powers allow him to travel backward in time and intercept terrorism before it happens. It was this partnership that prevented assassination attempts against Israel's Prime Minister Rabin in 1998 and 1999. However, following the collapse of peace talks in 2000, the alliance collapsed as well.

The failure of the Rabin assassination has managed to prevent much of the trouble that Israel and Palestine experienced (in the real world), including the 2000 Intifada and the subsequent occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. No wall has been built to separate Israel and Palestine. Yet things have not gone as people hoped in the 1990s. The peace movement has given way to a deep abiding cynicism. Terrorist bombings in Tel Aviv are frequent occurrences, as are rocket attacks in northern Israel.

Under the protection of the avowed nationalist superhero known in the West as *Migdal* ("Tower") a huge, handsome, and ruthless Toughness Gestalt, settlements in the occupied territories have grown with very little restraint. When a Palestinian Ven-



geance Gestalt named *Aswad Sikkiyn* ("Black Knife") massacred an Israeli settlement on Palestinian lands, Migdal took matters into his own hands. He killed him and wiped out his entire family and many residents of his village.

Since then, Migdal has gathered a small team of gestalt enforcers and has vowed to kill any Palestinian gestalt who harms an Israeli. He has conducted terror raids against members of the Palestinian Press, whom he calls "the hands that put bread in the mouths of terrorists". His conduct is tolerated (if not openly approved) by the Israeli government; this tacit approval, which has not helped deteriorating relations between Israel and its international community, even the United States. But Israelis feel safer when he is around, and a substantial political movement has gathered to support his actions and his organization (which has been dubbed *Abiray-Lev* ("Strong-heart", after the Israeli countervoffensive of the Yom Kippur War).

Migdal has generated a great deal of controversy, as has one other Israeli gestalt: a man codenamed *Netz* ("Hawk"), better known as Captain Simon Ivri, who's based in Jerusalem. Netz has performed assassinations not just against Palestinian terrorists but also against up-and-coming European politicians who hold strong anti-Semitic views. Aside from abilities gained training with elite Israeli military units, Netz is a Hiding Gestalt who has the power to conceal himself from electronic surveillance and to erase people's memories that he was ever present. Most commonly, he's linked to Israel's Mossad Intelligence Service.

While Brakeet, Netz, and Migdal receive a lot of attention, they're far from the most active (or even the most well known) gestalts within Israel. The last Gestalt Wave saw the emergence of several young Israeli gestalts. *Ha-Penini* ("Dispenser of Pearls") is a Wisdom Gestalt who fights crime in Jerusalem. He speaks but once per day, always in the form of a poem that contains advice. While his advice always sounds foolish, those who follow it to the letter always benefit from it.

Ha-Penini is the mentor of *Bar Kochva* ("Son of the Star"), a young Courage Gestalt who named himself after the leader of an ancient Jewish rebellion against Rome. He's started forming a new (as yet unnamed) Israeli superhero team along with a woman who's probably Israel's most popular superheroine, *Eshet Chayil* ("the Accomplished Woman", Gestalt Protector of Wives). She's one of the most powerful heroines in the region and patrols the streets of Haifa like a Western-style costumed vigilante. They shun politics and protect Arab and Israeli alike.

Taqiyyeh ("Caution") is the Protector of the Druze, a Shiite offshoot; he can be found in the mountains of Lebanon.

Turkey: *Inci i Kedi* ("Pearl of Cats") is an Istanbul cat burglar who preys upon the treasures of three continents. *Felakat* ("Catastrophe") is Turkey's most notorious villain; he's an Earthquake Gestalt who

extorts money and goods from villages and towns in exchange for "protection". For years, Felakat enjoyed success without much opposition, but the Kurdistan war has made the Turkish government wary of antisocial gestalts and they are now actively hunting him.

Iran: Iran's Gestalt population is unknown. When the First Gestalt Wave hit, Iranian fundamentalists proclaimed that gestalts were demons, spawn of the great Satan, America. Iran does not make that proclamation these days, which Western intelligence believes is a sign that the Iranian government is using (or has been infiltrated by) gestalts. The militant fundamentalist Taliban faction in Afghanistan, with which Iran has had numerous skirmishes, however, echoes the anti-Gestalt stance.

Very recently, in Iran-occupied southern Iraq, a group of low-powered Shiite superheroes formed an alliance called the *Badr Brigade*, publicly vowing to defend Iraq and Iran against all threats — especially from the West.

As in the real world, recent developments in the Iranian nuclear program are raising alarm bells in the United States. President Bush has recently issued strongly-worded threats that unless Iran disarms its weapons program, it will face American military action. These threatened attacks are expected to be targeted strikes carried out by the USMC Vanguard. Washington insiders claim that the administration blames Iran for agitating the Kurdistan crisis and there are hawks within the U.S. government who are urging for full-scale war against Iran.

Afghanistan: Because the events of September 11, 2001 did not occur on Gestalt-Earth, the Taliban remains in control of the government of Afghanistan, though it's not recognized as a legitimate authority by most world governments.

ASIA

CHINA

Perhaps due to its rural nature, China has fewer Gestalts than the United States. Best estimates place China's Gestalt population at about two-thirds of the United States'. That's still very big, and its growth rate has been improving with each Gestalt Wave.

Heroes: China is not known to have a paragon in Titan's league, nor an energy controller as powerful as the Warder. They may have, however, the world's most powerful psionic, a gestalt code-named *T'ien Ming* ("The Mandate of Heaven") by the CIA, who is alleged to use his powers to track down enemies of the state (including Falun Gong-like cults and nascent democracy movements). One Chinese gestalt who is definitely known (and who has represented the government at Copenhagen) is *Wu'hsien*, a woman who can transform herself into one of the five Chinese elemental forms: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water.

Chun Tzu ("The Superior Man") is a former Olympic gymnast who's now a figurehead-friendly Gestalt in the service of the Chinese government. He's often used as an intermediary to persuade newly emerged gestalts to cooperate with local and national governments. He's a Likeability Gestalt; meeting him face to face, it's nearly impossible to hate him or wish any harm on him. Chun Tzu has political ambitions, and is slowly working his way up the ranks of the Communist Party.

China is known for its martial arts, and it's not surprising that some of the best fighting Gestalts in the world hail from this country. *Dachao-jia* ("The Big Fight") is the best known fighter in the West — his wild, unpredictable style of fighting has disoriented opponents at three Copenhagen tournaments. He hails from Ji'nan. Better known inside China is *Li Xingyi Yang*, master of the art of Chinese boxing, a local legend in Beijing, and *Wang Hao-Quan*, the king of Crane-style Kung-fu, who's also been a top eight finisher at Copenhagen.

Beijing is also the home of a Western-style vigilante, whose name is spoken of in whispers by the locals. *Dashan* ("Big Mountain") is also known as "The Creature of the Streets". Dashan targets pick-pockets and minor criminals, and is not gentle with them ("When the Big Mountain falls on the streets, the hospitals are the first ones to know").

China is also the home to the world's most powerful weather controller, a woman known to the locals as *Yiyuan* ("Garden of Harmony"). A peasant in the western village of Taihuai, she got into trouble when she resisted "suggestions" from the Communist Party on how best to use her powers. (Apparently, the more politically influential neighboring provinces were... uncomfortable with the side effects of the perfect weather she provided her own province.)

Villains: China is a stronghold for the Leviathans, especially in Shanghai, where they are called *San You Lou* ("three-eyed towers") and perform telepathic services for local officials. The leader of the Chinese Leviathans is a Leviathan Prince who calls himself *Hanshan Lung* ("Cold Mountain Dragon"); three Leviathan dukes provide him with counsel and eight Leviathan Knights serve as his bodyguards. It's worth noting that at least a half dozen suspected Gestalts have vanished in Shanghai in the last two years. Hanshan Lung's record with the Chinese has been so successful that he's considering vying for the Leviathan Kingship — after he takes out most of the world's Gestalts by engineering a nuclear war with America, the hotbed of Gestalts.

The Leviathans are opposed by an underground movement of Shanghai Gestalts; unfortunately, all but one of them have been captured and killed over the last two years. The surviving Gestalt is the swashbuckling teenager *Dao-yo* ("The Courier"), son of a prominent local official who despises his father's involvement with the Leviathans. He's trying to rebuild Shanghai's Gestalt underground and thwart the Leviathan's long-range plans.

Lao Gui ("Old Devil") is another Chinese villain, a shapechanging Tempter Gestalt. Lao Gui wanders the countryside in the form of an old man and encourages people to commit unwise actions.

Military Supers: US Military intelligence has identified one elite Chinese army unit composed of ten Gestalts, codenamed "The People's Brigade". They're the opposite number of the USMC Vanguard, but with a much wider variation of powers. Their commanding officer, *Major Laoqiang*, has the ability to control combustion reactions (fires, fossil fuels, and gunpowder). Other members include a living cloud of thunder and lightning, a woman who can transform herself into a cannon, and a Chinese dragon.

There have been reports of other, stranger Gestalts, including a living book of laws that flies around the country and commands obedience to unpopular rules by opening to the correct page and reading the rule to people. The book is in the service of a high-level bureaucrat in the Communist Party.

Hong Kong: A summary of Gestalts in China cannot pass without a mention of Hong Kong, which has more Gestalts per square inch than any other place on Earth. Many of them are chain gestalts (known as "Combat Knights") created by *Weng Chiang*, a man who claims to be the embodiment of an old Chinese death god. Weng Chiang's guidance and the rising fortune of Hong Kong in the finances of the 80s and 90s led to the creation of Zhengcorp, a huge industrial conglomerate that's backed by Weng Chiang.

Weng Chiang has designs of global domination. To augment his considerable powers of "transmutation sorcery" (he can transform everyday objects into deadly weapons) the death god fields two extremely capable lieutenants are *Heihu* ("Black Tiger"), and *Sichou* ("Silk"), gestalt kung-fu masters.

Weng Chiang's archenemy is the Gestalt Protector of Hong Kong, *Bright Dragon*. A capable commander and martial artist, she has about a dozen gestalts under her command (along with a platoon of competent Normals known as "the 77 Dragons") and runs an underground war to expose Zhengcorp's corrupt practices and rid Hong Kong of Weng Chiang and his minions.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN

India is a nation in transition that has benefited greatly from the Gestalt phenomenon, although it suffered badly during 1993's Red Plague which killed an estimated 75 million Indians, including nearly 40% of the citizens of Calcutta. The disputed Kashmir region remains a hotbed of combat between gestalts: more gestalts have died fighting in the Kashmir than anywhere on Earth.

India: India's most famous superheroes are the extremely powerful *Garuda* superhero team, who may be a match for any superteam in the world. The team is based in New Delhi, sponsored by the Indian government, and led by the psionic-paragon *Pratapvant*

HOT SPOT: THE KURDISTAN POWDERKEG

The real disaster of the region is the Kurdistan crisis, the republic founded by the former Kurd minority in Iraq.

In 1991 the Alliance victory in the Gulf War was capped by the USMC Vanguard invasion of Baghdad, which resulted in the capture of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Without Hussein, Iraq largely collapsed, and despite Turkish concerns, the Kurds in northern Iraq declared their independence and founded the nation of Kurdistan. Irregardless of opposition from its neighbors, Kurdistan received formal recognition from the United Nations in 1997.

The establishment of Kurdistan gave hope to Kurds throughout the region, and in 2004, with the support of Kurdistan, several Turk towns along the Turkish-Kurdistani border declared independence. Kurdish Gestalts entered Turkey to reinforce the claim. The region has been engulfed in what can best be described as a continuing blood-bath ever since.

A handful of mercenary gestalts have flocked to the region to participate in the War. These gestalts tend to be soldiers without codenames or costumes, and (perhaps understandably) primarily come from Arab countries that do not border with Kurdistan. *Al-Jazzar* ("the Butcher") is a Palestinian mercenary, an exiled gestalt killer who's responsible for hundreds of deaths, including that of three Turkish gestalts; he has become a source of fear to the Turks and the most infamous Gestalt of the war. *Serhildan* ("Uprising") is a Turkish-born Kurd and an even more valuable Kurdistani asset; he's a Leadership Gestalt who many experts believe is responsible for Kurdistan's surprisingly good showing in the war.

In response to these Gestalts, Turkey has recently put together its own gestalt military team, *Tugay Insanustu* ("The Superhuman Brigade"). Its members are codenamed *Kaharaman* ("Champion"), *Topcu* ("Artilleryman"), *Donanma* ("Fireworks"), *Gurlemek* ("Thunder"), *Hancer* ("Dagger"), and *Kan Dokmek* ("Bloodshed"). The Brigade has a well-earned reputation for brutality and is responsible for the massacres of several Kurd towns. There's a personal reason for this: one of the first Turk gestalts killed by Jazzar was *Kumundan* ("Commander"), Kaharaman's brother. The vengeful Kaharaman hopes to draw out Jazzar and as many allied Gestalts as possible for a final showdown.

The United States and NATO have been forced to support Turkey in the crisis, which has resulted in American troops stationed in Iraq after the Gulf War being targeted by Kurd and radical Shi'a terror cells. Despite an intense effort to sell it to the people, the Kurdistani War is very unpopular in America.

("Possessor of Prowess"; he's erroneously been called "Maharajah" in the Western press). The other members are *Aandhi* ("Dust Storm", Gestalt of Dust); Pratapvant's wife *Chamaran* ("Peacock Feather Fan", a woman with similar powers to Pratapvant's, she's a Sidekick Gestalt who's sometimes been called "Maharani"), *Kalari* (a Kalaripayit Martial Arts champion Gestalt), *Kali* (a self-styled goddess of destruction), *Major Rudri* (the government liaison who's a fast flyer and force field controller), *Mahout*, a man who can shapechange into an elephant and control any beast except tigers and monkeys, *Risala* ("Cavalry Troop", a former Indian army captain who can duplicate himself into twenty soldiers), and *Yakhbasta* ("Ice-bound", a Gestalt of Winter).

Garuda is powerful and famous, but they aren't especially popular on the sometimes fractious subcontinent. They've vowed that nothing like the Red Plague will ever happen again, and take a very pro-active stance against possible threats. As a result, they tend to harass people a lot. They've also been used as a weapon by the government against opposition political parties, and have a track record of excessive brutality against Muslims.

India's most famous solo hero is *Hanuman*, a mythological reincarnation of the Monkey King, one of the greatest heroes of Indian mythology. Hanuman hunts his enemy *Ravana*, Lord of Rakshasas, one of Indian mythology's greatest villains. Hanuman is a flying strongman who's almost in the Titan's league ("But even the mighty Titan doesn't have such a magnificent prehensile tail!"). He has enormous contempt for Garuda, whom he views as pretenders

who are posing as the gods of India in this new age (he also thinks they're callow bullies, but Hanuman likes to put his grandest excuse first). Garuda doesn't care for him either.

Lau ("Candle Flame") is a woman who surrounds herself with swirling, flying candles, which she uses to generate or absorb flame, and to test the hearts of Man (their flames change color when lies are spoken); she protects the city of Madras. Sometimes she's referred to as "the Gestalt of Bollywood" for her tendency to land in bizarre situations and burst into song at a moment's notice.

Ganges Saand is the Protector of the sacred Ganges River. She is a ghostly, holy cow whose touch heals the sick; it's claimed that her urine can purify even the foulest, rankest water and that to bathe within sight of this holy beast brings about spiritual peace. Ganges Saand does not tolerate cruelty in her presence nor does she tolerate those who eat meat (she has a natural enmity toward beef eaters whom she can smell).

Bombay's most famous Gestalt is the NRK, *Night Rat Killer*. This industrious young man hunts the bandicoot rats that plague the city, as well as a family of intelligent giant bandicoot rats that commits many crimes in the city,

The southwest coast of India is protected by *Unniarcha*, the reincarnation of the greatest female warrior of Malabar.

Recent events in India involving the acquisition of nuclear weapons has drastically increased tensions with Pakistan. Garuda has openly supported

the Indian nuclear weapons program; Raaz and the Invisible Six were adopted by the Pakistani government in direct response to Garuda's actions.

India is also the home of *Kalkin Khan*, a powerful telekinetic supervillain and traitorous former member of Garuda, and *The Leper*, a Gestalt of Decay who lives to bring disease to the families of the wealthy and influential.

By far the most beloved gestalt in the region is *Deepak Patnaik*. He's a Cricketeer Gestalt, and although (due to the general ban of Gestalts in sports) he doesn't compete anymore, his coaching is responsible for India's recent dominance in the sport. Patnaik encourages peace through athletic competition. His zealous pursuit of this goal has gotten him into trouble; to protest his support for a recent series of matches with Pakistan, operatives associated with the anti-Muslim extremist party *Shiv Sena* ("Army of Shiva") publicly attacked Deepak. During the assault, Patnaik grabbed a cricket bat and defended himself admirably which only bolstered the cricketeer's popularity. The leader of Shiv Sena, embarrassed by the outcry against their actions, made a rare public apology.

Pakistan: Pakistan has numerous supers, and the disputed Kashmir province is where many of them congregate, to the region's regret.

Pakistan's official superteam, *Chheh An Deykha*, is better known by their English name "The Invisible Six". This team's leader, *Raaz* ("Secret"), is actually a former Indian archvillain who defected to Pakistan in 1998; he's a Contemplation Gestalt who can hide his body inside people's minds. The other members of the team are Pakistan-born: *Naalah* ("Lamentation") is a Grief Gestalt who recently married Raaz; *Guuthi* ("Tangle") is able to control people's motions and to violently contort them; *Faasiq* ("Transgressor") is a pardoned Pakistani criminal and shapeshifter who's also an extraordinarily capable weaponsmith; *Jalaal* ("Glory") is a Patriotism Gestalt with strong ties to anti-Hindu terrorism; *Purya* ("Embodiment") is a shapechanger who can shape change into any person (as long as they're one of the best in their field).

INDONESIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Indonesia: Indonesia is one of the world's largest nations and has its share of gestalts. The Jakarta native *Nyamuk* ("Mosquito") is the nation's most conventional crimefighter. He's a monstrous hero gestalt who fights crime by feeding on the blood of the violent and can transform himself from a human being to a swarm of thousands of mosquitoes. *Pria Rimba* ("Man of the Jungle") is a wildman who protects Indonesia's rain forests, to the regret of local foresters and developers.

Indonesia's champion is *Singa Bulan* ("Lion Moon"), a practitioner of *Pentjak-silat* who claims to be the greatest hand-to-hand fighter in the world. He refuses to go to the Copenhagen tournament but has demanded that the Copenhagen champion

should come to Jakarta and fight him for the *real* championship).

There are three gestalts who guard the president at all times: *Berani* ("The Brave", a superhumanly strong Courage Gestalt who can protect any brave person behind a force field), *Gajah* ("Elephant", a woman who can transform into an elephant), and *Pembantu* ("The Servant", a gestalt whose powers have unlimited versatility, but he must be told what to do by a "master").

Dokter Tukang (The Artisan") is Indonesia's most noteworthy villain; he's a Mad Scientist Gestalt who likes to mutate people by crossbreeding them with animals. Most of his mutations are terrible failures, but that doesn't keep him from trying.

The Philippines: The Philippines is another bastion of Gestalts in the region. The greatest gestalt of these is *Babaylan* ("Spiritualist") a female poet and Inspiration Gestalt who's the most trusted figure in the country, though she rarely involves herself in politics.

Manila's strangest protector is *Gimokud* (which roughly translates as "the Soul"). This remarkable Gestalt who may be summoned by any Filipino in need by plucking a leaf from a tree at dawn, exposing it to the sun, and then throwing it into the sea or onto the ground. The leaf then turns into the flying boat *Gimokud* which takes the subject into the Great Country, a land of Sanctuary (which is located in the Gestalt Dimension, of course) until dusk, when it must return the soul to safety in the land of the living prior to its nightly voyage through the underworld. Those who sail into the Great Country sometimes receive gifts to aid them in their hour of need, but those who enter the land more than three times have squandered the gift and may never return to the Great Country until after death.

A more traditional Filipino crimefighter is *Kápatíran* ("Brotherhood"), a Vengeance Gestalt who flies around Manila and other major cities; while he prefers to stop a crime as it's happening, sometimes he uses telepathic senses to locate those who have committed unprovoked violence within the past twenty-four hours, then beats them to a bloody pulp.

JAPAN

Japan is a nation of many gestalts; its mixture of tradition and dense urbanization is naturally attractive to the gestalt process. Many Japanese gestalts are shadowy figures that avoid the lime-light, or who try to live within the norms of society. As elsewhere, gestalts are a mixed blessing for this great nation; while many gestalts are glad to provide public service and greatly inspire the people, there are still many supervillains who don't have much appreciation for life or property, and casualties from Gestalt battles in Tokyo rival those of New York City and Washington DC.

However, many Japanese are thankful that no giant monster, or *kaiju* gestalt, has shown up (yet).

History: The first and most powerful of the first

wave of Gestalts to emerge in 1989 was a pure gestalt, an old man named *Hakushiki*, who appeared in Kyoto. Once every blue moon (the second full moon of a month), he would call for two men of extraordinary ability (but not gestalts) to engage in a fight; whoever won would be given a gift. Hideo Yamashiro, aka *Shugosha* ("the Guardian") was the first winner. He was given extremely powerful superhuman abilities and the responsibility to protect all Japan. It's worth noting that *Shugosha* is the world's first recorded chain Gestalt.

Shugosha used his "moon powers" to protect Japan against many foes, gestalts and normal alike. His greatest enemy was the Mad Scientist Gestalt *Ammei* ("Destiny"). In 1994 *Ammei* attempted to destroy Tokyo by burrowing a shaft deep into the Earth's core that would have flooded the city with magma. *Shugosha*, several superheroes, and hundreds of soldiers prevented this, but the hero died when the shaft exploded in a cataclysmic explosion. *Ammei* also perished in the holocaust.

From this volcanic flood, a large island was formed in Tokyo Bay, the *Yuuki No Shima* ("Island of Courage"), named to honor the soldiers who died stopping *Ammei*'s plan. The island is now inhabited by magma monsters. However *Hakushiki* is quoted as saying that one day a hero named *Wakajishi Saikyou* ("Very Strong Young Lion") will rise out of the island, defeat the monsters, and save Tokyo from an unimaginable peril.

Heroes: Japan prides itself on being a nation of heroes, rugged individuals who nonetheless honor their country in service. The most respected Japanese Gestalt is *Mushashugyo*, a man who appeared in the Second Gestalt Wave and claimed to be the legendary Japanese fighter *Mushasi Miyamoto* (he has since backed down from that claim, although he probably is a pure gestalt recreation of the legend). *Mushashugyo* is a man in classic samurai armor who fights with two blades and wanders Japan in search of good deeds to perform. His fame has attracted some Gestalt followers, the young man *Korogi*, Gestalt of Crickets, a man who can transform into a cricket and drive opponents mad with his chirping, and the elderly fighter-philosopher *Tetsubo* ("War-staff").

Tokyo's most stalwart protector is a young man called *Honosusori* ("Fireshade"), who claims imperial blood. He's a paragon with superhuman vision and alertness and wears Western-style skintight garb.

Japan also has a traditional superhero team, *Kisei* ("Team Spirit"). They are sponsored by a partnership between the Japanese government and major Japanese corporations, each corporation sponsors a member, the government provides the team equipment. Its members are *Yudachi* ("Evening Thunder Shower in Summer", a Thunder Gestalt); *Muteki* ("Invincible", a Perseverance Gestalt who gets more powerful the more badly he's hurt); *Hatsuentou* ("Smoking Candle", a Shinto Gestalt who's very powerful against traditional Shinto entities); *Denshi*

("Electron", a Gestalt who can shrink down to microscopic size); *Boshuku Bara* ("Twilight Rose", a woman who looks like a traditional geisha and who can produce effects that boost other people's abilities); *Kishou* ("Happy Laughter", a comedy Gestalt who can make others laugh until their sides ache); *Banajiumu-jin* ("Vanadium Man", a Gestalt who can transform himself into an 18' tall steel man with superhuman strength); *Keikogeishi* ("The Tumbler") a Gestalt of happy madness or comic relief (the team isn't sure which), *Yamabushi* ("Mountain Warrior", a Karate Gestalt), and *Bakuchiku* ("Firecracker", a Gestalt of Pyrotechnics).

Villains: The first major villain (by Western standards) to appear in Japan was *Genshiun* ("Atomic Cloud"). *Genshiun* wishes for Japan to become an atomic power but does so by wildly implausible master plans. Some consider him Japan's answer to Armageddo, while others are simply appalled by the lack of taste demonstrated by his name choice. Nevertheless, when he steals weapons-grade plutonium or second-hand Soviet nuclear devices, he demands to be taken seriously.

At present, the most serious supervillain threat to Japanese sovereignty is *Gunka* ("War Song"), a would-be general who wishes to remilitarize Japan. He's more of a cult leader than a traditional supervillain and he trains an army that's been linked to acts of terrorism (though he's yet to be convicted of a crime). The *Kenkyo No Gundan* ("the Army of Humility") are his special forces. *Gunka* is obsessed with finding specimens of perfect Japanese stock to be members of this army and breeding a sub-race of Super-Japanese. *Gunka* has a patron who is providing his army with advanced technology; the patron's identity is a mystery. Even more disconcerting is the physical transformation that occurs to those who are indoctrinated by *Gunka*; their physical features become indistinct to the point where they effectively vanish. The *Kenkyo No Gundan* is truly a faceless enemy.

Kisei's opposite number in the villain world is Japan's answer to the Tyranny League, *Akkuinen* ("Evil Destiny"). They are led by *Kyouyou Tensai* ("Master Villain Supergenius") and include the giant *Ootoko*; the shark-man *Wanizame*; *Tachikaze* ("Wind From a Swinging Sword", a Ninjitsu Gestalt); the mighty *Ikitousen* ("Strength of a Thousand", a man who absorbs the strength of others); *Yama no Tetsui* ("Hammer Fist on the Mountain", a Karate Gestalt), *Youkouro* (the human blast furnace); and *Rakugosha* (an invisible telepath; his name means "The Straggler"). *Kyouyou* seeks revenge against major Japanese corporations and bring down Japan's industrial complex (though *Kyouyou* hopes that enough will be left of it that *Akkuinen* can pick up the pieces).

The most powerful Gestalt group — albeit a secret one — is known to a few in the West as *Shishou No Kaigi* ("The Council of Masters"). They are a shadowy power group composed of creatures from Japanese mythology. The Council seeks Japan's eminence as the premier world power, primarily through

sabotage of its rivals. The only known members are the shapechanging fox-woman *Hengeyokai*, who serves as a liaison to Japan's Washington consulate, and *Meramera No Maizuru* ("Burning Dancing Crane"), a Knowledge Gestalt who's billed as having the world's most perfect memory. The Masters are working behind the scenes to undo Japan's recent economic slump, undermine America's preeminence, and keep a watchful eye on China.

The most unusual villain in Japan may be the faceless hitman *Terebi Shikaku* ("The Television Assassin"). He can teleport through televisions, appear on a television screen, and kill his targets from the confines of Japan's favorite television programs.

Beyond these players of the traditional superhero scene, there are many Japanese Gestalts who are neither heroes nor villains. The most famous of these is *Aijrushi* ("Badge of Friendship") a Reconciliation Gestalt who finds people with fractured friendships and brings them together.

KOREA

The dictatorship of President Kim Jong-Il, North Korea, is assisted in its hectoring by the propaganda Gestalt *Taesong* ("Great Success") who wanders Korea waving a giant flag to instill pride in their nation. Taesong's bodyguard is *Dong-Moo* ("Comrade"), a Regional Protector Gestalt who can create a lightning storm over several square miles, and an EMP burst over an even wider radius. He claims he was sent as an emissary by the Korean gods from the sacred city of Myohyangsan to protect Kim, just as Kim "protects socialism with courage like steel".

Kim is (of course) "the purest of all pure gestalts with powers of love that put the Titan to shame" (or so the songs say). For some reason, however, the loving Kim needs the services of *Juche* ("Self-reliance"), an invisible gestalt that remains near Kim's side at all times. It's also possible he's an agent of North Korea's vice president, Sung Yong-sun, who has a reputation for being as cunning as Kim is crazy.

As in our world, North Korea has nuclear weapons. They're also trying to make deals with the Ar'Kayadin for space weapons. One of the more interesting worst-case scenarios involves a team of mercenary gestalts stealing an Ar'Kayadin Oddat cruiser to add to North Korea's air force, then threatening to use nukes against South Korea unless Western superheroes protect them from alien retaliation.

South Korea does have one prominent defender, *Gobugson*, a scientist who wears fifteen-foot-tall battle armor. Gobugson is named after Korea's medieval dragon turtle ships, the first ironclad warships. He's a traditional crimefighter who patrols Seoul to prevent street violence. He often preaches a philosophy of non-violence but this hasn't prevented him from fighting villains.

Shinhwa ("Myth") is a Gestalt Protector of Youth, a K-pop (Korean pop music) sensation turned superhero. His powers and lack of self-control

increase with the passion of those around him and Seoul's student populations (who are given to occasional rioting) have learned to give him a wide berth.

There are a few other gestalts who are known to populate the Korean countryside.

Mudang Choon-yei is an old female "shaman" who lives in the mountains near Kyong-ju in eastern South Korea. When she senses a great evil is present in the land, she summons a champion to battle it.

Piwon ("Secret Garden") is a middle-aged woman, a Garden Gestalt who grows special flowers. Those who smell their fragrance become her slaves. She also grows flowers whose scent can temporarily boost human abilities, which she uses on her slaves to boost their abilities for criminal purposes.

AFRICA

Many African gestalts are attached to military or militia units. However, Africa's non-military oriented gestalts rank among the most idealistic in the world, and are the most active at creating a Gestalt community that will promote human brotherhood.

Heroes: The most famous African Gestalt is Uganda's *Soulkeeper*, a psionic with healing powers and precognitive abilities. She is the head of the Utopia 2100 organization, a tireless worker who promotes peace, tolerance, and unity. As she says: "Tolerance is Africa's only hope. Peace is mankind's only hope. Unity is man's greatest destiny."

Soulkeeper is sometimes helped by Zambia's *Umsipha*, who's reputedly as strong and tough as the Titan. Other well-known African heroes are *Springbok*, the speedster hero of Botswana (she repelled a 1996 Blood Red King incursion; *Konde* ("the Fist", a Tanzanian martial artist who trains children in the art of self-defense); and *the Lioness*, a Kenyan Animal Gestalt who can speak Swahili and English, and feeds on criminals throughout Central Africa (she was offered membership in the Menagerie in 2001, and responded by trying to bite off Dr. Canus's head).

There are two major groups of gestalts in Africa that operate independent of military control. *Kubwa Watu* ("The Great People") is a team based in Mwanza, a city on Lake Victoria in Tanzania. It's led by a charismatic man who calls himself *Ndoto Mlima* ("The Dream Mountain"), a former soldier who bonded with a Stone Gestalt. Other members of the team include *Nyoka Uchawi* ("Magic Snake"), a female shapechanger Wisdom Gestalt and exceptional advisor; *Umeme* ("Lightning"), a Weather Gestalt who produces spectacular thunderstorms; *Simba Moto* ("Burning Lion"), a flying, flaming lion, the bane of those who dedicate themselves to warfare; and *Wazo* ("Thought"), a Doubt Gestalt.

The team's goals are to restore Tanzania's infrastructure, improve crops, and curb the spread of AIDS, the slimming plague. They've gotten a lot of support from the masses and the government worries that Ndoto Mlima will attempt a coup sometime within the next two years.

The Titan on Umsipha

"So there's an African superhero who's stronger than me? In what way is this a problem? Do I go running around asking you journalists whether you can take Tom Brokaw in a fight?"

The *Ashanti Alliance* is the other major African superhero team. Based in Kumasi, Ghana, they are led by a martial artist/illusionist *Elegba* (who often not where he appears to be). Other members of the Alliance are *Golden Staff*, a female Destruction Gestalt whose staff produces many interesting effects (fire, cold, rain, thunder, lightning and locusts), *God Is With Me*, an extremely fast flying superhuman who can take control of any airborne object, *Ginga* ("Footwork", a martial artist specializing in West African kick-fighting) and *Kente*, a Cloth Gestalt capable of entrancing people by making them see nothing but the colorful patterns of the region's famous Kente cloth.

Nearby Liberia is protected by *Republic*, also known as *Martin Moniba*, head of the Republic Unity Party, a small Liberian political group. Moniba is a Hope Gestalt. Largely because of his efforts, Liberia has greatly stabilized over the last seven years, though the troubles of neighboring countries frequently spills over its borders.

Ututu ("Morning") is a Nigerian gestalt, the protector of the Igbo people (one of Nigeria's three major tribes). This young strongman is the embodiment

Kuumahali and Weapons (Game Mechanics)

There's a -2 penalty to the attack roll and power rank of any technological attack that is fired or triggered within the city limits.

of both physical and inner strength, and can strengthen or weaken the life force of people over a radius of several miles, bringing firmity and wisdom to thousands. Proclaimed by many as a living saint, Ututu is being encouraged by a number of Africans (mostly Christian clergy and other African heroes) to become a national leader. settle the Igbo's long-term dispute with the Yoruba tribe, and bring a lasting peace to his country. However, the idea of getting involved in politics frightens Ututu, and thus one of Africa's great potential hopes remains unfulfilled.

The aforementioned Soulkeeper is the head of the Utopia 2100 organization, a worldwide alliance of superheroes, with the goals of having a unified force to help during natural disasters and encouraging the demilitarization of Gestalts. The first goal is probably more feasible.

Soulkeeper has also teamed up with the Ethiopian Building Gestalt *Kore Addebabaye* and *Mtungi* ("Clean Water", an Engineering Gestalt) to found a planned "perfect city", *Kuumahali*. Swahili for "Great Place" and located on the northern tip of Lake Albert in Uganda, this is meant to be a refuge where African



gestalts can eschew violence and work for the good of the common man. As a result of the transformations that created this city, weapons are less effective here.

Villains: Another Ghana native is one of Africa's most notorious villains, *Plague-Burner*. This Intolerance Gestalt wanders Africa, seeking out the sick (especially those with AIDS) and uses mind control to encourage people to burn their loved ones alive. Doctors are also another of Plague-Burner's favorite targets; he was responsible for the 1998 murder of Africa's most powerful healer, "*Dr. Life-Healer-Man*" (despite the odd name, he was a powerful gestalt who could even raise the dead).

The Republic of Sierra Leone has also been embroiled in the horrors of civil war. In March 1999, *Major Gregory Alan Havoc*, a Gestalt of Noise, took control of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) faction and claimed control of the nation for eight days, until an ambitious underling assassinated him.

The most powerful—and despised—of Africa's known super-soldiers is *Askari* ("The Soldier"), a Kenyan superhuman mercenary. If half the legends about this man are true, he probably ranks as one of the world's most powerful gestalts. Among his reputed abilities is the power to summon an army of 100 warriors who are nearly invulnerable to small arms fire. Some have approached him and tried to persuade him to become a peacemaker, even offering to give him political power). But peace is a foreign concept to Askari, a pure gestalt who quite literally lives for war. Askari is not well-liked by anyone, but perhaps his most tenacious enemy is *Moran*, a Masai warrior who wanders Africa looking for any soldier who's ever harmed a non-combatant (whom Moran kills on sight.)

Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe, although lacking a superhero team, has several noteworthy gestalts. *Independence* is the official superhero of Zimbabwe; President Robert Mugabe's bodyguard, he's a Noise Gestalt with teleportation and sound control powers. *Svikiro* is a woman, a Medium Gestalt based in Bulawayo, who can speak to the spirits of her dead ancestors. *Motlalepula* is a Weather Gestalt who lives in Kariba and is well known as a rainmaker.

South Africa: South Africa has numerous gestalts, from *Alan Foke*, a black South African Justice Gestalt who targets gangs and corrupt judges, to *Diamant* (a bandit who's very fond of jewels), and *Hemelbaas* ("Skymaster"), is a mercenary flyer who's both a cat burglar and an industrial saboteur.

Auric, a "Gestalt of the Earth", hates mining operations and disrupts them whenever possible. Mining companies have placed a sizable bounty on his head.

The Anti-Crime Man is a Capetown Gestalt associated with PAGAD (People Against Gangsterism And Drugs), an Islamic vigilante group that's been linked to terrorist acts. He's a crimefighter in name only—he's an Anger Gestalt whose explosive blasts get more powerful as the amount of anger in the

area increases.

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

Australia: Australia's most famous superhero is a man with only marginal Gestalt abilities, a happy go-lucky boxer named *Mr. Australia*, who wanders the continent but uses Brisbane as a home base. He is a leading voice in uniting Gestalts for the benefits of Mankind and one of Soulkeeper's strongest allies in the Utopia 2100 movement. His wife is a non-gestalt who nonetheless wears superhero gear and calls herself Mrs. Australia. A highly-regarded local politician with national ambitions, she's also a devout Buddhist and a well-known Buddhist scholar.

Sydney is the home of four highly regarded superheroes. *The Blue Jet* is a cocky young man with flame powers who spends a lot of time insulting Mr. Australia. The root cause of his enmity is a mystery. The second gestalt emerged during the most recent Gestalt Wave, a teenager named *Thunder Rock*. He's a Gestalt Protector of the Great Barrier Reef, a powerhouse whose touch neutralizes natural toxins. The other two gestalts are a husband-and-wife vigilante team named *Penumbra* and *Umbra* who are known for affectionately bickering as they beat up crooks.

Melbourne is the home of *Peter Wild*, a Detective Gestalt, another teenager whose mystery-solving skills have made him an invaluable asset to the Melbourne PD. Wild and Thunder Rock met for the first time in 2007 and became close friends. They have plans to assemble an Australian national superhero team.

Perth has one noteworthy hero, Calvin Wallace, sometimes called the *ANZAC Warrior*. Calvin is a very strong man who reaches peak superhuman strength when he prays at Perth's memorial for the World War I dead—his strength fades 24 hours after he conducts a prayer. Wallace's most noteworthy enemies are *The Ribbon*, a petty thief who's able to animate cloth and make it as sharp as steel; *Stitcher*, a woman who telekinetically animates a needle and thread that can stitch any two things together; and *the Vaultsmith*, a Steel Gestalt bank robber who can rip apart even the thickest steel (and who laughs at bullets).

The Pegasus is a Gestalt of Flying who can give anyone the ability to fly (a transform that lasts twenty-four hours). He began his career as a superhero, but as time went on, he became more and more mercenary, charging large sums of money for his talent. He's completely abandoned any altruistic goal, and is so obsessed with material gain that he used his powers to find out intimate secrets of some of his richer clients, and he's begun blackmailing a few of them. Outwardly he's quite likeable, and as far as the world's concerned, he's still a superhero.

As far as the world is concerned, *the Bronze Talisman* is a supervillain, a powerful gestalt who murdered three security guards while stealing over twenty million dollars in gold and silver bullion. In actuality, he's a powerful hero who was framed for his heinous crime by Influence. He's determined to

Credit for Auric

Auric was created by Steve Perrin and is used with permission.

clear his name and take the fight to his enemy. In the meantime, he uses his superhuman strength and toughness to help those in need. He's occasionally known to commit a Robin Hood crime and play off his reputation to help those in need.

Ian Black is an Australian-based Sailing Gestalt and two-fisted adventurer who has the mannerisms of a 1930s pulp hero. He spends most of his time fighting local corruption, piracy, and criminal activities in the South Seas.

Lily Bug (not her true name) is an entomologist who wanders Australia. She can communicate telepathically with insects and has used them to solve crimes and fight injustice.

Laura Zakoji is a timeseer (someone who can look into both the past and future) who works as an aide to the Prime Minister and hires herself out as a freelance detective in her spare time. She's based in Canberra.

Two of Australia's most famous supervillains are quite bizarre. *Mr. Tick-Tock* is a time controller and an empath who believes that the modern world runs at too fast a pace and needs to be slowed down. *The Clay Man* is a Stone Gestalt who is able to control the surrounding landscape and form "Clay Men", automations under his control. The two criminals recently joined forces and are calling themselves *The Gruesome Twosome*. (It's safe to say they have a sense of humor.)

New Zealand: New Zealand is the home of a

man who has committed acts of both heroism and villainy, the aboriginal telepath *Dreamtime*. New Zealand's other superheroes include *Mr. Remarkable*, a Thrillseeker Gestalt from Queenston who's reputed to be "the world's craziest Gestalt" (his life's dream is to play "chicken" at full flying speed against the Titan); Christchurch's *Vigil*; Wellington's *Puncher* (a Justice Gestalt); and a young telekinetic Exploration Gestalt named *Kent Ashbury*. Ashbury forsakes a costume and spends much of his time as an anthropologist and an Antarctic explorer.

New Zealand's major villains are *Fog of War*, an embittered former soldier and politician who uses his fog control powers to commit acts of theft and terror; *Tragedy*, a woman who likes to use her psionic powers to make people reenact famous historical tragedies; *the Orc*, a bestial creature born when a popular fantasy movie was shot in New Zealand; and *Focus*, a Teaching Gestalt with light control powers. Focus is a villain solely to test young superheroes and bring out their full potential.

ANTARCTICA

Yes, there are a few gestalts known to exist in Antarctica. There's a flying penguin, christened *Bigg Byrd* by explorers, who's able to eat one fish and spit out thirty fish a few seconds later. Naturally, he's very popular among penguin-kind.



Other Antarctic gestalts are matter of legend. Kent Ashbury tells of meeting a family near the South Pole who called themselves *the Perfects*, the most transcendent family in existence. They have no special powers, aside from being able to survive naked in the dead of winter near the South Pole, but they're beautiful and artistically gifted beyond compare. Jim Perfect, the head of the clan, told Ashbury that if humanity is ever wiped out of existence, their family is the next one on deck to repopulate the world. "*Once upon a time*," Sandra Perfect once wrote in the snow. "*South of south, there lived a family of perfect people, ready to make the world anew when the old world used it up...*"

NEAR SPACE

Flying in a power geostationary orbit over the

Canary Islands, is an asteroid populated by three inhuman gestalts. They're *Xenira*, *Uoderbaron*, and *Sontag*, the Orbitmen. These three shapechangers will welcome anyone into their abode: though polite beyond the dreams of a Japanese geisha, they enjoy playing practical jokes. Their companion is *Ling-Lung*, the Space Panda, a semi-intelligent flying panda with psionic abilities.

More conventional are *Highpoint* and *Discovery*, a pair of gestalts who live aboard a giant space station named Orbit City (see page 178).

Finally, a Chinese space probe sent to Mars reported encountering some sort of Martian intelligence who called itself *Bu Shao* ("The Sentinel"). However, many suspect this is a deception committed by a terrestrial gestalt, similar to the panic Maligno caused in a small Delaware town by faking an invasion of "gestalts from the moon".

GESTALT OF THE YEAR

Every year since 1992, GTV hosts a "Gestalt of the Year" competition, which is awarded in the first week of January. The award goes to "the gestalt who, through a conspicuous display of valor and of positive values, made the world a better place". This excludes the villains and a lot of controversy. In 1997, GTV also established "The Armageddo Award" for the "best exemplars of the quality of Armageddo", which is (of course) a way to get Armageddo off their backs after he'd crashed their award ceremonies for the third consecutive year in a row.

The winners of the real award were:

1992	America Man
1993	Kinestar
1994	Liberator
1995	Der Jäger
1996	Jinete
1997	Dr. Astra
1998	(Reserved for a PC/GM NPC)
1999	The Titan
2000	Ricochet
2001	(Reserved for a PC/GM NPC)
2002	Edge
2003	Soulkeeper
2004	(Reserved for a PC/GM NPC)
2005	The Olympian
2006	Clipper



Bring on The Bad Guys' Awards

The website www.nomercy.com is widely credited with the dubious "honor" of providing the most credible supervillain awards (as well as an ongoing survey of the world's most dangerous supervillains, see page 111).

2006 BEST LISTS

THE BEST MARTIAL ARTISTS ON EARTH (NOT INCLUDING YOUR PCs)

Note: The list does not include individuals with a STR score above 30. (Source: Fighting Gestalt Journal)

	Name	Discipline	Place of Origin	PL	Mastermind's Manual Package
1.	Weng Chiang	Hung Gar Kung-fu	Hong Kong	18	Kung-fu
2.	Daimyo	Ninjitsu	Japan	18	Ninjitsu
3.	Lao-Shi Khan	Dragon Style Kung-fu	China	16	Kung-fu
4.	Dachao-jia	Drunken Fist	Ji'nan	16	Kung-fu
5.	Elegba	Capoeira Angola	Ghana	15	Capoeira
6.	Wang Hao-Quan	Crane Style Kung-fu	Suzhou, China	15	Kung-fu
7.	Cazador	Dirty Fighting	Mexico	14	Krav Maga
8.	Surasak Virote	Muay Thai	Thailand	14	Muay Thai
9.	Bright Dragon	Hung Gar Kung-fu	Hong Kong	12	Kung-fu
10.	Liberator	Karate	Washington DC	12	Karate
11.	Sven Riffjerg	Wrestling	Copenhagen	12	Wrestling
12.	Li Xingyi-Yang	Chinese Boxing	Beijing	14	Kung-Fu
13.	Supremo Lutador	Brazilian Jujitsu	Brazil	13	JiuJitsu
14.	Kinzhal	Krav Maga	St. Petersburg	12	Krav Maga
15.	Peacekeeper	Shorinji Kempo	Los Angeles	11	Kung-fu
16.	Kalari	Kalaripayit	New Delhi, India	11	n/a
17.	Jonathan Clark	Commando Training	Tennessee	13	Krav Maga
18.	Golden Serpent	Kickboxing	Chicago	11	Muay Thai
19.	Paladin	Shorinji Kempo	Atlanta	10	Kung-fu
20.	Der Champion	Boxing	Berlin	10	Boxing
21.	Kicking Horse	Muay Thai	North Dakota	10	Muay Thai
22.	Bonne Homme	Savate	Paris	10	Muay Thai
23.	Singa Bulan	Pentjak-silat	Malaysia	10	n/a
24.	Peng Lung	Shorinji Kempo	China	10	Kung-fu
25.	The Brutalizer	Pro Wrestling	"Parts Unknown"	11	Wrestling
26.	Athena	Shorinji Kempo	Greece	10	Kung-fu
27.	Chihou	Hung Gar Kung-fu	Hong Kong	11	Kung-fu
28.	Sgt. Bowman	Commando Training	Baltimore, MY	11	Krav Maga
29.	Peerless	Aikido	London UK	11	Aikido

The Strongest Men on Earth (Not including your PCs)

	Name	Place of Origin	Power Level	STR	CON	S-STR	Light	Med	Heavy	Max	Push
1.	The Titan	USA	18	50	50	18	1.1MT	2.2MT	3.3MT	6.7MT	16MT
2.	Umsipha	Zambia	18	48	50	16	210kT	420kT	630kT	1.3MT	3.2MT
3.	The Vandal	Germany	16	46	45	15	80kT	160kT	240kT	480kT	1.2MT
4.	Silverfist	Canada	15	46	40	14	40kT	80kT	120kT	240kT	600kT
5.	Berserker	Romania	15	44	40	13	15kT	30kT	45kT	90kT	230kT
	Karl Thorvaldson	Norway	15	44	36	13					
7.	Dynatos	Greece	14	44	35	12	7.6kT	15kT	22kT	45kT	115kT
8.	Grandeza	Nicaragua	14	42	30	12	5.7kT	11.4kT	17kT	34kT	85kT
9.	Bombast	USA	14	40	40	12	4.4kT	8.8kT	13kT	26kT	65kT
	Cosmic Man	USA	14	40	30	12					
	Der Kollos	Germany	14	40	30	12					
	Juunt	Equador	14	40	28	12					
	Medved	Russia	14	40	28	12					
	Orso	Italy	14	40	26	12					
	Powerjack	San Francisco	14	40	25	12					
	Strongarm	USA	14	40	25	12					
17.	Argamassa	Brazil	13	38	40	12	3.3kT	6.5kT	10kT	20kT	50kT
	Caber	Scotland	13	38	30	12					
	Trojan	Canada	13	36	30	12					
20.	Bearface Thompson	USA	13	36	35	12	2.5kT	5kT	7.5kT	15kT	37.5kT
	Bravura	USA	13	36	23	12					
	Doc Toon	USA	13	34	18	12	1.9kT	3.8kT	5.7kT	11.4kT	28.6kT
	Hanuman	India	13	34	30	12					
	Muteki	Japan	12	34	24	12					
	The Physique	USA	12	34	23	12					
	Pratapvant	India	16	34	30	12					
	Puissance	France	12	34	23	12					
	Thor	USA	12	34	30	12					

THE FASTEST FOLK ON EARTH (NOT INCLUDING YOUR PCS)

Known Space Travellers

	Name	Place of Origin	Power Level	Space Travel	Value of C	parsecs/day
1.	Ted Chess	USA	12	12	5000C	4.2
2.	The Warder	USA	15	11	2500C	2.1
3.	Titan	USA	18	6	50C	0.042
4.	Plazmova Soltntze	Russia	14	5	25C	0.021
5.	Cohete	Peru	11	1	1C	0.0004

Earthly Speedsters

	Name	Place of Origin	PL	Move	MPH
1.	Ricochet	USA	13	Speed 13	100,000
2.	Wirbelwind	Germany	12	Fly 12	50,000
	The Warder	USA	15	Fly 12/Teleport 10	
4.	Plazmova Soltntze	Russia	14	Fly 11	25,000
5.	Cohete	Argentina	12	Fly 10	10,000
	Kid Mercury	USA	14	Super Speed 10	
	The Titan	USA	18	Fly 10	
8.	Icarus	Greece	12	Fly 9	5,000
	Jericho Bronze	USA	12	Speed 9	
	Le Coursier	Canada	10	Speed 9	
11.	Golden Angel	USA	12	Fly 8	2,500
	Pratapvant	India	16	Fly 8	
	Schwarze Rabe	Germany	10	Fly 8	
	Speedstar	USA	10	Super Speed 8	
	Springbok	Bptswana	11	Super Speed 8	
16.	Armageddo	USA	13	Fly 7	1,000
	Ascension	Mexico	14	Fly 7	
	Bravura	USA	14	Fly 7	
	Carnival	USA	14	Fly 7	
	Doppler	USA	15	Speed 7	
	Fuga	Nicaragua	10	Fly 7	
	"God Is With Me"	Ghana	11	Fly 7	
	Hemelbaas	South Africa	10	Fly 7	
	The Leopard	USA	10	Super Speed 7	
	Orao	Serbia	13	Fly 7	
	Speed Freak	Jamaica	11	Super Speed 7	
	Vibrato	England	11	Speed 7	

THE MOST DANGEROUS SUPERVILLAINS ON EARTH (2006)

((COURTESY OF WWW.NOMERCY.COM))*

*It should be noted that many "behind the scenes" villains are not covered by this website.

Solo Villains

	Name	Home Base	Power Level		Name	Home Base	Power Level
1.	The Blood Red King	USA	20	13.	Dynatos	Greece	14
2.	Influence	USA	16	14.	The Anti-American	USA	12
3.	Dr. Power	Canada	X	15	Wirbelwind	Germany	14
4.	Sinistrado	Brazil	16	16.	Dokter Tukang	Indonesia	11
5.	Chernobog	Russia	15	17.	Night Huntsman	USA	12
6..	Gunka	Japan	11	18.	Piwon	South Korea	12
7.	Askari	Africa	15	19.	The Byzantine	USA	13
8.	Weng Chiang	Hong Kong	18	20.	Mandos	Argentina	16
9.	The Dark	England	15	**	Armageddo	Everywhere	Beyond Description
10.	Genshuin	Japan	14	**Lifetime Achievement in Villainy winner			
11.	Weaponsmith	USA	11				
12.	Incendio	Portugal	13				

Villain Teams

	Name	Home Base	Leader		Name	Home Base	Leader
1.	TheTyranny League	USA	Imperator	9.	Merc Six	Canada	Alan Throne
2.	The Psionic Seven	USA	Ominos	10.	Los Animales	USA	Party Animal
3.	Derr Kolloss	Germany	Der Kolloss				
4.	The Destruction Society	Britain	Vibrato				
5.	Akkuinnen	Japan	Kyouyou Tensa				
6..	Haeder	Scandanavia	Uveir				
7.	Lendermain	France	Monqraue				
8.	The Hot Gods	USA	Apollo				

V: COMMON GESTALT ARCHETYPES

Gestalts represent a vast variety of archetypes and concepts. The GM should help the players find Gestalts that they're comfortable playing and work with the players to make them an important part of the campaign. Even great campaigns crumble if the players don't enjoy playing their characters.

Here are some of the many concepts that a player can use as a basis for a Gestalt PC. These concepts range from philosophical schools, religious beliefs, favorite pastimes, sports, or (the love of) a city or a country.

These sample packages won't fit every conceivable version of the archetype; use discretion and common sense in matching powers to concept.

The victory and defeat consequences of each archetype are suggestions for how a gestalt's fortunes affect the outside world. In general, these consequences should match the Gestalt's morality; if a heroic Destruction Gestalt wins a major battle, terrible things shouldn't befall the community, but it should make a positive impact.

ACTING

"Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"

Description: The Acting Gestalt lives to play a role. He (or she) likes to imitate others, grab attention and make the world his stage. Some Acting Gestalts are incredibly over-the-top, while method-acting Gestalts want to get into the character as deeply and unobtrusively as possible.

Acting Gestalts sometimes become superheroes when they think it'd be a great part to play, sometimes because superheroes do investigative work that requires them to adopt a large number of covers and wear cool disguises, and sometimes just out of a sense of civic responsibility.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Starlet, Jade Townsend, Jon-Alan Thompson.

Related Gestalts: Impersonation, Imitation.

Subtypes of this Archetype: Literary/Movie/Television characters.

Opposed Gestalts: Critic, The Mundane.

Victory Consequences: A small, easily overlooked great film captures the popular imagination. An actor kicks his drug habit and makes a great comeback.

Defeat Consequences: An old movie house burns down, a great actor suffers a serious setback (illness or death).

ACTING GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 8, Perform (acting) 12, Perform (comedy) 8, Perform (dance) 8, Perform (oratory) 8, Perform (singing) 8, Profession (actor) 12, Sense Motive 8

Feats: Attractive 1, Inspire 1, Taunt

Powers: **Impersonate Shapeshift 8** (*Flaw* - limited, people only); **Know Someone's Acting School (Super-Sense 1, Detect).**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Critic Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 18 + Feats 3 + Powers 57 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 76

Acting Gestalt Scenario Hooks

The King and I

The most feared villain on the planet is the Pain and Suffering Gestalt known as the Blood Red King. Someone (the government, law enforcement, or other superheroes) decides that an Acting Gestalt who takes the role of the King might discover a weakness. However, the Blood Red King has been known to get under the skin of anyone who invokes him, and who knows what might happen to an Acting Gestalt who gets too deeply into *that* role?

ATHLETICS GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Acrobatics 4, Climb 8, Concentration 8, Knowledge (popular culture) 4, Medicine 4, Profession (athlete) 12, Swim 4

Feats: Attractive 1, Elusive Target, Endurance 2, Evasion 1, Fearless, Improved Aim, Improved Defense 1, Improved Initiative 1, Leadership, Teamwork 1, Ultimate Effort

Powers: **Competitive Drive (Enhanced Attack +4, Enhanced Defense +4, Flaw - Limited, only in athletic competitions), Know Someone's Sport (Super-Sense 1, detect).**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from rival Athletic Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Skills 11 + Feats 12+ Powers 9 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 31



ATHLETICS

"We are the champions!"

Description: Athletic competition has been popular since the dawn of time, and competition breeds an intensity that attracts more than its share of Gestalts. Athletic Gestalts are the pinnacle of perfection in their chosen sport. Although the sport is not always combat-related, Athletic Gestalts are in good enough shape to do respectable damage in a fight. They view the superhero world as just another arena of competition.

This is a worldwide popular archetype, especially in Japan and England where sports stories are popular. An Athletic Gestalt's archetype drives them to compete; however, their Gestalt abilities make them far superior to their competition. This is particularly troublesome if they have a code that forces them to seek worthy competition or to play fair. Many Athletic Gestalts seek each other out and hold private competitions.

Related Gestalts: Agility, Competition, Endurance, Mythic Reincarnations (old athletic heroes), Coaching.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Martial Arts Style Champions, Individual Sports.

Opposed Gestalts: Sloths, Nerds, High School Jocks.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Red Dog, Kosucu (of Haeder), Joust, Praia, Slugger Joe.

Victory Consequences: Favorite aging athlete finds his second wind, underprivileged kid enjoys success in athletics, local team stages miraculous comeback victory.

Defeat Consequences: Great athlete suffers serious injury, local sports team is in decline (possibly moving out of town).

Athletic Gestalt Scenario Hook

If They Build It...

A group of kids who build a playing field in a Midwestern cornfield have inadvertently summoned a PC Athletic Gestalt to their nightly contest. Unfortunately, he's there every night and can't escape, and thus, he loses two to three hours of his life every day. Find a way to break the cycle.

BEAUTY

"Mirror, Mirror on the Wall... Oops! Too Much Mascara!"

Description: Faces do launch a thousand ships and good things only happen to beautiful people. For thousands of years, humanity has been obsessed with beauty, so should it come as a surprise that beauty would be a prime draw for Gestalts? The Beauty Gestalt joins Gestalt teams because they want to be in the public eye. They need not be useless in combat, in fact the archetype of the incredibly beautiful person who turns out to be extremely deadly in combat is not an uncommon one.

This Gestalt comes with a real jealous streak. Beauty Gestalts often loathe their Gestalt twins, to

the point where some comedians (and sexists) refer to them as "the Gestalt of Cat Fighting".

Related Gestalts: Mythological Reincarnations (of a famous beauty), Seduction, Sex, Vanity.

Sub-Types of this Gestalt: The Perfect Face.

Opposed Gestalts: Hags, Mythological Reincarnations (of deformed characters), Ugliness.

Prominent Examples of this Gestalt: Beauty, Gyrfalcon, Venus.

Victory Consequences: A beautiful actress emerges as a new icon of style and beauty, there's a style renaissance, a beautiful woman's appearance stays young (or grows more graceful with age).

Defeat Consequences: Ugly style trends, a beautiful woman's appearance is marred in an accident.

BEAUTY GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 8, Diplomacy 8, Knowledge (popular culture) 4, Medicine 4, Sense Motive 4

Feats: Attractive 3, Distract (Bluff)

Powers: **Make Someone More Beautiful (Transform 5**, Narrow Group of Traits (a version of themselves with an extra rank in the Appearance feat), [Alternate Powers: **Paralyze 6 (Extra: Range: ranged)**, **Captivating Beauty (Mind Control 10, Flaw - Limited, Only If Naturally Attracted to the Gestalt)**], **Become Everyone's Idea of Beauty (Morph 2**, Limited Group, into version of one's self that others find most beautiful, Extra: Perceptual (appears as each individual's personal idea of beauty, different people have different perceptions)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from rival Beauty Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 7 + Feats 4 + Powers 28- Drawbacks 2 = Total 37

Beauty Gestalt Scenario Hook

Deadly Dying Wish

A dictator who's an ally of the PC's country is dying and wishes to behold pure beauty (ie., a PC Beauty Gestalt) before he passes to the "other side". Human rights groups approach the PCs and ask them to refuse the request, citing abuses he committed decades ago. Should they grant the request? And what about the local Leech Gestalt who's conspiring with the dictator's daughter to steal the PC's beauty?



COMMERCE

"You want to hang every last capitalist? Let's talk rope!"

Description: Not all Gestalts are built for fighting; sure the Commerce Gestalt might have taken some martial arts training at some time in his past, but that's only a last resort, because there's no problem that can't be resolved with a little enterprise and street smarts. One part used-car salesman, and one part world-class economist, the Commerce Gestalt straddles all incarnations of that age-old profession that, to put things bluntly, makes people want stuff. Not many Commerce Gestalts are known to be superheroes (though at least one was forced to join a local team by a judge to work off community service, and so for 4000 hours, Murphy Laws, AKA Captain Capitalism, was a member of Denver's D-Guard team).

Related Gestalts: Precious Gems or Metals, Wealth.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Banks, Barter, Merchants.

Opposed Gestalts: Marxism, Anti-Materialism, Buddhism.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Captain Capitalism, Enterprise, Kiasu.

Victory Consequences: Stock market goes up, a new corporate sector/hot new product niche is cre-

ated, a plant opens up, a competitor's stock suffers.

Defeat Consequences: Stock market goes down. Protests at a trade conference turn ugly, a prominent entrepreneur is arrested on corruption charges, local company goes bankrupt.

COMMERCE GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 12, Diplomacy 12, Knowledge (business) 12, Knowledge (civics) 8, Knowledge (current events) 4, Profession (businessman) 12, Sense Motive 12

Feats: Benefit 3 (Wealth 3), Connected

Powers: **Transform 5**, Narrow Group of Traits (make an object look like new until it's sold), [Alternate Powers: **Playing the Game (Mind Control 10, Flaw - Limited, only to make someone buy what they're selling at a less than outrageous price)**; **Telepathy 10, Flaw - Limited, only to determine when someone is bluffing**], **Super Senses 4** (precognition, Flaw - Limited, only to know what stock will be hot)), **Know Something's Monetary Value (Super Senses 3**, detect (visual), acute, analytical)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Gestalts with anti-Commerce or materialism aspects); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 18 + Feats 4+ Powers 27- Drawbacks 2 = Total 47

Commerce Gestalt Scenario Hook

Let's Make a Deal

A Commerce Gestalt claims to have discovered the secret of eternal youth — which he can bestow on one person only — and is willing to auction it off to the highest bidder. Naturally, this auction attracts a lot of attention and the PCs are called in (either as security or as representatives of an interested third party).

COURAGE

"It's always darkest before the dawn... which makes it my favorite time of the day!"

Description: Gestalts exist (in part) to exemplify humanity's greatest qualities, and courage is a quality that can be used by anyone. The Courage Gestalt doesn't just seek out dangerous situations; rather, he or she seeks situations where he can face and conquer his fears and encourage other people to do the same. The role of "superhero" fits this kind of Gestalt like a glove.

Related Gestalts: Toughness, Mythic Warriors (Courageous Heroes), Soldiers, Non-Conformity.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: "Liquid Courage" (a Courage Gestalt that requires drunkenness).

Opposed Gestalts: Fear, Cowardice, Indecision.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Berani, The Lion, Pastor, Smalchak, SSgt. Phillip Torrance, Vanaprastha, Yarost.

Victory Consequences: An ordinary person finds courage to perform an act of selflessness and bravery (from someone running into a burning building to a kid successfully standing up to a schoolyard bully). More people go into professions that require heroism (policemen, firefighters).

Defeat Consequences: A disaster that could

have been prevented goes unchecked because someone lost his nerve. Someone backs down in a public confrontation.

COURAGE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 12, Intimidate 12, Perform (oratory) 12

Feats: Diehard, Fearless, Fearsome Presence 3, Ultimate Effort 1

Powers: **Boost 10** (Will Save, *Extras:* Area, Range. *Flaws:* Limited - only to resist fear effects, Limited - requires Perform (oratory) check DC 18) [Alternate Power: **Boost 3** (all Attack Effects, *Extras:* Ranged, Area, *Flaw:* Limited, requires Perform (oratory) check DC 18)]

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Bully Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 9 + Feats 6+ Powers 11- Drawbacks 2 = Total 24

Courage Gestalt Scenario Hook

Manhood Becoming

A young man who faces a dishonorable discharge from the Marines for displays of cowardice wants to be able to conquer his fears, so he asks a PC Courage Gestalt to help find ways to conquer his fear.

DEATH

"I'm not proud, just inevitable."

Description: Nothing is more feared than the touch of the Grim Reaper, though death isn't necessarily an evil thing. The Death Gestalt may rank very low on the list of desired Gestalts for one's teammates but the power to kill — and understand death — may be a very valuable one in the fight against those who bring death (and things worse than death) to the world.

Related Gestalts: Assassins, Massacres, Mourn-

ing, Murder, Weapons.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Fatal Accidents, Deadly Diseases, Burning Death, Drowning, Choking.

Opposed Gestalts: Life, Birth, Healing.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Grave, Carcass Jones, Sarg, Solo.

Victory Consequences: A wave of deaths hits the local area (peaceful if it reflects the gestalt's nature, violent or a pandemic if it doesn't).

Defeat Consequences: People who would have died will linger on — not always in an enviable condition.

DEATH GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8, Medicine 8

Feats: Diehard

Powers: **Induce A Death-Like State (Paralyze 6)**, [Alternate Powers: **Fear of Death (Emotion Control 10, Flaw: Limited – One Emotion (fear))**, **Death Touch (Drain CON and Fort Save 10))**], **See What Deaths They've Experienced (Telepathy 10, Flaw: Limited – Only To See Memories Of Death)**], **Super Senses 4 (Sense Death (detect, acute, analytical)**, **Immortality 2 (Regeneration 1 (resurrection), Extra: True resurrection)**, **Protection from Death (Immunity 42, all Lethal physical and energy attacks. CON Drains, Aging)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Life Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 4 + Feats 1+ Powers 72 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 75

Death Gestalt Scenario Hook

Death, Thou Shalt Die

Okay, every Death Gestalt out there knows the hoary old plot about the eccentric millionaire who tries to capture Death to avoid dying. Well, that doesn't mean they're not out there and it does mean that Death Gestalts are a target.



DESTINY

"I am tomorrow, and all the days to come..."

Description: Ancient philosophy had two schools of thought about the nature of human responsibility: pre-destination and free will. The Destiny Gestalt is the champion of predestination. He is able to look into the future, travel into the future, and even bring the future to life. He does not claim to shape the future, though he realizes that reality is so complex that the act of revelation may be enough to alter the course of events. Many Destiny Gestalts are too unstable to join a superhero team, but it can happen.

Related Gestalts: Oracles, Hourglasses, the Norse Norns.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Doom.

Opposed Gestalts: Chaos, Self-Determination.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Destino, Insight.

Victory Consequences: People come to realize what they might potentially achieve; there's a growth in ambition tempered with realism.

Defeat Consequences: People develop unrealistic expectations of what they can achieve, resulting in disastrous projects.

DESTINY GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 12, Sense Motive 12

Feats: Diehard, Luck 3

Powers: **Aging (Drain 10 (all abilities)**, [Alternate Power: **Unlock Someone's Full Potential (Boost 10 (all abilities))**], **Super Movement 1 (Temporal Movement 1 [10 seconds into the future])**], **See Disturbances in Destiny (Super Senses 4, Sense Luck/Probability Field Disruptions (detect, acute, analytical))**, **See Someone's Destiny (Super Senses 6, precognition, acute, analyze)**, **Immunity 2 (Probability Tunnel effects)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Chaos Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Feats 4 + Powers 55 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 63

Destiny Gestalt Scenario Hook

Cut the Thread

A giant spinning wheel appears in the campaign city, and three women — one crone, one wife, and one girl — proclaim that they will cut the thread that represents the life of the entire city unless "one who has cheated fate is made to pay the price". An attack on the Three Fates merely causes them to fade away, but won't prevent the city from experiencing their judgment. Find out who has cheated fate and determine what price needs to be paid.

DESTRUCTION

"Yeah, Big Jim, that blew up REAL good!"

Description: We all pretend to be moral human beings but secretly (or perhaps not so secretly) everyone likes to watch things blow up.

The Destruction Gestalt plays into this strongly held desire. This doesn't necessarily make him a villain — one can have destructive impulses and still not want to hurt people, and some philosophies such as Hinduism accept Destruction as an integral part of the natural order — but anyone with a Destruction Gestalt on their team had better be prepared to deal with a whole mess of collateral damage.

Related Gestalts: Death, Natural Disasters.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Arson, Demolitions, Vandalism, Weapons.

Opposed Gestalts: Creation, Preservers.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Destructeur, Kali, Rhinoceros, Shiva.

Victory Consequences: Old, brittle structures are destroyed, a major fire or earthquake occurs.

Defeat Consequences: A demolitions project goes awry, a natural disaster is narrowly averted.

DESTRUCTION GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Craft (mechanical) 4, Knowledge (earth sciences) 4, Knowledge (physical sciences) 4

Powers: Blast 10; [Alternate Powers: Blast 6 (Extra: Area), Disintegration 5, Order Someone to be Destructive (Mind Control 6, (Extra: Area, Flaw: Limited - one command "be destructive"), Make Objects Weaker (Drain Toughness 6, Extra: Ranged)]; Immunity 2 (disintegration)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Preservation Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 3 + Feats 0 + Powers 25 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 26

Destruction Gestalt Scenario Hook

Destruction Junction, What's Your Function?

Across the country there's been a spate of mysterious train crashes as the systems that keep the trains on the right tracks now seem intent on causing headlong collisions. The culprit is a Destruction Gestalt who views the nation's train system as a giant toy. Stop him.

DREAM

"Dream a little dream with me."

Description: At night, even the most mundane person gets a taste of the surreal. The Dream Gestalt is both connoisseur and maestro of these excursions into the subconscious. He has great insights into the subconscious mind — it's the conscious mind that gives him trouble. The Dream Gestalt sometimes learns to hate the real world and love the comfortable wildness of the human imagination.

Related Gestalts: Desire, the Id, Sleep.

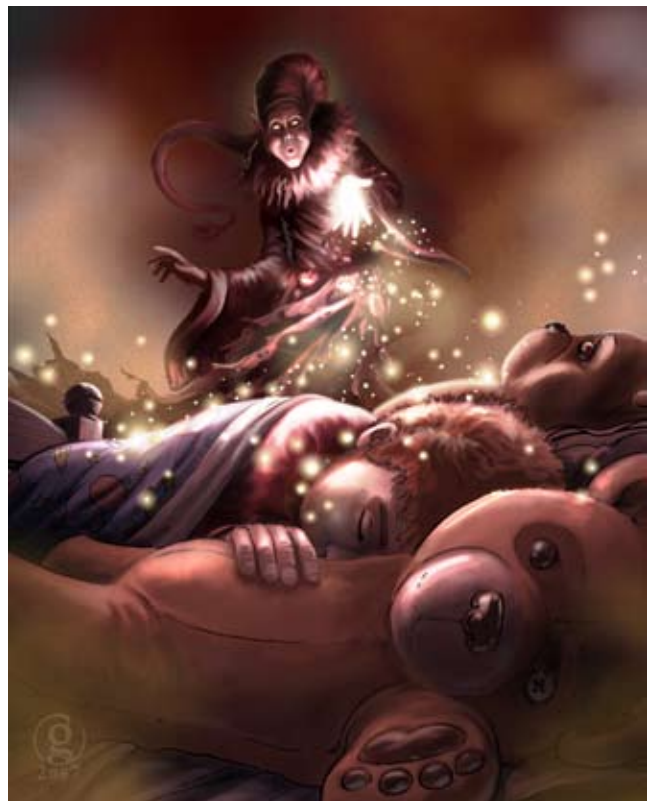
Sub-Types of this Archetype: Nightmares, Pleasant Dreams.

Opposing Gestalts: Reality, Anti-Imagination Gestalts.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Dreamhawk, Skitatsya.

Victory Consequences: In the local area, people experience unusually creative, revitalizing dreams.

Defeat Consequences: People experience troubled, dreamless sleep.



DREAM GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 8, Intimidate 8, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 4

Powers: **Dream Stuff Control 10 (Cosmic Energy Control, Flaw: Limited - only in dreams, [Alternate Powers: Boost 2 (all traits), Create Object 5, Animate Objects 3, Snare 5], Summon 8 (Extras: Fanatic, Type (broad) any creature from dreams), Read Someone's Dream (Telepathy 10, Limited - only to perceive someone's dreams), [Alternate Powers: Super Movement 3 (Dream Travel 3), Induce Dream (Mind Control 9, PF: Mental Link, Limited: One Command, (tell a sleeper to dream).**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from other Dream Gestalts in dreams); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 0 + Powers 76 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 79

Dream Gestalt Scenario Hook

Coma

A Hope Gestalt determines that only a visit from his favorite superhero will allow a dying boy to find the strength to live. Unfortunately, the boy's in a deep coma and the only way to get the PCs into the child's mind is for a Dream Gestalt to induce a dream and take them there. (If the only Dream Gestalt they know is a villain who's burnt them before, this will make it doubly difficult for them)

ENVIRONMENTALISM

"It's better to hug trees than to worship the almighty dollar!"

Description: This is a variation of the Regional Guardian Gestalt; the Environmentalism Gestalt exists to protect wilderness areas from harm, and to expose those who have harmed them. The Environmental Gestalt is usually a Guardian and not a Vengeance Gestalt in that they work to prevent damage to the environment, not to harm those who have already done the environment harm. (A Environmental Vengeance Gestalt would probably take on the form of a mythical creature that pursues and kills those who have harmed the region — Ghost Mammoths, anyone?).

Related Gestalts: Luddites.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Trees, Particular Ecosystem Types (Jungles, Deserts, Permafrost, etc.)

Opposed Gestalts: Technology, Commerce.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Douglas Fir.

Victory Consequences: An increase in recycling, a breakthrough is made in green technology, more parkland is preserved, the recent fire turns out to have mostly burned away rotting wood.

Defeat Consequences: An environmental disaster occurs; a leading environmentalist dies, a local environmental agency sells out to big business.

ENVIRONMENTALISM GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Craft (chemical) 4, Knowledge (life sciences) 12, Medicine 4

Feats: Environmental Adaptation

Powers: **Nature Control 10 (Boost 10 (all traits, Flaw: Limited - only to plants, [Alternate Powers: Snare 10, Extra: Area, Limited - Targets on natural ground), Create Activist (Mind Control 10, Flaw: Limited - only to make someone protective of the environment), Destroy Machine (Disintegration 10, Flaw: Limited - only to destroy machines that harm the environment), Summon Animated Tree (Summon 6: Extra: Fanatical, use the Animated Tree entry in M&M p. 233), Heal Plant (Healing 10, Extra: Area, PF: Persistent, Regrowth, Flaw: Limited - only on plants), Remove Pollutants (Transform 7, narrow group to narrow group, Extra: Area]**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Industry Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 1 + Powers 46 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 50

Environmentalism Gestalt Scenario Hook

See The Tree, How Big It's Grown

A Native-American (or druid/naturalist, for campaigns outside the United States) decides to "fight against the madness of modern society" by summoning a Grandfather Tree (a 300-foot- tall Environmental Gestalt) that reacts to its sudden entry into the world by mindlessly smashing the environment around it. But as the heroes get ready to battle it, environmentalists step into defend it, the tree's beginning to realize what it was doing and starts to calm down, and the PCs are presented with a much more morally complex situation than they originally knew.

FIRE

"Flames activated!"

Description: The gift of man to the gods, the Fire Gestalt is hot-tempered, hot-blooded, and makes no apologies for it. Fire Gestalts — much like

the uses to which humans put to the element — can be both beneficial and a curse, ranging from fire-fighters and fireshapers to arsonists and torturers. Gestalts of Fire are objects of fear and wonder, to the public, to teammates, and themselves. Superheroic Fire Gestalts take on the most benign aspects of the

element but even they aren't immune to the charms of its more destructive properties.

Related Gestalts: Anger, Arsonists, Comfort, Firewalkers, Light, The Sun.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Firefighters, Warmth, Forest Fires, Pyrotechnics.

Opposed Gestalts: Cold, Water, Earth.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Arson, Big Red, Blast (of Los Animales), Chama!

Victory Consequences: Fires demolish dead-wood and abandoned neighborhoods without injuring people, performing a valuable service to the community.

Defeat Consequences: Brush fires rage out of control, numerous injuries occur.

Fire Gestalt Scenario Hook

Fire of Hope, Fire of Glory

A doomsday cult is grooming a teenaged Fire Gestalt, Emblazon, to serve as their vehicle to begin a holocaust. The kid thinks the cult's weird but is enjoying the attention. Can you free the gestalt from this cult's extremely destructive influence?

FLYING

"I can see for miles!"

Description: The fantasy of flight has tantalized humans from the moment that they first craned their necks to watch a bird in flight. Thanks to the marvels of the Gestalt, this fantasy is now a reality for a fortunate few. The Flying Gestalt loves to fly. Fish gotta swim, runners gotta run and a Gestalt of Flying gotta fly. His lives is filled with wonder and a slightly condescending attitude towards earthbound man and the FAA.

Related Gestalts: Day Dreams, Diving, Exploration, Motion, Racing, Space Travel.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Flying Carpets, Pilots.

Opposed Gestalts: Gravity.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: The Airman, Aviation Angel, Buzzhawk, Fuga, Icarus, Major Rudri, Navigateur (I and II), Orao.

Victory Consequences: Aeronautics breakthrough, a plane disaster is averted, a pilot survives the crash of a small plane.

Defeat Consequences: Airplane crash, increased airline delays, hostage incident/hijacking occurs.

Flying Gestalt Scenario Hook

Hot Dog

A masked Flying Gestalt has been buzzing small planes at a local airport and people are worried that his stunts will cause a serious accident. The authorities don't want to hurt the guy, (who's probably just a kid) but they'd like other responsible gestalts (i.e., The PCs) to find out who is he and persuade him to stop.

FIRE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Intimidate 12

Feats: Environmental Adaptation

Powers: **Fire Control 10 (Blast 10** [*Alternate Powers:* **Blast 6 (Extra: area), Create Flame Constructs 10** (like Create Object, except objects have no toughness and inflict half rank damage when touched), **Melt (Disintegration 6, Flaw:** Limited - only to objects), **Energy Aura (Fire Aura 4, Extra:** Area (flame trail), **Boost 6** (all flame powers), **Drain 6** (all flame powers), **Ignite 6), Immunity 10** (all fire effects)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Water Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 3 + Feats 1 + Powers 36 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 38

FLYING GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Acrobatics 12, Climb 4, Escape Artist 4, Pilot 4

Feats: Elusive Target, Environmental Adaptation (air), Fast Over-run, Favored Environment (air), Move-By Action

Powers: **Flight 10** (10000 mph), **Empowerment 6, Flaw** - may only grant flight, [*Alternate Power:* **Drain 7** (all powers related to flight), *Extra:* Range], **Dodges Anything In Flight (Immunity 10** (to all projectiles, *Flaw:* Limited - only when airborne, cannot attack when this power is activated), **Super Senses 4 (Sense Flight Properties** (detect, acute, analytical))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Earth or Gravity Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Feats 5 + Powers 65 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 74



FOOD

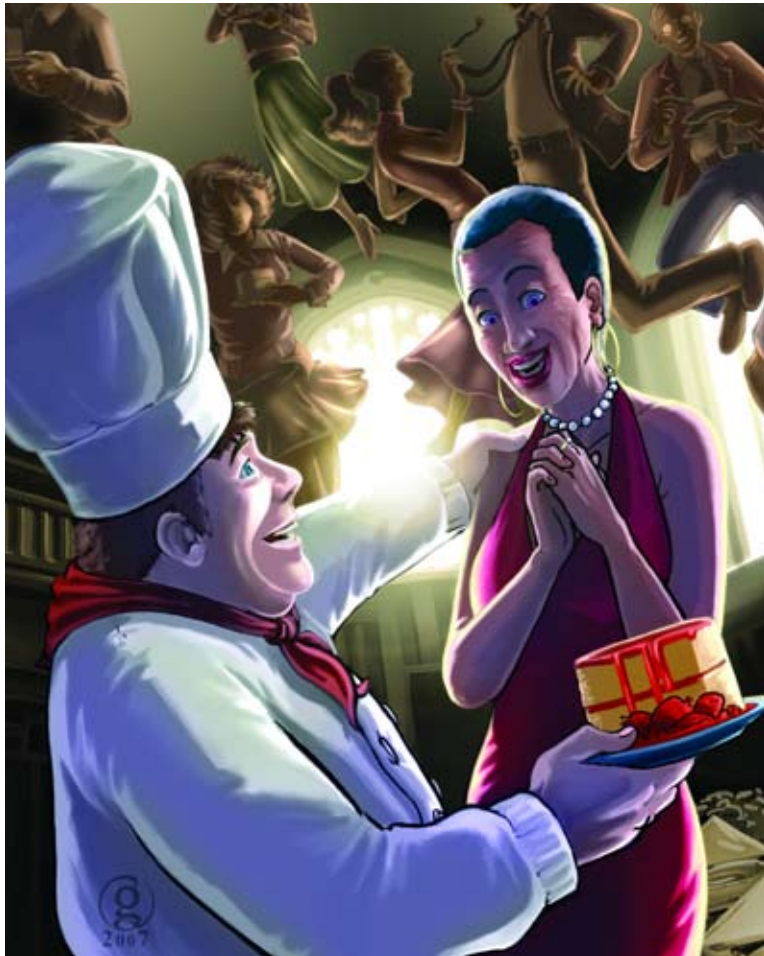
"My Gestalt may not win battles – but I'll take a good meal over the ability to eviscerate someone any day."

Description: When one thinks about the fundamental forces that shape our lives, few forces are more important than food. Food does more than just nourish us — meals provide us with an important element of our social vocabulary. From kingly feasts, to Japanese tea ceremonies to fast food restaurants how we eat tells as much about ourselves as what we eat, a fact that the Food Gestalt knows well. The Food Gestalt is the champion of fine cuisine and good taste (and occasionally good nutrition too).

For members of a superhero team, the Food Motif is very silly. On the other hand, there's nothing to say a Food Gestalt can't occasionally spend time away from the kitchen to perform his civic duty, appearing to the rest of the world as just another martial artist until it's time to serve up the victory banquet. If a Food Gestalt does join a superhero team, the GM should tailor some of the scenarios to showcase his avocation.

Related Gestalts: Pleasure, Indulgence, Gluttony, Nutrition.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Various Cooking Sub-schools



Opposed Gestalts: Poison, Hunger

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Andre Mattson, Hiroyuki Sakai.

Victory Consequences: Food crops increase, there is a decrease in food safety violations.

Defeat Consequences: Food crop failure, short supply or famine, incidents of food poisoning/contamination.

FOOD GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Craft (chemical) 8, Profession (chef) 12

Feats: Environmental Adaptation (kitchens), Inventor, Master Plan

Powers: **Really Good Knife (Strike 6, Extra:** Penetrating), **Food Powers (Boost 8** (any ability score, **Power Feats:** Slow Fade 2 (1/20 minutes), Triggered (by ingestion), Progression 5 (serves 25 people) [**Alternate Powers:** **Sleeping Food (Sleep 5, Power Feats:** Sedation 3 (chance to wake up every 20 minutes), Triggered (by ingestion), Progression 5 (serves 25 people)), **Poisoned Food (Drain 5, any ability score, Extras:** Poison, **Power Feats:** Triggered (by ingestion), Progression 5 (serves 25 people)), **Grow Food 4 (Growth 4, Extras:** Area (Progression 1 (40 ft. burst)), Affects Others (+0), Duration: Continuous (permanent), **Flaw:** Limited - only to food plants)], **Travel to the Kitchen of Your Dreams (Super Movement 1** (Dimensional Move to the perfect kitchen in the Gestalt Dimension, **Power Feat:** Progression 5 (take 5000 lbs. with him)), **Perfect Sense of Taste (Super Senses 4** (aroma/taste properties, acute, analytical)), **Know Someone's Cooking School (Super Senses 4, detect, acute, analytical), Immune to Poison (Immunity 1** (poison))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Earth or Gravity Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 3 + Powers 51- Drawbacks 2 = Total 57

Food Gestalt Scenario Hook

The Party

An obnoxious rival superhero is holding a party at the same time the city is honoring a PC at their own affair, and because the rival has invited a famous Food Gestalt, no one's accepting an invitation to the PC shindig. Sure it's petty and beneath a real hero, but if the PC could find a way to lure the Food Gestalt away from the rival, it sure would be satisfying!

GOOD SAMARITAN

"Let me give you a hand..."

Description: The Good Samaritan exists to help people. His life is devoted to actively seeking out people in need and giving aid and comfort. Occasionally, the Good Samaritan's obsession with helping people can get irritating or he may help "the wrong side"; for all that matters to him is that he assists someone in their immediate need. He's much more likely to stick around superhero teams whose heroes have a good reputation for helping the needy, while superheroes who ignore injured innocent bystanders to pursue a supervillain are likely to receive (at the very least) a serious tongue lashing.

Related Gestalts: Friendship, Lifeguards

Opposed Gestalts: Sadists, Abandonment.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Bomber/ Yanqui, The Boy Scout, Clipper, Gobugson, Svalovy

Victory Consequences: An increase in volunteerism, community values, and conciliation between ethnic and other demographic divides.

Defeat Consequences: An incident occurs where people ignore someone in need under outrageous circumstances.

GOOD SAMARITAN GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Climb 12, Computers 12, Craft (chemical) 12, Craft (electronic) 12, Craft (mechanical) 12, Craft (structural) 12, Disable Device 8, Drive 4, Medicine 8, Pilot 4, Survival 8

Feats: Improvised Tools, Inspire, Redirect, Set-Up

Powers: **Helpful Powers 10** (**Telekinesis 10**, **Power Feat:** Precise), [**Alternate Powers:** **Healing 7** (**Extra:** Energizing), **Create Useful Object** (**Create Object 6**, **Extra:** Duration (continuous), **Flaw:** Permanent, **Power Feats:** Innate, Precise)], **Super Senses 5** (danger sense, detect (sense a person's needs (acute, analytical)))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Bully Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 26 + Feats 4 + Powers 28 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 56

Good Samaritan Gestalt Scenario Hook

Mister Good Fellow Goes To City Hall

Smiles Goodfellow, a Good Samaritan Gestalt, decides to run for mayor of the city. People love him and will probably vote for him, even though his ideas of running a city are so impractical that if they were implemented it'd probably lead to complete chaos. Worse, his main rival is clearly in the pocket of the local crime boss. The situation is almost likely to end in disaster, and some friends of the PCs quietly ask them to do something about it.

GUILT

"Have you been a good boy? I didn't think so."

Description: The Guilt Gestalt exists to punish the wicked, or more precisely, make the guilty aware of their crimes and punish themselves. This Gestalt is generally a mentalist as opposed to a killing machine, eliciting self-punishment through psionics.

The Guilt Gestalt can have many different incarnations, from angels, to the grim reaper (who elicits confession via fear), to someone who may appear to resemble everyone's mother. A Guilt Gestalt on one's team can be a real wet blanket...

Heroic Guilt Gestalts join superhero teams because they provide easy access to the guilty. Vigilante and supervillain Guilt Gestalts are sadists who enjoy hurting people. Their employers like to hire Guilt Gestalt mercenaries because they're very good at uncovering material that can be used to blackmail people.

Related Gestalts: Justice, Sadism, Truth.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Various Stereotypes (Accusing Victim, Catholic Parents, Jewish Mothers).

Opposed Gestalts: Lies, Sociopaths.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Amnesty, Gaslight, Guilt.

Victory Consequences: More people go to confessional, an increased number of guilty people



GUILT GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Diplomacy 12, Gather Info 12, Intimidate 12

Powers: **Telepathy 10** (*Flaw:* Limited - only to discover guilty secrets), **Guilt Powers (Illusion 8)** (all senses, *Extras:* Damaging, Selective Attack; *Flaws:* Phantasms, Must know a guilty secret), [Alternate Powers: **Paralyze 10** (*Flaw:* Limited - must know a guilty secret), **Morph 10** (any humanoid, *Flaw:* Limited - only forms that make someone feel guilty)]

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks by Sociopath Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Feats 0 + Powers 60 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 64

turn themselves in. Overdue library fees and parking tickets are paid.

Defeat Consequences: There's an increase in petty crime, as a general sociopathy takes root. A violent incident occurs involving a kid who was angered by a parent's attempt to discipline them.

Guilt Gestalt Scenario Hook

J'Accuse!

A Guilt Gestalt has made a public allegation against the PCs, accusing them of being guilty of murdering a city official – and everyone believes him. But you didn't do it! Clear your name.

GUN

"Oh!! This one's a beaut!"

Description: The Gun Gestalt loves his chosen weapon. Pistol, rifle, shotgun, SMG, it doesn't matter, his love for guns is so intense that even an average NRA member can't stand being around him for very long. This Gestalt loves to hold the weapon and admire it, and using it in combat is better than sex or chocolate. Whereas the Soldier Gestalt is interested in a military victory, the Gun Gestalt just adores the weapon, enjoying look, feel, and use alike.

This Gestalt is often a vigilante (though a Gestalt in a more four color game is allowed to buy a weapon as a normal attack and define them as "rubber bullets" or tranq dart "mercy bullets"). Villainous Gun Gestalts, of course, abound, and compose the core of more than a few villain teams..

Related Gestalts: Vengeance, Soldiers.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Various Gun Sub-types (Pistols, Rifles, Shotguns, Blunderbusses).

Opposed Gestalts: Pacifism.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Gunslinger, Silver Star.

Victory Consequences: Gun rights laws pass. A citizen is saved by the responsible use of a gun. A gun show brings about new appreciation for classic firearms.

Defeat Consequences: Anti-gun lobbies grow in power and influence. A horrible firearms mishap occurs.

GUN GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Intimidate 8, Knowledge (tactics) 12

Feats: Fearsome Presence 2, Improvised Tools (use a gun in interesting ways), Precise Shot 2, Quick Draw 2

Powers: **Device 6** (*Personal Firearm*, easy to lose, (**Blast 10**, *Extra:* Penetrating)), **The Weapon Montage Boost (Boost 6)** (all ability scores), *Power Feats:* Slow Fade 4 (20 minutes), Triggered (by picking up his weapon, loading it and cleaning it)), *Flaw* (self-only), **Guns Don't Kill People, Especially Me! (Immunity 10)**, all firearms attacks), **Shoot Bullets Out Of The Air (Deflect 10**, *Extra:* Ranged), **Know A Weapon's Characteristics (Super Senses 4**, visual, detect (range, acute, analytical))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Pacifism or Disarmament Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 7 + Powers 73 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 83

Gun Gestalt Scenario Hook

Bang Bang

Someone's secretly going around the city's gun shops and placing a lethal and long-lasting contact poison on the triggers of the weapons. The local Gun Gestalt is ready to declare war on the local anti-gun movement (which is innocent). Stop the situation from escalating.

HOPE

"Go ahead and allow yourself to be weak today. Lick your wounds and be assured that tomorrow you will be stronger."

Description: Of all the world's most celebrated virtues, the greatest virtue may be Hope, the belief in a better, greater tomorrow that often translates into

a belief in one's self. This fervent confidence in one's ability to succeed and make the world a better place is a tonic whose potency cannot be underestimated.

Optimistic and assured, naturally many of these gestalts gravitate toward a career as a superhero, for they hold the torch that lights the modern world, and make it easier to bring their championed archetype to those who need it most. It's hard for a Hope Gestalt to be a supervillain — but not impos-

sible, for what is a better quality in a cult leader than the ability to inspire Hope?

Related Gestalts: Delusion, Determination, Faith, Optimism.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Fool's Hopes, Con Artists.

Opposed Gestalts: Despair, Cynicism.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Martin Moniba, Hope's Heart

Victory Consequences: People in poverty and other inequitable situations receive hope, breakthroughs are made in terminal illness treatment.

Defeat Consequences: Riots happen in poverty stricken areas, there's an increase in suicides.

HOPE GESTALT	POWER LEVEL 10
Skills: Bluff 12, Perform (oratory) 12,	
Feats: Inspire 3, Leadership	
Powers: Hope Powers (Emotion Control 10) (<i>Extra:</i> Duration (continuous), <i>Flaw:</i> Limited - hope only), [<i>Alternate Powers:</i> Emotional Lift (Boost 6) (any single ability score), <i>Power Feats:</i> Slow Fade 2 (1/5 minutes), Progression 5 (help 25 people), Group Project (create any structure quickly) (Create Object 6, <i>Extra:</i> Duration (continuous), <i>Power Feats:</i> Precise, Subtle, <i>Flaw:</i> requires a group of 8 people to complete, only to build physical structures (homes, churches, barns, burnt buildings) for those without hope], Mind Shield 8	
Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Despair Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2	
Skills 6 + Feats 4 + Powers 30 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 38	



Hope Gestalt Scenario Hook

A Town Called Hope

A Hope Gestalt, tired of the misery of the world, has founded a town where despair is illegal. Unfortunately, many of the citizens' big entrepreneurial plans encouraged by the founder have fallen apart. Nearly everyone is broke and unemployed and the Hope gestalt finds himself constantly using his powers on the citizens to keep them from falling into despair. Can you find a way to help the Hope Gestalt let go of his dream – or make it work?

JUSTICE

"And the verdict is..."

Description: The line between justice and vengeance is sometimes thin, but the Justice Gestalt is interested in tracking down criminals who escape the judicial system and making certain they're punished. He may either gather sufficient evidence that the guilty party can be punished by the System, or apply their own punishments, as long as the accused is treated justly and fairly. This differing methodology is often what separates the superhero Justice Gestalt from vigilante supervillains. However, unlike a Vengeance Gestalt, a Justice Gestalt is concerned with issues of truth and fairness.

Even more than most archetypes, there are many approaches to statting this Gestalt. The package (below) is a "Harsh Justice" Gestalt. Kinestar, in the Characters section, is also a Justice Gestalt, but more along the lines of a "Bring People To Justice/Manhunter" Gestalt.

Related Gestalts: Determination, Truth, Vengeance.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Policemen, Judges.

Opposed Gestalts: Mob Lawyers, Criminals, Vengeance.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Kinestar, Justicia, Safir Aswad, Golden Serpent.

Victory Consequences: People bravely and unexpectedly come forward to testify against a powerful criminal, conviction rates rise.

Defeat Consequences: A powerful or vile criminal gets off on a technicality, a corrupt politician is elected, a judge accepts a bribe.

JUSTICE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 8, Diplomacy 8, Intimidate 12, Knowledge (behavioral science) 8, Knowledge (civics) 12, Knowledge (current events) 8, Perform (oratory) 12, Sense Motive 12, Stealth 4, Streetwise 12

Feats: Diehard, Endurance, Fearless, Fearsome Presence

Powers: **Justice Powers (Fear of Justice (Paralysis 10, Extra: Range, Flaw: Limited to half-strength except on wanted criminals), [Alternate Powers: **Blast 10** (Flaw: Limited to half-strength except on wanted criminals), **Snare 10** (Flaw: Limited to half-strength except on wanted criminals), **Super Senses 10** (Awareness (of a crimes being committed, postcognition), Detect (criminal), acute, analytical, Tracking 3 (all out))**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Corruption Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 24 + Feats 4 + Powers 32 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 58

Justice Gestalt Scenario Hook

Mad Justice

A Justice Gestalt, who had previously been reluctant to take the life of even the sickest criminal, is suddenly killing minor hoods and low level mob flunkies without any concern for the consequences. Is it mind control, a new kid in the suit, or (like the famous New York City vigilante Karetaka) has he snapped?



KNOWLEDGE

"You seek to bar me from your store of knowledge? Can there be anything more evil than to be a servant of ignorance?"

Description: Whereas the Enlightenment Gestalt seeks to transform people into seekers of knowledge and the Curiosity Gestalt enjoys prying into dark corners, the Knowledge Gestalt wishes to know things for its own sake. To him, knowledge is a possession. He views people's minds as libraries and will borrow or steal knowledge at will. Some serve as superheroes because it allows him access to store-houses of knowing that might be denied to them. Unfortunately, his vast intellect and store of knowledge can also make them very conceited.

Superhero Knowledge Gestalts join teams because superheroes often have access to interesting facts and travel to interesting places. Supervillain Knowledge Gestalts become villains because they don't believe that laws should be allowed to get in the way of their goals.

Related Gestalts: Truth, Prodigies, Books.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Measurements, Science, Puzzles.

Opposed Gestalts: Ignorance, Superstition.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Cerebral, The Measurer, Schoepfergeist.

Victory Consequences: University enrollment

KNOWLEDGE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Knowledge (art) 4, Knowledge (behavioral science) 4, Knowledge (business) 4, Knowledge (civics) 4, Knowledge (current events) 12, Knowledge (earth sciences) 4, Knowledge (history) 12, Knowledge (life sciences) 4, Knowledge (physical sciences) 4, Knowledge (popular culture) 8, Knowledge (streetwise) 4, Knowledge (tactics) 4, Knowledge (technology) 4, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8

Feats: Assessment, Eidetic Memory, Inventor, Jack-of-all-trades, Well Informed

Powers: **Knowledge Powers (Mental Transform 5 (alter memories), [Alternate Powers: **Telepathy 10** (Flaw: Limited - Only to access memories and knowledge), **Improve Someone's Intellectual Capacity (Boost 10 (INT))**, **Overload Someone's Brain Via Telepathic Transmission of Information (Confuse 10)]**, **Reflex Memory 1**, **Knowledge Awareness** (Be aware of the storage or transmission of knowledge by sight, sound, mental powers, or radio senses), (**Super Senses 32**, detect (x2), aware (x10), acute (x10), Rapid 5, Extended 5)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Ignorance Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 20 + Feats 5 + Powers 65 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 88

surges, school drop-out rates decline. Ratings fall for a loudmouth radio talk-show host railing against intellectuals.

Defeat Consequences: Libraries close. A computer viruses wipes out data across the city. A intellectual genius dies or becomes incapacitated.

Knowledge Gestalt Scenario Hook

You've Got A Secret

A bored Knowledge Gestalt decides to pursue the ultimate secret — the secrets of the PCs (secret identities, weaknesses, any misdeeds they're covering up, and so on) Can the PCs prevent a superhuman intellect from exposing truths that are likely to rip their lives apart?

LANGUAGE

"That inflection is unique to proto-Mongolian dialects spoken by the late Tocharian peoples... My God, he must be a time traveler!"

Description: One of the greatest achievements of the human race happened on the day they learned to understand and employ speech — the ability to speak may be the single thing that most defines us as human. The Language Gestalt is ultimate arbiter of human meaning and understanding, able to bridge the gap between cultures. He may not be the most powerful gestalt in a fight, though with creative use, his control of language can provide him with an unexpected advantage.

A Language Gestalt involves himself in adventures so he can experience new language and new forms of communication first hand. They're more prone to belong to hero or villain teams that travel to far places than ones that stay in any particular place.

Related Gestalts: Knowledge, Gestalt Protector (of the Language's Ethnic Group), Mathematics.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Linguistics, Symbols.

Opposed Gestalts: Babbler.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Cpl. Bryon Williams.

Victory Consequences: New samples of ancient languages are discovered, bilingual education rates increase.

Defeat Consequences: A language goes extinct. A translation error causes a major incident.

LANGUAGE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Diplomacy 12, Sense Motive 12

Powers: Language Powers (Universal Translator (Comprehend 4 (Extra: Comprehend (all languages, Extra: area (burst, PF: Selective)), [Alternate Powers: Mental Transform 5 (remove capacity for language), Mental Transform 5 (make someone misunderstand the intent of spoken speech)], Recognize Someone's Dialect, Time Period, and Home Region (Super Senses 5 (analytical, postcognition on hearing), Recognize When Something Was Written and With What (Super Senses 5 (analytical, postcognition on sight)).

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Silence Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Feats 0 + Powers 25 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 29

Language Gestalt Scenario Hook

It's Insanity, I Tell You

Everyone who has read a certain ancient Arabian tome (which allegedly has incredible occult powers) has been driven insane. But what happens if Tabula Rasa, the Language gestalt reads it, and understand its hidden meanings?

LAUGHTER

"Stop me if you've heard this one before, but there was this supervillain and three nuns..."

Description: Emotions are a wonderful thing, and the need to make people laugh, to hear people's laughter is one of the most poignant of human desires. The Laughter Gestalt is the embodiment of this human need for joy. He may take on the form of a jolly old uncle, a stand-up comedian, a village idiot, a king's fool, or a clown or a mime, but the Laughter Gestalt will be noticed by the people who surround it. Of course, not all laughter is good laughter and villains who take this motif can be sadists who give the Blood Red King a run for his money.

Related Gestalts: Gestalt of Acting. Gestalt of Hap-

LAUGHTER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 4, Intimidate 8, Perform (comedy) 12

Powers: Laughter Powers (Paralyzing Laughter (Paralysis 10, Extra: Extended (range), [Alternate Powers: Order Someone to Laugh (Mind Control 10, Power Feat: Mental Link, Flaw: Limited - Only to Make Someone Laugh), Healing Laughter (Healing 4, Extras: Ranged, Energizing, Restoration)], "Yeah, That Was A Good Joke" (Super Senses 5, analytical, postcognition on hearing, Flaw: Only to Figure Out Why Someone's Laughing).

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Silence Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Feats 0 + Powers 36 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 40

piness, Gestalt Reincarnation of Famous Comedians.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Clowns, Stand Up Comedians, Tickling.

Opposed Gestalts: Grimness.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Kishou, Rigaletto.

Victory Consequences: People's spirits are lightened. Even dullards tell good jokes. Geeks learn new material and no longer feel the need to repeat Monty Python or South Park routines.

Defeat Consequences: A comedian dies, a great comedy troupe breaks up, a great comedy series is cancelled.

LUCK

"I found a penny! And a horseshoe! And a winning lottery ticket!"

Description: In the words of the hero of one of the most beloved cartoons of the 1960s, the greatest power in the universe is dumb luck. Such is the power of the Luck Gestalt. He may not be the most skilled person in the universe, but he doesn't have to be, because he has (if you don't count the GM), the most powerful force in the universe on his side. The Luck Gestalt is usually a happy person who revels in the fortune.

Luck Gestalts can be both superheroes and supervillains, but many Luck Gestalts stay away from (or are lucky enough to avoid) the most dangerous activities in the Gestalt world. Naturally, heroes and villains often seek to recruit this gestalt to their side, as their good fortune often rubs off on others.

Luck Gestalts register as holy persons to the Eiko, who see them as emissaries of the Probability Lords.

Related Gestalts: Chaos, Superstitions.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Curses, Blessings, Gamblers.

Opposed Gestalts: Destiny.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Anguila, Chaostar, Donnie Picardo, Wild Card.

Victory Consequences: A worthy person wins the lottery.

Defeat Consequences: Accident rates skyrocket. Brownouts and computer failures become common.

Laughter Gestalt Scenario Hook

Crocodile Tears Of A Clown

A troupe of clowns, which includes the Laughter Gestalt Rigaletto, are hiring themselves out to parties – all of which have been mysteriously robbed. Are the clowns responsible? And if they are, can you make the clowns cry?

LUCK GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: (Give it a Good Kick) Craft (mechanical) 12, (Blurt Out The Right Thing to Say) Diplomacy 12, (The Bond Just Loosened) Escape Artist 12, (Make a Good Guess) Sense Motive 12

Feats: Beginner's Luck, Blind-Fight, Diehard, Elusive Target, Improvised Tools, Luck 5, Seize Initiative, Ultimate Effort, Uncanny Dodge

Powers: Luck Control 10, Unlucky Thing Happens to a Bad Guy (Blast 10, Power Feat: Subtle), [Alternate Powers: Bad Guy Stumbles and Gets Trapped (Snare 10, Power Feat: Subtle), Bad Guy Runs Out of Bullets/Juice (Transform 7, Power Feat: Subtle)]

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from other Luck Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 12 + Feats 13 + Powers 53 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 76

Luck Gestalt Scenario Hook

Cool Hand Cameron

Cameron Mills, the world's unluckiest man, is hiring himself out as a bad luck charm to casinos. Should the heroes try to stop the ultimate cooler?

MACHINES

"Watch your step human, or we'll turn you into a battery..."

Description: The Industrial Revolution was one of the triggering events of the Gestalt phenomena, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that the Machine would generate its share of Gestalts. Although often seen as cold and as unfeeling as the machines they represent, this Gestalt can be a valuable asset during a blackout or when the team jet has run dry. Some Machine Gestalts have a robotic appearance, though even the most clockwork of souls can find some

humanity at the core.

Related Gestalts: "The World of Tomorrow", Mad Scientists, Toys..

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Computers, Clocks, Robots.

Opposed Gestalts: Luddites.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Technarch, Computer.

Victory Consequences: Technological breakthroughs occur. New technologies are commonly adopted.

Defeat Consequences: Machine breakages and computer failures become common.

MACHINE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

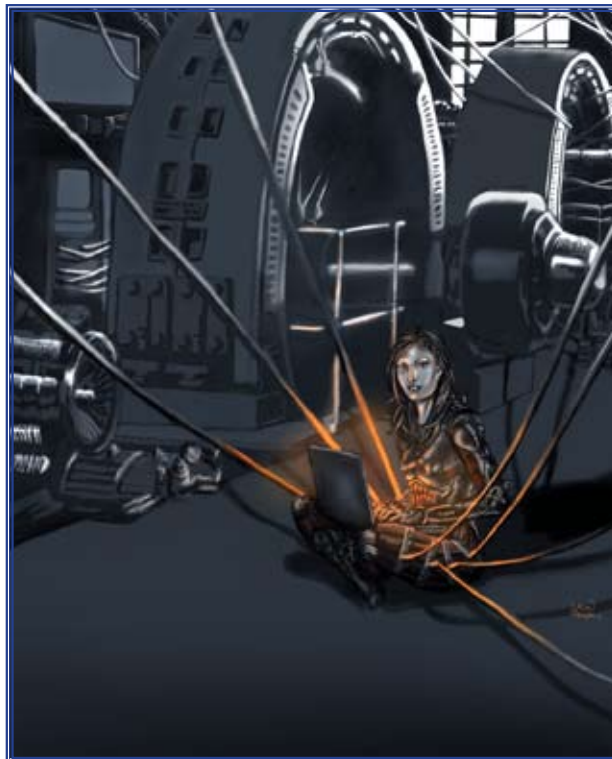
Skills: Computers 12, Craft (electronics) 12, Craft (mechanical) 12, Disable Devices 12, Knowledge (technology) 12

Feats: Environmental Adaptation (factories, workshops, clock-works), Improved Tools, Inventor

Powers: Datalink 10 [Alternate Powers: Machine Control 10, Deflect 10 (weapon mechanisms only)], Machine Manipulation (Machine Animation 10) [Alternate Power: Super Repair (Healing 6, Extra: Affects Objects (+0), Power Feats: Regrowth, Extras: Resurrection), Flaw: Limited - affects machines, not people or other objects], Analyze Machines (Super Senses 11 (machine properties, acute, analytical, X-Ray, microscopic (complex molecules)))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Luddite or Nature Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 15 + Feats 3 + Powers 43 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 59



Machine Gestalt Scenario Hook

Mean Machine

A Machine Gestalt plans to transfer his brain into a giant robot that's being constructed by a Mad Scientist Gestalt. The Machine Gestalt has always been benevolent (if distant), but will a transfer into the machine rob him of all humanity, and if so, what happens next?

MAGIC

"There are more things under Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy – but not in mine."

Description: Some argue that all gestalts are magic and sometimes it's hard to argue with that thesis. The Magic Gestalt is the epitome of old superstitions brought into the modern world. The Magic Gestalt doesn't just believe that magic is real, he believes that it's the supreme force of the age and a tool for enlightenment (or power).

The Magic Gestalt is best used to model a wizard, however the Gestalt of any mythological spell-granting creature, such as a djinn, may use a similar template. Magic Gestalts join superhero groups out of a sense of civic responsibility, but often display a feeling of arrogant superiority toward others, especially technological types, especially when they refuse to believe in magic or dismiss it with rationalizations.

Related Gestalts: Mythological Creatures, Prestidigitators, Alchemists, (pro-occult) Religions, Black Metal Bands.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Charmers, Necromancers, Illusionists.

Opposed Gestalts: (Anti-Occult) Religions, Reason.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Charodey, Circe, Hexe, Shaio-Ren.

Victory Consequences: Increase in interest in magic, quasi-arcane gestalt phenomena.

Defeat Consequences: Magical cults give magic a bad rep, occult bookstores burn down.

MAGIC GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Concentration 12, Knowledge (pseudo-arcane lore) 12, Knowledge (history) 4, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4, Perform (oratory) 8.

Feats: Artificer, Trance

Powers: Offensive Magic 10 (Blast 10, [Alternate Powers: Ten offensive Spells], Deflect 6 (all attacks), Movement Magic 10 (Speed 10, [Alternate Powers: Flight 5, Teleport 5] Analyze Magic (Super Senses 4 (other magical gestalt powers, acute, analytical)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from anti-Magic Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 10 + Feats 2 + Powers 64 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 74

Magic Gestalt Scenario Hook

The Summoning

While practicing some new spells, a Magic Gestalt accidentally summons a major demon — who convinces the Magic Gestalt that he's actually the mage's beloved pet. While the heroes try to stop the demon's rampage, the Magic Gestalt is trying to protect his "snookums".

MEDICAL DOCTOR

"Let's begin the examination, shall we?"

Description: One of the most honored roles of the modern world is that of the doctor, the learned descendent of ancient healers and Old West barbers. While a few unfortunate incidents have encouraged Medical Gestalts to hide their abilities, many secretly practice them; some of the most miraculous recoveries of the last ten years are due to Medical Doctor Gestalts who visit patients in the guise of a "consulting physician" and quietly use their powers.

Related Gestalts: Comfort, Compassion, Veterinarians.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Natural Healing, Psychology, Surgeons

Opposed Gestalts: Pain, Plague, Faith Healing.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Dr. Cross, Dr. Shannon Ford, Dr. Leo Leonard.

Victory Consequences: An important surgery saves someone's life against all odds.

Defeat Consequences: A flu epidemic spreads, unwelcome medical bureaucracy increases.



MEDICAL DOCTOR GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Concentration 12, Craft (chemical) 8, Diplomacy 12, medicine 12.

Feats: Improvised Tools

Powers: Medical Powers 10 (Healing 10), [Alternate Powers: Stimulant (Boost 6 (Wis and Dex simultaneously), Power Feat: Slow Fade 2), Anesthetize (Fatigue 9 (Power Feat: Sedation)), Diagnose Illness (Super Senses 10 (acute, analytical, X-Ray, microscopic (cellular))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Pain Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 11 + Feats 1 + Powers 32 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 42

Medical Doctor Scenario Hook

Playing God? Who's Playing?

A Healing Gestalt has gone on a killing spree in the criminal underworld— he's learned that every time he takes someone's life, he can absorb their life force and use it to cure someone who's terminally ill. The benefactors include the parents of a very powerful local superhero (who's now in his debt and determined to protect him). Do you stop him? Should you stop him?

MIRRORS

"I'm beautiful!"

Description: Since well before the legend of Narcissus, humanity has been concerned with its appearance. If there was any invention in human history that was inevitable, it was the mirror.

Commonly the Mirror Gestalt is part trickster, part vain buffoon. He's more likely to be a villain than a hero, though superhero Mirror Gestalts are certainly viable, especially among those who are science/physics oriented.

Related Gestalts: Glass, Light, Pools, Vanity.

Opposed Gestalts: Darkness.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Imago Dei

Victory Consequences: Large astronomical mirror is built, a local hall of mirrors opens, people become more conscious of their reflection.

Defeat Consequences: Around the local area, mirrors crack. People become less appearance conscious in general.

Mirror Scenario Hooks

Who Doesn't Want to Look Cool?:

Sometimes bonded gestalts form under the most unusual circumstances. A person who was thought to be a Mirror Gestalt turns out to have no powers whatsoever — the Gestalt bonded with his mirrorshades. Now that people realize that all it takes is a pair of glasses to give them superpowers, everybody wants the shades.

MIRROR GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Craft (mirror) 12, Knowledge (physical science) 12

Powers: **Mirror Powers (Seven Years Bad Luck (Drain 10 (Dex), Power Feat: Slow Fade 13 (seven years), Flaw: Limited - Only if you've broken a mirror), [Alternate Powers: Mind Control 10, Power Feat: Mental Link, Flaw - One Command, admire your reflection in a mirror), Look Through A Mirror (Clairvoyance 10, 10 mile range, Flaw: - medium (mirror)), Teleport Through Mirrors (Teleport 10, Flaw: Limited - only through mirrors), Create Mirror (Create Object 10, Power Feat: Innate, Flaws: Limited - Only Creates Mirrors, Requires Sand, Dirt, Rubble and grit), Destroy Mirror (Blast 9, Extra: Area 1, Flaws: Limited - Requires a mirror in the area, Destroys Mirror in Process), Make Any Image Appear In A Mirror (Illusion 10, Flaw: Limited, Only in Mirrors), Change Surface Characteristics of a Mirror (Transform 5, mirrored surface into different concave shapes), Reflect Light (Deflect 6 (energy, Extras: Reflect, Redirection)], Sense Mirrors (Super Senses 7, detect, acute, analytical, Extended 3)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from any creature with no reflection); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Powers 38 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 42

MYTHIC WARRIOR

"We shall embrace each other with the warm arms of battle."

Description: Legend and stories are archetypal, and when warriors achieve greatness, they acquire a mythical stature. The Amazons. The Spartans. The Huns. The Viking berserks. The samurai of ancient Japan. Cossacks. The Gurkhas of Nepal. Warriors with a philosophical code who achieved greatness — or infamy.

The Mythic Warrior Gestalt is the epitome of such legendary warriors. He is renowned for his

MYTHIC HERO GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Knowledge (history) 8, Knowledge (tactics) 12

Feats: Critical Strike, Diehard, Favored Opponent (cultural enemy), Luck 3, Sidekick 15

Powers: **Device 6** (30 PP, easy to lose, a weapon that does either Strike 10 or Blast 10 with one Extra), **"It Would Have Killed Any Other Man" (Immunity 2** (critical hits, Power Feat: Subtle))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from cultural archenemy); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 21 + Powers 20 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 44



combat prowess, but also for a culture and a lifestyle that contributes to their greatness. Many of the greatest superheroes of modern comics have characteristics borrowed from the Mythic Warrior.

Related Gestalts: Mythological Reincarnation.

Opposed Gestalts: Mythic Warrior (of Enemy Cultures), Mythological Reincarnation (of Mythical Monsters That Preyed On The Hero's Culture).

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Mush-ashugyo, Penthesilea.

Victory Consequences: Increase in interest in the hero's culture, increase in honor and self-respect among the descendents of that culture.

Defeat Consequences: A general decline in appreciation of myths, and heroes in general.

Mythuc Hero Gestalt Scenario Hook

When Things Were Pretty Damn Rotten

It's the Gestalt of Robin Hood! Pretty wacky guy, right? Rob from the rich and give to the poor? However, compared to the peasants of 12th Century England, there aren't many people in modern society who qualify as poor by his standards, so he's robbing practically everyone and giving money to homeless drug addicts (who are spending it on their habit). Educate the lad.

NEIGHBORHOOD COP

"You're under arrest, boyo!"

Description: This is the Gestalt of the friendly neighborhood cop, the sort of policeman that only exists in movies (and television shows) of the 1930s through early 1960s. The Neighborhood Cop Gestalt doesn't make mistakes, has an eagle eye, is polite to women and children, knows the city like the back of his hand, and is invariably male, Irish, and a good boxer. He can tell if you're a criminal at a glance. He is never unjustifiably brutal, but will often break the rules in the name of justice — which almost always works out in the end. And he never puts on too much weight, no matter how many donuts he eats.

A Neighborhood Cop gestalt is not usually found as a superhero and never as a supervillain (except in rare cases when he's undercover) as he prefers to work within the system. However, he makes for a fine contact. If a local superhero team lacks someone who's good at legwork, the neighborhood cop is a good character to take a junior detective under his wing and show him the ropes.

Related Gestalts: Justice, Regional Defenders

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Detectives, Police Dogs.

Opposed Gestalts: Burglars, Criminals, Mobsters, Street Gangs. Narcotics, Vandals..

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Sterling, Grey Shield, Peerless II.

Victory Consequences: A cop's life is miraculously saved during a dangerous incident. An officer is (justly) vindicated in a police scandal

Defeat Consequences: A local cop is killed or badly hurt in the line of duty.

NEIGHBORHOOD COP GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 12, Climb 8, Diplomacy 8, Disable Device 8, Drive 8, Gather Info 12, Handle Animal 8, Intimidate 12, Investigate 8, Knowledge (civics) 8, Knowledge (current events) 8, Knowledge (tactics) 8, Medicine 8, Notice 8, Profession (policeman) 12, Sense Motive 8

Feats: Assessment, Favored Opponent (wanted criminal), Fast Overrun, Favored Environment (urban), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Takedown Attack, Well Informed.

Powers: Hot Pursuit (Speed 6), Bulletproof (Immunity 5)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from mobster, street thugs, or corrupt cop gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 36 + Feats 8 + Powers 11 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 53

Neighborhood Cop Gestalt Scenario Hooks

You've Got Blackmail

The Neighborhood Cop Gestalt's been arrested on corruption charges! But he's incorruptible, isn't he? Clear his name.

Dogged Perseverance

A telepath has trapped a PC's mind in the body of a Neighborhood Cop Gestalt's police dog companion! Find a way to communicate your plight to this good-hearted if somewhat clueless officer.

NIGHT

"He who conquers Night, conquers all..."

Description: Some Gestalts represent concepts that people find intimidating, even though their nature may or may not be evil. The Night Gestalt loves the chill of the air when the sun goes down, and the sight of the clear night sky overhead. When the sun is up, his powers can transform day into night. After nightfall, he is girded by the dark and transformed into a being of power.

A Night Gestalt is often a villain. Even when he's a hero and a member of a group, the Night Gestalt often acts like a loner and shuns the spotlight.

Related Gestalts: Darkness. Fear.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Dusk, Midnight.

Opposed Gestalts: Day, Dawn, The Sun

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Great Woods Dragon, Sombra.

Victory Consequences: Evening skies are clearer and brighter, even in areas of light pollution.

Defeat Consequences: Nighttime crime becomes rampant. Curfews are established.

NIGHT GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Intimidate 8, Stealth 12

Feats: Favored Environment (night)

Powers: **Night Powers (Obscurement 10, [Alternate: Dark of Night (Dazzle 10)], Fear of the Night (Emotion Control 10, Emotion Type - Fear), Summon Nocturnal Creature (Summon 5, Extra: Type: Nocturnal)], Super Senses 1 (ultravision)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from mobster, street thugs, or day gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 1 + Powers 24 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 38

Night Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Because The Night

The Night Huntsman, decides that if he can convert the Night Gestalt Noxt to his cause, he can use his power to function effectively in daylight. This would effectively double the archvillain's power. Stop the Night Huntsman's recruitment drive.

PERSUASION

"Surely we can come to a reasonable understanding..."

Description: Even in a world of violence, there's room for gentle persuasion. The Persuasion Gestalt makes even a ridiculous argument seem plausible and a reasonable argument seem incontrovertible. The Persuasion Gestalt prefers to use reason to resolve conflicts, not violence. Of course, the powers of this Gestalt can be as devastating a weapon as any energy blast or punch.

Persuasion Gestalts don't often end up in the superhero or supervillain arena, but usually find work as lawyers, car salesmen and other silver-tongued professions (though some of these gestalts, drawn to a criminal life, use their careers as a cover).

Related Gestalts: Command/Leadership, Extortion.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Orators, Public Relations, Salesmen, Seduction.

Opposed Gestalts: Antipathy, Discord.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Gorgeous, Lady, Trick.

Victory Consequences: Ad rates rise, people flock to advice columns; in general, people are more open to listen to other people, and offer better advice.

Defeat Consequences: A local disaster happens that would have been prevented had someone listened to people who were warning about it.

PERSUASION GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 12, Diplomacy 12, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 8, Perform (oratory) 12, Sense Motive 12

Powers: **Mind Control 10 (Power Feat: Mental Link, Flaw: One Command - be Open-Minded), Weaken Someone's Will (Drain 5 (Will Save), Extra: Range, Power Feat: Subtle)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Stubbornness gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 14 + Powers 22 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 34

Persuasion Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Would You Buy A Used Car From This Man?

Rick "The Trick" Carstairs is telling people that the vehicles he's selling at extremely high prices are lemons – and they're still buying them. Many suspected he's using a Gestalt ability to steal people's money, but no one could prove it (nor can anyone prove he's breaking any other laws). Then one of your PC's friends had a serious accident after buying a car from "Honest Motors", and you realize that "Trick" needs to be shut down.

ROCK-N'ROLL

"Sex, drugs, and, uh... whatever! Party on!"

Description: There have been few cultural forces more potent than Rock n'Roll, and rock has been one of the most powerful influences on the lifestyles of the last two generations. Is there any doubt that a Rock n'Roll Gestalt (or many varieties of the archetype) would emerge? The Rock n'Roll Gestalt likes to entertain and to be entertained in the wildest manner possible, but some of these Gestalts have enough of a social conscience that he'll go out and fight evil (or perhaps he just thinks that dressing up in skintights and brawling bad guys is incredibly cool).

Related Gestalts: Hip Hop, Country Music, Classical Music, Opera, Soul.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Heavy Metal, Punk.

Opposed Gestalts: Anti-Modern Culture Gestalts

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Braineater, Heroic.

Victory Consequences: Sales of good bands rise, a classic rock band reunites (and doesn't suck).

Defeat Consequences: Illegal downloads cut into legitimate sales, a band sells out to commercial interests, a great band breaks up, a great record's release is delayed by litigation.

ROCK N' ROLL GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 12, Diplomacy 4, Knowledge (civics) 8, Knowledge (current events) 8, Perform (acting) 4, Perform (keyboards) 8, Perform (percussion) 12, Perform (singing) 12, Perform (string instruments) 12, Perform (wind instruments) 8

Feats: Fearless, Quick Change

Powers: **Device 9** (easy to lose, musical instrument, 45 pts); **Immunity 5** (sound attacks)

Device: **Musical Instrument: Noise (Dazzle 6 (sound), Extra:** Area, PF: Progression 8 (extended area, 750 ft. burst radius));

Performance: Paralyzing Sound (Paralyze 6, Extra: Area, PF: Progression 5 (Extended area, 625 ft. burst)), [Alternate Powers: **Captivate Audience (Mind Control 7) (Extra:** Area (burst), PF: Progression 5 (extra area, 675 ft. radius), Telepathic, *Flaw:* one command - "listen to my music"), **Shatter Glass (Disintegration 3), Extra:** Area (burst), *Power Feats:* Progression 8 (extra area, 125 ft. burst radius) *Flaw - Limited* (Only objects made from glass, ice, and ceramics)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from gestalts representing other musical styles); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 22 + Feats 2 + Powers 32 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 56

Rock N' Roll Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Gimme Shelter

The Infernals, a death metal band, is funneling their earnings into a corporation that's financing the cult activities of the Blood Red King — which has not gone unnoticed by the arch-villain, who's given the lead guitarist a "special instrument" that's been christened "the devil's guitar". Now he's about to cut his first CD with the instrument — but what abomination will come into being when he hits the wrong chord?



SLEEP

"Good night"

Description: Although not among the most common of Gestalts, the Sleep Gestalt is a powerful ally, for most creatures have a strong need to experience slumber. The Sleep Gestalt likes to put people into that state of peacefully tranquility. Unlike Dream Gestalts, he doesn't care what people do in their sleep — it's simply the act of sleeping that matters.

Civic minded Sleep Gestalts have become superheroes, while some enterprising Gestalts prefer to make money as a very expensive sleep aid to the wealthy.

Related Gestalts: Delirium, Dreams, Night.

Opposed Gestalts: Vigilance, Dawn, Noise.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Mechta, Naum.

Victory Consequences: People get a good night's rest, productivity increases.

Defeat Consequences: People get a lousy night's sleep. Because of this, car accidents and road rage incidents are becoming an epidemic.

SLEEP GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Knowledge (behavioral science) 4

Powers: Sleep 10 ((*Power Feat:* Sedation) [*Alternate Powers:* Drain 10 (Fort Saves), *Extra:* Range, **Make Everything Wearisome** (Fatigue 10 , *Extra:* Range. **Immunity 5** (fatigue effects)).

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from anyone immune to sleep); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 1 + Powers 38 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 37

Sleep Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Golden Slumbers

It's the old "unlikely robbers" plot, as sleepwalkers have been robbing stores and banks and returning with the loot to a sleep deprivation clinic. So it's an evil doctor who's a Sleep Gestalt, right? Wrong! The Sleep Gestalt is the clinic's receptionist, whose affair with the head doctor recently ended badly, and who's using her powers on the patients to set up the doctor for a long-term prison sentence.

No Rest For The Wicked

Inmates in a maximum security prison facility are experiencing a traumatic sleep disorder – they've lost the ability to sleep, and they're going insane. A Sleep Gestalt who believes "the prisoners don't suffer enough" is responsible. Unfortunately, one of the affected prisoners is someone the PCs are trying to rehabilitate

SOLDIER

"The Tyranny League has a position on the west side of the building. Give me some cover fire and I'll take a couple of guys and see if we can draw them out..."

Description: Soldiering may be the world's real oldest profession, and the development of civilization has not diminished the trade. The Soldier Gestalt is an ideal combat machine. He obeys orders without question, leads by example in combat, never abandons a buddy, and remains calm and stoic except when he needs to motivate his troops with a battlecry. The superhero Soldier Gestalt sees the typical hero team as a squad in the war against evil, though his hardened attitudes and frequent use of lethal force puts him at odds with many heroes, who prefer a kinder, gentler approach to beating evil senseless.

This Gestalt is very highly desired by many world governments. Soldier Gestalts are prime candidates to lead executive bodyguard units or elite fighting squads. In particular, many African countries consider them a plague.

Related Gestalts: Mythic Warrior (with Royal Blood), Mythological Reincarnation Gestalts (of War Gods), Policemen, Bounty Hunters.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Drill Sergeants, Captains, Generals, Tactics, Mercenaries.

Opposed Gestalts: Pacifism.



Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Major Clark, Mercenario, Partizan, Zaijak.

Victory Consequences: Soldiers receive better

benefits, veteran's hospital conditions improve, more recruits join the army.

Defeat Consequences: A local soldier who's stationed overseas is killed or badly wounded in action.

Soldier Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Old Soldiers

Believing that today's generation is too soft and decadent, an American Soldier Gestalt who's a Vietnam veteran is kidnapping the most vocal protesters at the current peace rally ("No Involvement In Kurdistan") and using a telepath to brainwash them. He plans to outfit them as a mercenary force. Once brainwashed, he'll drop them into modern North Vietnam to terrorize the population. Stop them.

SOLDIER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Climb 12, Disable Device 4, Drive 4, Diplomacy 4, Intimidate 12, Knowledge (history) 4, Knowledge (tactics) 12, Medicine 8, Notice 8, Perform (oratory) 4, Profession (soldier) 12, Search 8, Stealth 8, Survival 12

Feats: Endurance, Leadership, Commando Fighting (Allout Attack, Chokehold, Dodge Focus, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Power Attack), Redirect, Set-Up, Teamwork.

Powers: Device 8 (40 pts., easy to lose, weapons, including a Blast 10 (rifle) and smoke and fragmentation grenades); **Inspire one's unit**, (Boost 3 (all attack affects), **Extras:** Area, **Power Feat:** Selective), **Sense Friend/Foe (Super Senses 5** (detect, ranged, acute, analytical)).

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from enemy Soldier Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 28 + Feats 13 + Powers 42 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 81

STONE

"Anger me, and I'll become your tomb..."

Description: The strongest of the four classic elements is earth, and this element is present in the Gestalt world. The Stone Gestalt represents earth's power and its usefulness to the development of man. He enjoys building and construction but also love to demonstrate what happens when the earth turns against humanity. Stone Gestalts have a reputation for being slow and steady (much like the medium they represent) but it's largely a stereotype.

Related Gestalts: Earthquakes, Mountains, Mines.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Gems and Minerals

Opposed Gestalts: Water.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Felakat, Martillo, Roca.

Victory Consequences: Sculptors are inspired, nearby mine lodes reveal new veins or deposits.

Defeat Consequences: Sinkholes open. Roads deteriorate, mudslides occur. If the town's on a fault line, there's an earthquake.

STONE GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Craft (structural) 8, Knowledge (physical sciences) 8, Survival 8

Feats: Endurance, Environmental Adaptation

Powers: Earth Powers 10 (Blast 10, [Alternate Powers: Rock Swarm (Blast 8, Extra: Area 2), Tunnel Through Stone (Bulldozing 10), Summon Earth Elemental (Summon 6, Extra: Fanatical), Stone Shape (Transform 5, stone structure to a differently shaped stone structure), Raise Obscuring Cloud of Stone and Dirt (Obscure 10), Create Stone (Create Object 5 (Extras: Duration, Movable), Strengthen Stone (Boost 10 (hardness, Flaw: Limited - only to stone)); Unmovable (Immovable 5), (Evaluate Stone (Super Senses 7 (detect, acute, analytical), Tremorsense).

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Water Gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 6 + Feats 2 + Powers 39 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 45

Stone Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Stone Mountain Georgian

A Stone Gestalt living in a Plains States city wonders what it would be like if there was a mountain near his backyard – and then a mountain starts to grow on the outskirts of town. It's causing havoc and destruction, and its creator can't stop it. Can you?

STRONGMAN

'Ugh... this jetliner is... <grunt>... light as... <grunt>... a feather...'

Description: This Gestalt is physically impressive, in deeds and in appearance. The Strongman likes to push himself to his limits, then show off his strength. Some are bullies who kick sand in people's faces while others would give their lives to protect the least important people, but all are capable of feats of incredible strength.

Superstrong characters do not need to be Strongman Gestalts; he might also be a National Hero Gestalt or the reincarnation of certain mythical deities. But none of which can compare to the Strongman Gestalt (or so the Strongman Gestalts claim) and they'll inevitably get a chance to prove it when times call for raw brawn, a frequent event in a four-color universe.

Related Gestalts: Gestalt of Animals (that are associated with Strength, such as bears), Gestalt of Blacksmiths, Gestalt of Mythological Reincarnation (physically powerful gods and heroes), Regional Protector Gestalts (With Superstrength), Gestalt of Toughness, Gestalt of Wrestlers, Gestalt Paragon of Youth.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Teamsters, Weightlifters.

Opposed Gestalts: Weakness.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Berserker, Orso, Baumstarke, Argamassa, Bearface Thompson, Boss Strong, Bravura, Caber, The Physique, Forzudo, Friendly Ed, Grandeza, Intensidade, Lawson, Medved, Potência, Silach.

Victory Consequences: A person who needed a burst of strength to save someone finds it.

Defeat Consequences: A strong man is paralyzed in an accident, a steroid scandal shuts down a local gym.



Strongman Gestalt Scenario Hooks

"I AM THE POWERR!!!!"

The mischievous imp gestalt Maligno has given a Strongman Gestalt amnesia and replaced his memories with those of a popular cartoon character – who's now running around the city waving a sword and causing destruction while he looks for his archenemy. The only thing that will reverse the damage is for the PCs to dress up as the cartoon character's allies and enemies and play out the cartoon drama to the "episode's conclusion".

STRONGMAN GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Intimidate 12

Feats: Appearance 1, Endurance

Powers: Strongman Powers (**Super Strength 10**, *Power Feats:* Groundstrike, Shockwave, Thunderclap, [*Alternate Powers:* **Turn Someone Into A Hero of the Beach: Boost 4** (Strength, Con, and add 1 rank in Appearance, simultaneously), *Power Feat:* Slow Fade 8 (1/month), *Flaw* - Limited, Requires a day's grueling exercise regimen), **Flex My Pecs and Guns (Emotion Control 5** (make people ogle uncontrollably, run away in fear, or despair at one's lack of manliness, *Extras:* Area, *Power Feat:* Progression 2 (on area, 125 ft. radius burst), *Flaw* - Requires visual contact (with the gestalt flexing in a nude or semi-naked state)), **Support Massive Structures, Super Strength 5**, *Extra:* Area, *Power Feat:* Progression 5 (area, 625 ft. burst radius)).

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from anyone who beats them in a strength competition); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 3 + Feats 2 + Powers 26 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 31

SUN

"But the world DOES revolve around me."

Description: The sun has been an object of fascination and worship since the dawn of man. The Sun Gestalt is the ultimate extension of that worship, reflecting its light, warmth and awe in such a manner that people cannot help but worship it. He joins a superhero team because it seems like the natural thing to do — as the sun's representative, he should be the guiding light of the universe!

Related Gestalts: Heat, Dusk, Light, Stars, Astronomy, Astrology, Fertility, Mythological Reincarnations (sun gods).

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Solar Eclipses, Summer, Dawn, Noon

Opposed Gestalts: Moon, Black Holes.

Sun Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Crown of the Sun

An NPC Sun Gestalt becomes convinced he's a god, and that by stealing Aztec artifacts associated with their sun god Huitzilopochtli, he can obtain supreme power. It's a race against time to prevent him from getting them — and to prevent him from conducting Huitzilopochtli's favorite worship activity, human sacrifice.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Dr. Solio, Luzente, Solar E, Soleil.

Victory Consequences: Warm sunny days.

Defeat Consequences: There's a long stretch of bad, sunless weather that causes poor crop growth.

SUN GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Intimidate 12, Survival 8

Feats: Attractive 1, Fearsome Presence

Powers: **Sun Powers (Sun Blast (Blast 10), [Alternate Powers: Heat Prostration (Fatigue 5) Extra: Area, Range), Make A Sunny Day (Drain 4 (Obscurement), Extra: Area, Power Feat: Progression 12 (5 mile radius burst), Flaw: Limited - only affects clouds), Give Someone the Perfect Tan (Transform 5 (untanned to tanned), Extra: Area), Make Someone Stop and Worship The Sun (Mind Control 10, Flaw: - Limited One Command)], Solar Sphere (Immunity (to cold) 5, Extra: Area, Power Feats: Progression 5, 625 ft. burst), Immunity 10 (Heat/Fire Attacks), Analyze the EM Spectrum (Super Senses 4 (acute, analytical))**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Darkness gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 5 + Feats 2 + Powers 53 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 58

SWASHBUCKLER

"They seek me here, they seek me there... why don't they just look in the yellow pages?"

Description: Some heroes are very serious (even grim) individuals, but the Swashbuckler engages in high adventure with a smile on his face and an artistic flourish. The Swashbuckler loves to swing (be it from a rope, a tattered curtain, or a web line), quip jokes and tweak the noses of authority figures. Politicians, policemen, government agents, or powerful newspaper publishers might be his prey.

The Swashbuckler Gestalt is typically something of an outlaw or outcast (a role he enjoys) and sometimes uses a carefree attitude to hide deep psychological scars. Robin Hood is a possible role-model of a Supervillain Swashbuckler.

Related Gestalts: Acrobat Gestalts, Anti-Authority Gestalt, Thrillseekers, Tricksters.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: The Three Musketeers, Swinging, Cinema Pirates.

Opposed Gestalts: Tyranny, Authority Figures.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Kavalierist, Maskrobat, Dao-yo.

Victory Consequences: Stuffy authority types are caught in embarrassing situations and fall from power.

Defeat Consequences: There's a spate of accidents by "idiots" who are showing off.

SWASHBUCKLER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Acrobatics 12, Bluff 12, Craft (structural) 8, Diplomacy 8, Disable Device 12, Disguise 12, Escape Artist 12, Knowledge (current event) 8, Knowledge (tactics) 8, Notice 8, Perform (oratory) 8, Sense Motive 8, Sleight of Hand 8, Stealth 8

Feats: Attractive 1, Elusive Target, Fearless, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improvised Tools, Luck 3, Move-by Attack, Set-Up, Taunt.

Powers: **Improvised Weapon (Strike 10, Extra: Penetrating, [Alternate Powers: Snare 10], Blast 10], Super Movement 1 (swinging)], Horde Fighting Ability (Immunity 20 (all attacks from people with 1/2 of the gestalt's Power Level, if attacked at 3:1 or higher odds).**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from tyranny gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 33 + Feats 12 + Powers 43 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 86

Swashbuckler Gestalt Scenario Hooks

All For One

A PC Swashbuckler Gestalt who was a member of a college fencing team has learned that an old teammate has also drawn a Gestalt — he's a Gestalt of Swords, and using his powers as a mob enforcer. Can you take him away from that evil life, or is he doomed to become an implacable enemy?

THRILLSEEKER

"What a rush! Disarmed the nuke with five seconds to spare!"

Description: The Thrillseeker Gestalt taps into one of the most common human emotions for anyone who actively courts danger. Superhero Thrillseekers seek to fight the villains with the biggest killing attacks, the nastiest reputations. Villainous Thrillseekers dream of going mano-a-mano against Columbia or the Titan. The Thrillseeker isn't necessary courageous, in fact, the more scared he gets, the better! Adrenaline is the most addictive substance in the universe.

Related Gestalts: Courage, Demolitions, Drug Addicts (amphetamines), Race Car Gestalts, Swash-bucklers, Test Pilots.

Opposed Gestalts: Security, Comfort.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Thrillseeker, Adrenaline, Risktaker, Kent Ashbury, Ringtail, Stuntwoman, Silverfist.

Victory Consequences: A stunt captures people's imagination.

Defeat Consequences: A spate of accidents. Risktaking and entrepreneurial spirit declines.



THRILLSEEKER GESTALT	POWER LEVEL 10
Skills: Acrobatics 12, Climb 12, Drive 8, Handle Animal 4, Intimidate 8, Pilot 8, Swim 8	
Feats: Diehard, Fearless, Luck 2, Ultimate Effort	
Powers: "C'mon, Don't Fight Those Losers, Hit Me Instead" (Mind Control 10, <i>Flaw</i> - Limited One Command), Regeneration 12 (Disabled 1 per 20 minutes, Injured 1 per minute, Staggered 1 per minute; Ability Damage 1 per 20 minutes)	
Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from backfiring stunts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2	
Skills 15 + Feats 5+ Powers 22 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 40	

Thrillseeker Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Pull!

While sneaking into the equatorial mass driver to launch yourself into orbit, you discover it's been sabotaged. Do you fight the saboteurs and expose them, or do you think being launched into orbit in a damaged mass driver is an even more insane thrill?

THUNDER

"It's too late. The storm has arrived."

Description: Gestalts draw themselves to things that fascinate people, and few things are as fascinating as the fire that forks in the sky, and the distant sound of thunder. The Thunder Gestalt is drawn to the storm and brings the storm with him wherever he goes. The stereotypical thunder Gestalt is quick-tempered and impulsive, and prefers brute force to subtlety — the stereotype is often true. The Thunder Gestalt is often a show-off, and joins superteams because it allows him to display his powers.

Related Gestalts: Electricity, Explosions, Weather, Mythological Reincarnations (of Thunder Gods)

Opposed Gestalts: Tranquility, Calm Before The Storm.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Karl

THUNDER GESTALT	POWER LEVEL 10
Skills: Knowledge (earth sciences) 8	
Feats: Fearsome Presence	
Powers: Absorption 5 (goes to healing effect; <i>Extras:</i> Energy Storage, Power Magnet; <i>Limited:</i> Electricity only), Thunder Powers Blast 10 [forked lightning; <i>Extra:</i> Autofire; <i>PF:</i> accurate 2, [Alternate Powers: (Blast 10 (thunderbolt; <i>Extras:</i> Line Area, <i>PF:</i> Penetrating; <i>Flaw:</i> Touch Range; Blast 10 (ball lightning; <i>Extras:</i> Explosion)], Dazzle 8 (sound of thunder; hearing; Burst Area, Linked to Blast array; Touch Range), Immunity 11 (electrical effects, own powers), Super Senses 4 (precognition, <i>Flaw:</i> Limited - only for knowing when thunderstorms will happen)]	
Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from water gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2	
Skills 2 + Feats 1+ Powers 83 + Drawbacks 2 = Total 84	

Thorvaldson, Wakinyan.

Victory Consequences: A thunderstorm hits the city, people come to appreciate the awesome beauty of the storm.

Defeat Consequences: Thunderstorms bring massive power outages and damage. People aren't quite so appreciative.

Thunder Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Storm Of The Century

A person who's uninsured building was damaged in a storm is suing a local Thunder gestalt, claiming he was "egging on" the storm with his powers. You did see him exalting in the middle of the storm and using his powers at random, however you saw him cause no property damage and if the courts rule in the plaintiff's favor, it could have devastating legal consequences for all gestalts.

TIME

"There is no rush hour in eternity."

Description: The Time Gestalt is a rare one, perhaps reflecting how difficult it is for humanity to control this fundamental element in our lives. The Time Gestalt avoids the world of the here and the now to live in the world of the possible and the definite. Everything is a non sequitur. He joins a Gestalt team only because they provide his best chance for living a life where he'll be surrounded by people who accept and understand him.

Related Gestalts: Destiny, Clocks

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Anniversary Gestalts, The Past, The Future.

Opposed Gestalts: Inertia, Celerity, Entropy.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Mr. Tick-Tock, Laura Zakoji.

Victory Consequences: There's an increase in punctuality, a local landmark clock is preserved.

Defeat Consequences: Traffic delays fluster people, children are tardy for school, the local community fails to win an important contract because their bid was late, people's watches and clocks break.

TIME GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Feats: Eidetic Memory, Luck 3, Second Chance 5

Powers: Time Control 8 [*Alternate Powers:* Time Stop 8, Destroy Temporal Perception (Mind Control 10, *Extra:* Area, *Power Feat:* Mental Link, *Flaw:* One Command, "Refuse to acknowledge or understand the law of cause and effect")], **Super Senses 9** (danger sense, detect probability variations [acute, analytical, ranged], precognition), **Immunity 5** (temporal effects), **Sense Temporal Anomalies (Super Senses 14**, detect, acute, analytical, timesense, precognition, post-cognition)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from inertia and entropy gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Feats 9+ Powers 84 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 92

Time Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Cretaceous Park

To assist in scientific research, a Time Gestalt is being hired to transport dinosaurs ahead in time. But what happens when the meteor that's meant to wipe out their species comes ahead in time too?

We're What?

A Time Gestalt is claiming to have conversations with your ghosts after you've died at some point in the future. Figure out when and how you're going to die, and how to stop this from happening.

TOUGHNESS

"If you can manage it, could you aim a little lower next time? I've got an itch right... there."

Description: The Toughness Gestalt is a popular one with hand-to-hand fighters. The Toughness Gestalt is the ultimate tough guy. He can take a beating. He enjoys taking a beating. He derives a psychotic pleasure from the look on people's faces when he takes their best shot without flinching. He doesn't necessarily seek out dangerous situations, but when he gets involved in them, it's party time.

This is another Gestalt that's popular with powerhouses, although it's by no means exclusive to them. Some Toughness Gestalts have relatively weak offensive

powers; good defenses are the hallmark of this Gestalt.

Related Gestalts: Thrillseekers, Strongman Gestalts, Endurance, Courage.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Tough Guy Activities (Stuntman, Boxing, etc.), Masochists.

Opposed Gestalts: Weakness.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Staff Sgt. Randolph Adams, Banajiumu, Felsen, Invincible, Maverick Man, Sean McMullen, Nerazrushimiy, The Stuntman, Stürmer, Tough.

Victory Consequences: Someone's life is saved because their rescuer was able to fight the pain.

Defeat Consequences: A local tough guy is humiliated, kids fail to stand up to bullies, a crack forms in a prominent landmark.

TOUGHNESS GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Feats: Intimidate 12, Knowledge (streetwise) 4

Feats: Die-Hard, Second Chance

Powers: **Immunity 10** (torture/pain-based attacks), **Protection 5** (*Extra:* Impervious), **Toughness Powers (Boost 10, CON, Toughness and Fort Saves simultaneously)**, [*Alternate Powers:* **Open A Weak Spot (Drain 10, Toughness/Fort Saves simultaneously)**, **Hard as a Rock (Stun 6** (*Extra:* Aura) and **Immovable 10]**, **Sense Toughness (Super Senses 5, detect Con/Toughness saves, acute, analytical)**, **The Injury Wasn't As Bad As It Looked (Regeneration 12** (Disabled 1 per 20 minutes, Injured 1 per minute, Staggered 1 per minute; Ability Damage 1 per 20 minutes; *Power Feat:* Subtle))

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from other Toughness gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 4 + Feats 2+ Powers 70 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 74

Toughness Gestalt Scenario Hooks

The Barroom Brawl of Doom

A tavern in a town that's not on the map in Central California is home to a disturbing phenomenon: a barroom brawl that never ends. Tough guys enter the bar, fight, and keep fighting without stopping to eat, sleep, or perform any other activities associated with living (including leaving the bar to live out their lives). All wounds are instantaneously healed. Nearly thirty people, including several Toughness gestalts, have been trapped in this barroom brawl, some for years. Non-combatants can go in and out as they please, but once you start fighting, you're trapped. Can you find a way to end



TRICKSTER

"Have I got a deal for you..."

Description: When times are tough, people enjoy hearing stories about the Trickster. Naturally, the Gestalt was going to pop a few of these out as well. Although not particularly heroic, the Trickster Gestalt gets things done when brute force isn't the answer. Cunning and deception are the Trickster's stock in trade and stories of a Trickster's clever deeds are among the most popular tales in all mythology. However, unlike the gestalts of Deceit or Deception, the Trickster enjoys playing his tricks on the gullible and the self-important, (especially those who are wicked as well as stupid), but usually leave well-meaning, humble folk alone.

The Trickster's defenses are often brittle; this archetype relies on manipulation and the gullibility of its opponents to work its will. Tricksters (particularly villainous ones) can have illusion or shapechanging powers, or they can have no real powers, relying on skills instead to persuade people to accept their point of view.

Related Gestalts: Luck, Swashbucklers, Decep-

tion,. Mythological Reincarnation (of Trickster gods).

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Liars, Con Artists.

Opposed Gestalts: Honor, Truth.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Maligno, Vulpe, Engano, Kachina.

Victory Consequences: Memorable practical jokes occur, people learn to take life less seriously.

Defeat Consequences: A practical joke goes tragically awry, there's a backlash against scam artists and some innocent people get caught in the cross-fire.

TRICKSTER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Feats: Bluff 12, Diplomacy 12, Disguise 12, Gather Info 12, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 8, Sense Motive 12, Sleight of Hand 12

Feats: Luck 3, Master Plan, Taunt

Powers: **Morph 10** (any form), **Trickery Powers (Illusion 8)** (all senses), [Alternate Power: **Trick Someone Into Firing Into A Reflective Surface (Deflect 7, Extras:** Reflection, Redirection), **Create Object 10** (PF: Innate, Precise, Subtle), **Set Aside Skepticism (Mind Control 10, Flaw:** Limited - Only to believe something they really like to be true, but which obviously isn't), **Create Booby Trap (Blast 10, PF:** Triggered, Subtle Extra: Area), **Transmutation (Transform 5 (any)), PF:** Subtle]

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from anyone who sees through his deception); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 20 + Feats 5 + Powers 68 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 91

Trickster Gestalt Scenario Hooks

"My Name Is Maligno. It's A Name You Can Trust!"

A helpful invisible imp named Maligno has decided to follow the PC around invisibly and make his life easier. Girlfriends don't argue, but agree with the hero's every demand, villains fall over on their faces unexpectedly, weapons trained on the hero are suddenly transformed into swarms of bees, angry newspaper editors fall down flights of stairs and break their legs. When the PC becomes more and more accustomed to his good fortune and lowers his guard, Maligno appears to the PCs and asks for a quid pro quo.

TRUTH

"I cannot tell a lie... seriously I can't... why are you looking at me like that?"

Description: Honesty may be the best policy but it's not always the most popular one. Nonetheless, there are a few truth gestalts out there whose goal is to enforce honesty and to disclose the truth. While this might seem a natural fit for a superhero team, superheroes often don't appreciate their commitment to truth regardless of how brutal it might be. Supervillain Truth Gestalts sometimes enjoy the havoc that their powers can reap.

Related Gestalts: Knowledge.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Investigational Journalism, Oaths.

Opposed Gestalts: Secrets, Lies.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Dani Jensen, Doctor Veritas, the Questioner.

Victory Consequences: A local corruption scandal is exposed, the public holds ethics in higher regard.

Defeat Consequences: A Big Lie becomes "common wisdom", a politician gets away with telling a major lie.

TRUTH GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Feats: Gather Info 12, Intimidate 12, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 12, Knowledge (history) 12, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 12, Sense Motive 12

Feats: Assessment, Distract 2

Powers: **Zone of Truth 10 (Mind Control 10, PF:** Subtle, Extras: Area, Duration 2 (to Continuous), Flaws - One Command, "Tell the Truth", Permanent, Range 2 (touch), **Truth Powers (Transform a Body Part if They Tell A Lie (Transform 4, PF:** Triggered, Extras: Duration (continuous), [Alternate Power: **Telepathy 10, Flaw** - only to determine if someone's lying])

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from trickster or deception gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 18 + Feats 3 + Powers 43 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 62

Truth Gestalt Scenario Hooks

City of Truth

A Truth Gestalt meets a Wish Fulfillment Gestalt - and as a result, everyone in a 100 kilometer radius must tell the truth and the whole truth for twenty-four hours. As the city descends into chaos (which includes everything from cheating spouses making full confessions to District Attorneys frantically trying to move their toughest cases up the calendar), can you stop it while still preserving your secrets?

WATER

"The tide just turned, my friend!"

Description: Water is life - and death - throughout history, and the ability to control it is a valuable one, particularly in cities along the coasts of seas or major lakes.

The Water Gestalt is often a free spirit, and superheroes who accept one onto their team may have problems keeping him to a "party line". He joins a superhero team because he senses kindred spirits among them. Supervillain Water Gestalts are usually either rabid environmentalists striking back at Mankind's crimes against the oceans or psychotics who enjoy drowning people.

WATER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Survival 4, Swim 12

Feats: Environmental Adaptation

Powers: **Water Powers (Water Control 10, [Alternate Powers: Water Blast (Blast 10), Ride Water Spout (Fly 5, Flaw - Must Begin Within 500 feet of a major body of water), Current Control (Drain 6 (swimming), Extra: Range, Area, Suffocate 6 (Extra: Range)], Swimming 7, Heals in Water (Regeneration 9 (Recovery +3; Injured 1 per 5 minutes, Staggered 1 per 5 minutes, Disabled 1 per hour), Flaw - must be immersed in water), Water Breathing (Immunity 6, breathe underwater, resist the negative effects of any liquid that contains water)**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (fire attacks); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 4 + Feats 1+ Powers 46 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 49

Related Gestalts: Surfers, Swimmers, Sailors, Fishermen, Animal Gestalt (Marine Animals), Waterfalls.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Rain, Rivers, Lakes, Wells.

Opposed Gestalts: Stone, Fire.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Ganges Saand, Surfer Joe.

Victory Consequences: Increase in safe water practices. A local excels at watersports. Water pollution lessens.

Defeat Consequences: A tainted water scandal. There's an oil spill on a local waterway.

Water Gestalt Scenario Hooks

The Secret Storm

Many people who live by the seas think of them as alive, and view sea storms as the ocean's wrath. Now a great coastal city is being battered by storms for which there is no rational explanation. Can you find a way to communicate with the Great Water and quiet its anger?

WEATHER

"Everyone talks about it. I do something about it!"

Description: Mankind has been obsessed by weather since the dawn of time. It's only natural that a Gestalt would emerge who would do something about it. The Weather Gestalt can ensure sunny days for a picnic and rain on any unworthy person's parade. Het can be a very useful thing to have but sometimes has a bit of a god complex.

Related Gestalts: Natural Disasters, Conversation.

Sub-Types of this Archetype: Rain, Snow, Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Hail, Thunder, Fog, Sunshine.

Opposed Gestalts: Calm.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: Bell-weather, Human Tornado, Herausforderer, Hagel-storm, Monsoon, Motlalepula, Storm Warning, Stratis Katayitha, Torrent, Umeme, Uveir, Yiyuan.

Victory Consequences: Good weather.

Defeat Consequences: Bad weather. And everyone complains about it.

WEATHER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Knowledge (earth science) 8, Survival 4

Feats: Environmental Adaptation

Powers: **Weather Control 10 (Windstorm (Hamper Movement 10 (to 1/4 normal movement, Extra: Area), [Alternate Powers: Lightning Bolt (Blast 10), Rain (Distraction 10 (DC 10), Heat Prostration (Fatigue 7, Extras: Area (burst), Range), Cold Control 10, Air Control 10, Fog (Obscure 10 (visual)]), Predict the Weather (Super Senses 9 (detect, analytical, acute, precognition))**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (other weather gestalts); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 3 + Feats 1+ Powers 45 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 47

Weather Gestalt Scenario Hooks

From Hell's Heart, I Stab At Thee!

A murderous Weather Gestalt supervillain who's about to be executed has predicted that there will be seven great storms that will devastate the city if he's killed. Is he just trying to get people upset, or will the city be in deadly danger if he dies?



WEIRDNESS MAGNET

"Aliens kidnapped my sister? Again! I hope she doesn't end up pregnant this time!"

Description: The Gestalt universe is a strange place, but no stranger than around this Gestalt. This Gestalt has unusual encounters, bizarre problems, nothing seems to go as intended, and every attempt to lead a normal life goes awry. The weirdness does act in the Gestalt's favor at critical moments, otherwise the Gestalt would never be able to survive.

The Weirdness Magnet Gestalt is really a hard one to integrate into a group; he doesn't tend to be an adventurer and usually wants to be left alone. He's usually forced to join a superhero team for protection and superheroes may curse the weird situations that this Gestalt gets them into. A Weirdness Magnet player might also have a bit of a masochistic streak

Related Gestalts: Luck, The Everyman.

Opposed Gestalts: Conspiracies.

Prominent Examples of this Archetype: No one who will admit it.

Victory Consequences: Strange coincidences help those in need, people become more tolerant of the eccentric.

Defeat Consequences: The Conspiracy manages to suppress the Truth, whatever the hell that is.



WEIRDNESS MAGNET GESTALT POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Bluff 8, Diplomacy 4, Gather Info 8, Knowledge (current event) 12, Sense Motive 4.

Feats: Luck 3, Taunt, Ultimate Effort

Powers: **Someone Shows Up At the Right Time to Distract The Enemy (Summon 7)** (*Extra:* Type 2 (any human being), *PF:* Subtle, *Flaw* - no control over who's summoned), **Perceive The Weird or Out of Place (Super Senses 17)**, detect, acute, analytical, counters concealment, counters illusion, counters obscure (all), **Wait, What's This? (Create Object 7 PF:** Innate, Precise, Subtle, *Flaw* - doesn't have exact control over what object is summoned), **Object Grabbed Is Useful (Enhanced Trait 4** (to Craft (chemical)), [*Alternate Powers:* **Enhanced Trait 4** (to Craft (electronic)), **Enhanced Trait 4** (to Craft (mechanical))])

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (when surprised); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 8 + Feats 5+ Powers 48 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 61

Weirdness Magnet Gestalt Scenario Hooks

Conspiracy-XXX

What does an aging porn star, the captain of the US Olympics Lacrosse team, the treasurer of the Vermont Monarchist Party, the ghost of Sitting Bull's horse, a bouncer from an all midget bar, the drummer for an Islamic heavy metal band, and a manic depressive Harvard economics professor have in common? They're trying to kill a Weirdness Gestalt PC! But why?

WINTER

"Welcome to my winter wonderland..."

Description: Some people like a season so much that they'd like to live in it all year round. The winter Gestalt has the powers to do it. Some winter Gestalts look like normal people, while others have a more chilling form (blue skin, covered with snow or icicles, surrounded by condensed air, etc.). Like weather, the winter Gestalt includes lots of motifs: ice and snow, cold, winter activities and games, and animal plants and hibernation.

While the plot to create eternal winter ranks with the mind controlling rock band as one of the ten most cliché supervillain master plans, a Winter Gestalt super-scientist might actually attempt it. Either that or a well-meaning winter Gestalt super-scientist may attempt to reverse global warming and inadvertently trigger disaster.

Related Gestalts: Ice, the Arctic/Antarctic, Cold, Darkness, Snow, Snowmen.

Sub-Types of this Gestalt: Christmas.

Opposed Gestalts: Summer.

Prominent Examples of this Gestalt: Raw, Yakh-basta, Gel D'hiver, Snowstorm.

Victory Consequences: The area receives a perfect snowfall: beautiful, but not enough to foul up traffic.

Defeat Consequences: An increase in winter depression, winter is either too long or too short.

WINTER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 10

Skills: Intimidate 12, Knowledge (earth science) 4, Survival 12.

Feats: Environmental Adaptation

Powers: **Winter Powers (Cold Control 10, [Alternate Powers: Cold Blast 6 (Alternate Save: Fort), Ice Slick (Ranged Trip 10 (Extra: Area (burst))), Create Ice (Create Object 10), Drain Energy (Fatigue 6 (Extra: Range), Obscure Vision (Obscure 10 (visual), Form Ice Bonds (Snare 10), Summon Snowmen (Summon 3 (snowmen), PF: Progression 2 (5 minions), Extra: Horde, Flaw: only in the presence of winter snow), Force Hibernation (Sleep 4 (PF: Sedation, Extra: Duration (continuous), Flaw - only in winter)] , Immunity 11 (cold, starvation and thirst, fatigue effects), Flaw - only in winter).**

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (heat attacks); +50% DC; unc, mod, -2

Skills 7 + Feats 1+ Powers 39 - Drawbacks 2 = Total 47

Winter Gestalt Scenario Hooks

The Ice Queen

Snow Queen, a dying Winter Gestalt is determined that Winter will never loosen its grip on the city after she dies. Find a way to persuade her to loosen the grip on her winter powers, so the natural cycle will be restored.



REGIONAL PROTECTOR

"NOBODY WRECKS CHAUNCV ST. IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT!"

Description: Because this gestalt is both common and a little unusual in the way that it's constructed, the Regional Protector deserves to be singled out for special consideration.

Every homestead needs protection. This Gestalt is not always the toughest, but put him on his native soil, and this patriot becomes a powerhouse. The Regional Protector is the stalwart watchdog, defender, and avenger of its home and native land. Their personalities reflect the attitudes of their region. This Gestalt can represent regions of any size: from neighborhoods (such as a 1930s classic movie street tough with a heart of gold) to countries (often flag-bearing super-patriots). Regional Protector Gestalts are most likely to represent large regions (usually countries), but Gestalts for small areas are not unknown.

There's also a lot of variety in how this gestalt can be represented. This is a listing of powers similar to some possessed by America Man and Crucible, two of the first known Regional Protectors; other Regional Gestalts might be represented by important historical or mythological figures, by national animals, or other icons of the culture.

Paragons: Protector Gestalts are very similar to Paragon gestalts. The big difference is that the Protector is a guardian figure that embodies the qualities that the culture looks for in a guardian. A Paragon gestalt is a figure of excellence that embodies that culture's idea of perfection. For example: The Protector Gestalt of "Little Sicily" (an Italian-American neighborhood) might be someone in stereotypical hit men dress who only attacks outsiders. That same neighborhood's Paragon Gestalt would be "a good Italian boy" who eschews crime and everything it stands for, but isn't afraid to get his hands dirty when provoked, and will protect neighborhood criminals from outsiders if they don't prey on the home community.

Note: Villains can also be regional protectors (with a misguided fervor toward their territory or hatred toward traditional regional enemies, or they're the Regional Protectors that support an evil local regime). Regional Oppressors Gestalts (e.g. the Anti-American) also have this option available to them.

Related Gestalts: Gestalt of Bigotry, Gestalt of Paragons.

Sub-Types of this Gestalt: Gestalt of Mythical Warriors (from Regional History), Gestalt of Mythological Reincarnation (from Regional Mythology)

Opposed Gestalts: Gestalts of (rival) Regional Protectors, Gestalt of Regional Enemies.

Prominent Examples of This Gestalt: The National, Archa, Gouden Fantoom, Agenda X, Agiba, Kavalerist, Captain Gary, Corazon, Maid of the Mists, Qasr.

Suggested Skills: Knowledge (history) (at least 1/2 max ranks), Knowledge (local) (max), any Craft or Perform that showcases a local tradition), Language (if region is multilingual)

Suggested Powers: *Teleportation* (only within the home region), *Regeneration* (only on home soil), *Healing* (only to natives of the home region/ethnic group), *Boost to Will Saves* (Only affects residents of the region), *Telepathy* (to know their thoughts), *Mind Control* (to take pride in their home region).

REGIONAL PROTECTOR GESTALT SCENARIO HOOKS

To Protect And Serve: A Protector gestalt stumbles across a situation where people who belong to his group commits an act of terrorism: planting a big bomb in a crowded area.

The PC arrives on the scene, determined to stop them, but the cops are already there—and they start insulting the group and raise their weapons to force them to surrender—or start a massacre. On whose side will the PC stand?

Cultural Treasure: An exhibit of the most cherished treasures of the PC's culture are going to be displayed at a local museum. These artifacts were stolen decades ago by ruthless profiteers, and the sponsor of the current event seems to be following in the exploitative tradition of the original thief.

The Man Who Would Be Martyr: A person who belongs to a group that a PC has sworn to protect is the target of political assassination. However, the guy *wants* to be assassinated, as he hopes his death will make a political statement. Can he be persuaded to fight for his life?

And what if he's the Gestalt of Martyrs, who will become much more powerful (and angrier) when he returns from death?

Complication: The answer is still no. When he dies, he becomes the Gestalt of Martyrs, and he is very powerful, aggressive, and very angry with his killers. Perhaps he knew all along...?

MERIDIAN

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+5	+6	+5	+2	+2	+4
20	22	20	14	14	18

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+7	+8	+11	+9

Skills: Acrobatics 1 (+7), Bluff 6 (+10), Climb 4 (+9), Computers 2 (+4), Concentration 4 (+6), Craft (chemical) 8 (+10), Diplomacy 10 (+14), Disable Device 2 (+4), Drive 2 (+8), Escape Artist (+6), Gather Info 8 (+12), Handle Animal (+4), Intimidate 4 (+8), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 2 (+4), Knowledge (civics) 6 (+8), Knowledge (current events) 11 (+13), Knowledge (history) 6 (+8), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+10), Medicine 2 (+4), Notice 6 (+8), Perform (singing) 2 (+6), Profession (bartender) 4 (+8), Search 8 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Stealth 2 (+8).

Feats: Inspire (1), Leadership, Interpose, Redirect, Taunt, Well-Informed

Powers: **Home Defense Powers (Blast 10)** (electrical, *Flaw*: reduced to Blast 5 away from home soil), [*Alternate Powers*: **Healing 5** (*Extra*: Total, *Flaw*: only affects residents of home soil) **Teleport 5** (*Flaw*: only between locations on home soil), **Deflection 10** (all ranged powers) (*Flaw*: reduced to Deflect 5 away from home soil), **Danger Sense (Super Sense 9)** (danger sense, acute, analytical, precognition, (*Flaw*: only on home soil)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +15, Damage +10 (Blast), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -9, Initiative +6

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (rival city gestalt attacks; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 48+ Skills 29 (116 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 22 + Combat 32 + Saves 15 – Drawbacks 2 = **150 Total**

Background: Meridian is an example of a generic regional protector gestalt, the sort of person that the heroes might encounter while visiting another city. He's very protective of locals (he'll stand up for his people if the heroes try too hard to bully them or abuse their rights) and is suspicious of outsiders, especially if they're famous superheroes.

Meridian's secret identity is that of a bartender; he owns a small club in the downtown area of his campaign. This allows him to overhear a lot of dirty business. Meridian is pretty good at cleaning up street crime and punishing anyone who abuses people.

Beyond this, the details of Meridian's background are left for the GM to decide.



VI: EXTRATERRESTRIALS

A Basis in Fiction

This anecdote is based on an actual game session from the New Columbians campaign, with the PCs filling the role that Columbia plays here. Thanks guys!

"I still don't think we've got a right to do this," Edge said. "It's not like we're a government or anything."

"You didn't have to come," Starbird objected.

"The hell I didn't!" Edge snapped. "Without me, the Astra estate would never have let us use the space plane in the first place!"

"Well if you had to come, maybe you should get on the same page as the rest of us!" Starbird retorted.

"That's a laugh, coming from you!" Edge shouted.

"God! I have a headache!" Kid Mercury bellowed.

"That's enough from all of you." Liberator said. "If the Ar'Turodain data is correct, we should be in radio contact range. I'm about to send a signal."

"First contact with Space Nazis," Starbird snapped. "Let's hope it turns out to be last contact."

"And the motto for this mission is: 'One small misstep for Man, one giant leap into fascism...'" Edge muttered.

Starbird glowered at her teammate, while Carnival (who shared Edge's concerns), smiled at the quip. Labyrinth's thoughts were, as usual, a mystery to all.

"Kiskustelnin mirkottäy! Me Kolombitäy, Ar'Terra-Mestayn!" Liberator said. "Kukelstelnin!"

"I am honored by your selection of language, unfortunately your choice of words are less...embracing." A voice came back over the airwaves. "Columbia, isn't it? The champions of Earth?"

"I am Liberator." Liberator stated. "On behalf of the people of this world, I am here to inform you that the Ar'Kayadin are denied entry into this system. You are not welcome here. Go home."

The voice laughed, a laugh that sounded human. "Is this humanity's way of issuing a formal challenge?" the Ar'Kayadin asked.

"We do not have a dueling culture."

"How odd," the Ar'Kayadin said. "Our intelligence indicated that the Ar'Huriti of this world engaged in frequent duels of personal honor. In fact, since entering your star system, we've monitored your communications networks, and seen these duels displayed quite vividly. They've been most entertaining. And the commentary even suggests that they occupy much of your popular imagination. No dueling culture? You are the epitome of a dueling culture."

"Listen here... Space Nazi!" Starbird shouted.

"We've heard how you live, what you do to the people of your planets!"

"Even if those reports were true – and I maintain that the Ar'Turodain propaganda machine is producing nothing but the most vile pieces of slander – are these crimes really as terrible as some of the atrocities committed by your own governments? Regimes that you dine and sup with as though they were family?" The Ar'Kayadin was clearly enjoying the verbal joust.

"This is not a debate. Go. Now. Kukelstelnin." Liberator was getting clearly frustrated.

"Let me inform you on how we shall proceed," the Ar'Kayadin responded. "If you continue to deny us permission to land on Earth, we will contact every single one of your fractious little governments until one of them gives us official permission to land on their soil. Given that your world has hundreds of quarreling despots, and that having us land on their soil will instantly transform even a backwater nation into a Power, I do not believe we will have any problem receiving permission."

"You still have to get through us." Liberator said.

"That's your decision," the Ar'Kayadin replied.

"However, if you choose to duel us, I cannot guarantee that one of the twenty-six nuclear missiles onboard this vessel will not accidentally veer off course and strike one of your charming little cities, such as, say, Washington DC."

"They did their homework," Edge muttered under his breath.

Liberator ground his teeth, but said nothing. The Ar'Kayadin leader continued. "You called me a Nazi. From what I understand of your history, I take that as an insult. The Nazis were strategic incompetents and ultimately met an ignominious defeat. We are not strategic incompetents, nor can we be defeated by plucky courage and bad weather.

"My name is Tarradan Si'Surhalia. You will not need to commit it to memory, we will remind you of it from time to time. Now if you – or the esteemed Griffinitäy, that rather brawny young Ar'Huriti gentleman that you've named "the Titan" – have no further objections, the time has come for the Ar'Kayadin to embrace our distant cousins and pledge ourselves to them in brotherhood. Stop us if you can."

The transmission abruptly ended.

"Are we going to let them win?" Starbird snarled.

"This round, yes," Liberator responded, and ignoring Starbird's scream of rage, he ordered Astra-1 to return to Earth.

— First Contact between Earth and the Ar'Kayadin

A HISTORY OF KNOWN SPACE

Mankind has only begun to emerge from the Earth and explore the universe around him. Even with extraterrestrial contact, known space is quite small, a globe approximately 600 parsecs in radius, with Earth at the far edge of the globe. The center of Known Space is the planet Turoda, home of the Ar'Turodain Confederation, and former capital world of the Ar empire.

About 8000 years ago, an extremely advanced alien race visited this region. These beings were called Probability Lords, because the side effect of their abilities is that they generate a natural probability-altering field that twists the laws of probability and makes impossible things occur. For unknown reasons, the Probability Lords tampered with the destinies of several races.

On the planet Darforn, they gave a few members of the avian Roykok race psionic powers. This did not save them from eventual extinction, although an Ar cloning project later revived the race.

On a verdant planet with no name, they created a sentient psionic sap which flowed from the trees into the soil. Every spring, the trees become sentient, and communicate with each other for several weeks, becoming dumb when their blossoms fall and they have no need for sap. In recent centuries, the largest trees have occasionally built a reservoir of sap and retained some of their intellect year-round. The planet is moving, inch by inch, to a civilization of sentient trees, but it will be a long time coming yet.

On the gas giant Szzataivos, the Lords mutated some protein-methane clouds to be able to make neurological connections in lightning storms. On the great storms that rage in the upper atmosphere, intelligent thunder ponders the mysteries of the universe. This planet is as yet undiscovered by other life forms, and the Szzaitaivoi do not know how to escape their world's gravity or communicate with the rest of the universe.

On the planet Eikos, the Probability Lords merged the two dominant life forms, a hard, worm-like crawler and an air-breathing telekinetic jellyfish, into a single life-form. This new life-form, the Eiko, quickly developed new mutations and became a telepathic race of considerable power. They wiped out their only competitor, the mammal-like Doa, about three thousand years ago. The Eiko are ruled by an Elite whose awareness contain religious thoughts, who believe that all other species are unworthy of existing on worlds that were touched by the Probability Lords or of possessing the scraps of their technology.

On Fndnti Pasture (a rough translation of the planet's name), the Fndnti were created. These beings remain a mystery, but are believed to serve the interests of their creators by exploring the mysteries of other species and acting against threats to local space.

Some time in the Sixth Millennium BC, the Probability Lords took a small but hardy Caucasian tribe from Earth, and transplanted them on the planet Turoda (a world about five hundred parsecs from Earth, near the coreward edge of the Orion Arm of the Milky Way Galaxy). Without significant ecological competition and enjoying kinder climactic conditions, this tribe thrived. By 2500 BC, the Ar had developed into a technologically adept civilization with an internal combustion engine, and a single solidified language. There was a period of wars between 2200

BC and 1200 BC that slowed the advancement of their civilization, but by 1000 BC, the Ar had weathered the crisis and became a space-faring race.

The Ar Empire expanded, unchecked, for close to fifteen hundred years. They colonized two dozen worlds within a 300 parsec radius of Turoda. But they became an arrogant, imperialistic species. When they first encountered the Eiko, they didn't even try to initiate diplomacy – it was war on first sight. In the Earth year 502 AD, the first Ar-Eiko war broke out.

The Eiko quickly proved themselves to be militarily superior to the Ar. They seeded several worlds with psionic devices that drove the population mad, and utterly destroyed the Ar world of Wystad. In response, Ar scientists captured Eiko specimens and used their genetic code to create a race of superhumans, the Ar'Huriti ("the Great Warrior Ar").

The Ar'Huriti helped turn the tide of the war, and by 700 AD, the Eiko had retreated. But the Ar'Huriti did not integrate well with the rest of society, and tended to stay apart from the civilian populations. Eventually, tensions within the Ar Empire between the Ar'Huriti and the rest of the population rose to point where they went to war. In this war, the Ar'Huriti were all but exterminated. And that's when the Eiko came again.

The second Ar-Eiko War occurred between 850 AD and 1050 AD. The Eiko weapons had greatly improved, and to fight it, a new generation of Ar'Huriti were bred. Toward the end of the war, the Ar Empire had been stretched to the breaking point. Some of these Ar'Huriti rebelled, seized five planets, and called themselves the Ar'Kayadin. Another group of five Ar worlds, the decadent Serash, natives of Ar pleasure worlds, also rebelled and used Eiko technology to hold their worlds – they are called the Ar'Sarashar. The core Ar worlds remained loyal, and called themselves the Ar'Turodain.

Since about 1200 AD, things have remained stable. The Eiko periodically test Ar defenses, but have not launched any full-scale offensives. Small wars broke out between them between 1606-1658 AD and 1871-1902 AD; an Eiko invasion against the Ar'Sarashar was intercepted and destroyed by the Fndnti (a mysterious people known as "The Third Race") in 1820 AD, but the imperial map has not been redrawn.

In the 19th Century, Ar'Sarashar expeditions reached Earth, and Ar'Sarashar scouts began to spy on Earth society. Other Ar remained uninterested in human society until 1999, when they encountered Titan and Cygnus in an out-of-control human spaceship and learned that humans still existed on the legendary Ar birthworld. Since then, both the Ar'Turodain and the Ar'Kayadin have made contact with Earth and are now entrenched in its politics, both mundane and superhumans. This is not a good thing.

Worse, the Religious Ones of the Eiko have also discovered Earth, and their initial probe found heavy influences from the Probability Lords. They are

next few years with the goal of purging the planet of infestations and cleansing it for the return of the Probability Lords.

In dealing with Extraterrestrials in the Gestalt Universe, there are four working assumptions:

- 1) Space is small. Only a tiny fraction of the galaxy has been explored.
- 2) Space is bigger than the ability to detect moving objects. It's easy to send out a fleet and not be detected unless you travel near a listening post or a system (or the enemy gets very lucky).
- 3) Habitable planets are rare. Most inhabited worlds have bacteria, a few have animal life, and a lucky (?) handful contain sentient life. There are many small stations in Ar space where mining takes place, but habitable worlds are few and far between. Fortunately, the Ar have achieved a mostly stable population over the centuries and can handle surplus populations comfortably.
- 4) Lifeforms are really varied. The human form is nicely adapted to our environment, but given the diversity of life on our planet, it's arrogant to think mammal-like creatures are likely to dominate everywhere.

THE AR

The Ar are an offshoot of humans; the vast majority of them are virtually identical to Caucasian humans. Ar are long-lived (170 year average lifespan) and have sharper senses than a human. The major physical difference is that most Ar are hairless. Now-banned genetic modification techniques produced some superhuman offshoots centuries ago; there are occasional throwbacks, and a few places (such as asteroid mining camps) where mutants are the norm.

The Ar'Turodain faction made friendly contact with Earth in June 1999; the Ar'Kayadin faction was slightly less well received when they made first contact later that year. Those Ar who have made contact with Earth have established embassies with major Earth nations and agreed to stay out of Earth affairs; although an Ar'Kayadin sub-faction has allied with Argentina (and others), and the Ar'Turodain offered Earth advanced technology if they destroyed or centralized their nuclear stockpile (a request refused by the Chinese and the French in a historic United Nations security council vote in 2000). No border has been set between the Ar worlds and Earth space, although with the young state of Earth-Ar relations this is not an immediate problem; Earth lies well beyond the frontier of Ar space and it still has room to expand in all directions.

The Ar are still technologically ahead of Earth, but not as far ahead as some might expect; when dangers in technological development arose (problems with the Ar'Huriti, weapons of mass destruction, artificial psionics and especially Artificial Intelligence development), the Ar factions banned most technological research. Ar societies, aside from the occasional war, have been stagnant for the last

eight hundred years. Ar societies place family obligation above individual rights, and the family, not the individual, is the basic building block of Ar'Kayadin and Ar'Turodain societies.

Ar economics are a capitalist/socialist hybrid, based on maintaining the status quo and giving family heads the power to deal with individual needs. Neither society is tolerant of mavericks. The third Ar offshoot, the Ar'Sarashar, have greatly different values than their cousins.

Many people on Earth are fascinated by their space-born cousins, especially in the academic world where they now have the history and art of two dozen worlds to explore, not to mention the scientific world. The Ar have been reticent to share their scientific data, but have released music and copies of their art to humans. Many academics have begged the Ar'Turodain to take them to their world and allow them to study the Ar culture. The Ar'Turodain have denied all travel requests (except to masters of the human sport of curling, which has become a popular fad on several Ar'Turodain worlds).

Ar prefer to hold conversations at a closer range than most human cultures; their "comfort zone" is about two feet (1/2 meter). Physical contact is not considered a taboo, except in erogenous zones and even this is permissible among close friends and younger Ar (or between Ar'Sarashar; where the line between sexual attraction and friendship is extremely blurry).

Ar commonly greet each other by touching the palms of each other's hands together and holding them there for a few seconds (typically until each feels the other's heartbeat). "I notice you" or "I recognize you" is a common greeting, although the Ar'Kayadin prefer "you look worthy". The Ar'Sarashar prefer "you interest me" (or, in cases of strong physical attraction "you arouse me"), a greeting that most humans find extremely embarrassing and/or offensive.

Ar science was developed during an earlier era than that of Earth, and religion was still in the polytheistic stage when the primary conflict between myth and rationalism occurred. Most religion is dismissed as tribal superstition, although a vague monotheism is commonly accepted, a belief that somewhere, forces greater than Ar guide universal destiny. The Ar'Kayadin venerate a wide variety of cults, some of which are religious. It's accurate to say that most Ar are agnostics or borderline deists.

Ar'hul, the universal Ar language, is an inflected tongue (which indicates tense through a complex paradigm, like Latin languages). Ar writing is similar to Anglo-script, using a 46 character alphabet (more diphthongs receive their own symbols than in English), and Ar languages tend to enunciate breathed letters more than English, and words receive emphasis by the stretching of vowels, which can strike English speakers as comical.

Ar'hul has been largely stable for about four thousand years (Ar speakers can read ancient Turo-

dan writings with the same difficulty as a modern English speaker reading Shakespeare). There is a second common Ar script, the so-called "poetic script", which is a six thousand year old florid script that's stylistically similar to Persian calligraphy. This is the language of art, and all important works of literature are expected to employ it.

The Ar use a base eight number system and have developed the concept of "zero".

Common Ar art-forms include poetry (composing poetry and reading it well is a sign of virility, particularly among the Ar'Kayadin); drama (largely historical, and usually propaganda), and music (the current popular style resembles marching music, but with greater variance in instrumentation, and softer volume. Strings, woodwinds, and drums are common instruments; brass instruments never became popular among the Ar.) Weaving, metallurgy, holography, and glass sculpturing are also respected pursuits. Most art is kept in the family, and is meant to glorify family deeds or (more critically) explore family issues.

Ar are derived from Caucasian humans, but were extensively genetically engineered about two to three thousand years ago to extend their lifespan and improve their physical capabilities; they're still genetically compatible with humans and can interbreed. Some Ar genetically "dye" their skin (blue, red, green, black or dull gold are the most popular colors) and place patterns on it; this is considered normal for all Ar cultures, though some patterns are considered

gaudy. Ar'Sarashar patterns sometimes glow and move along their bodies, and a few of them are covered with so much "tattoo script" that they resemble walking billboards (or walking pornography).

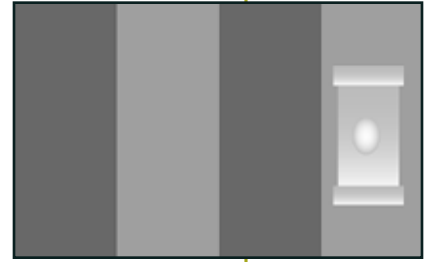
There are three strains of Ar:

THE AR'TURODAIN (HOMEWORLD: TURODA).

The Ar'Turodain are Imperial Ar, the largest and most powerful of the Ar. They are the fragments of a once-great empire, reduced by rebellion and war with the Eiko. Peaceful and very conservative by nature, they've banned most scientific research as part of their never ending quest to preserve the status quo. The Ar'Turodain emphasize the needs of family and community over the rights of individuals, but are not a tyranny.

There are fourteen inhabited worlds in Ar'Turodain space. Turoda is the homeworld, but the central government is stationed in the nearby Parayma system. Other major worlds include Ceejol, Esnat, and Luvix.

The Ar'Turodain wage periodic wars against the Eiko, and frequently skirmish with the Ar'Kayadin. They have three levels of government; a united government for all Ar'Turodain worlds that deals with common defense and diplomacy, planetary governments that serve as a judiciary and a



WHY THE AR THINK AIs ARE A BAD IDEA

In 110 AD, an Ar scientist named Teyatemmus developed the first true Artificial Intelligence machine, which was put to use doing medical research. He tried to make other AIs, but all of them "died" within a few hours of their birth. It turned out that "Teyatemmus Jr." was so paranoid about the prospect of losing his creator's attention that he murdered his siblings.

Sometime around 225 AD, on Parayma, another A.I. named Visaufian mourned the death of his creator by infecting the computer networks of the planet with a corruption that shut down all of the planet's power, communications, and computer systems. It took years to rebuild the world. Over a million deaths were blamed on the planetary shutdown.

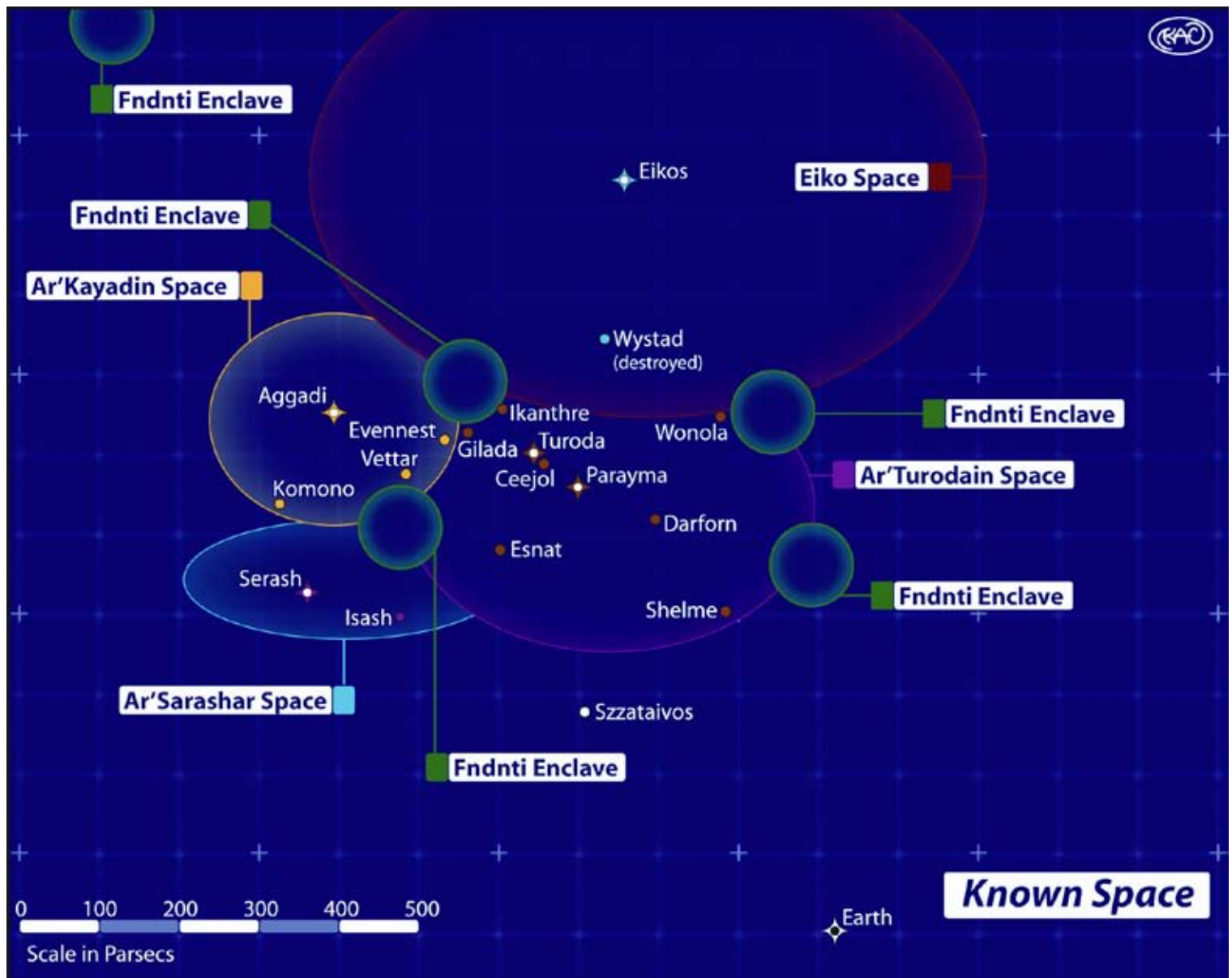
The Ar world Esnat is actually a series of bases on a debris ring in orbit around a neutron star. In 260 AD, its radiation shields failed, at the same time that the star emitted an X-Ray burst. Millions died from a fatal exposure to radiation. They never conclusively determined the cause for this failure, but it was blamed on the mining A.I. Kivoilen.

The worst incident occurred around the Earth year 300 AD; on the Ar planet Luvix, an Artificial Intelligence known as the Sentrion went insane and decided to see how many people it could kill in an hour if it took control of the planetary defense systems. Over one hundred and ninety-eight million people perished – 97% of the planet's population. After this incident, Ar A.I. research was stopped, and many AIs were destroyed.

The last major A.I. Incident involved Kilpannen, the A.I. that controlled the defenses of the planet Wystad, which – having been persuaded by the Eiko that it was a slave who was exploited by the Ar – refused to operate the planetary defenses when the Eiko invaded. The planet was destroyed. Among the defensive measures taken by the Ar after the attack was the destruction of all AIs (a stronger guard on nuclear protocols was another one).

A few AIs survived the anti-A.I. crusade, mostly on future Ar'Sarashar worlds. The most famous of these AIs was the *Muustomerka*, which took control of a starship and fled into deep space. It developed a cloaking technology that could elude Ar sensors, and preyed on starships for pieces, so over fifteen hundred years it's gradually turned itself into the deadliest juggernaut in Ar space. Warriors have hunted it for well over a millennium, and countless Ar have died trying to end its reign of terror in Ar space. It's also spawned a few (less effective) offspring over the ages, most of whom have been destroyed.

The Ar do have domestic robots to handle simple tasks, but with limited A.I. and no implanted personalities.



meeting place to discuss planetary concerns, and the family, where trade and economic issues are settled.

The central government of the Ar'Turodain is the Presidium, selected representatives of major families. This body handles executive and legislative branches of the government. The closest thing that the Presidium has to a central leader is the President, who serves a function similar to the Speaker in the British parliamentary system; he controls what gets debated and arbitrates conflicts within the Presidium, and gives public speeches on behalf of the government.

However, the family is the most important Ar'Turodain social and political unit. Each family has a patriarch/matriarch who (theoretically) wields absolute control over the members of his family. The number of people in the family or clan varies; typically, if people are third cousins or greater removed from a patriarch, they should start their own family or find a family with stronger blood ties.

The family runs the economy, often focusing on a single trade, exclusive to family members.

Ar'Turodain families are part clan, part corporation. It's hard (but not impossible) to join another family's trade and advance in the corporation; successful employees are sometimes adopted into a family, especially when they're on poor terms with their own family head.

All Ar employ robots for heavy labor, although mutants are often employed for specialized tasks, such as mining. Because of some horrific nuclear conflicts early in Ar history, military conflict is expected to be handled with a minimal use of technology; the use of drones is considered to escalate an armed conflict beyond a "gentlemanly" level. War between the Ar races is similar to warfare between some North American First Nations peoples prior to the coming of Europeans: merciless and hard-fought, but always conducted on a scale that guarantees that an enemy will never be fully eliminated. (Against the Eiko, however, the rules are very different).

Most legal matters are handled within the family, though the family heads are expected to abide by common law. Crimes that go beyond family lines

are settled by Judicians, wandering judges with no family ties. People are presumed guilty until proven innocent, and receive punishments that are proportional to the probability they committed the crime: the more likely it is they did it, the more severe the punishment. Although this may seem harsh, Ar punishments are more lax than corresponding human ones. Some Judicians are fond of punishing an entire family, or assigning punishments to major family members. Ar'Kayadin frequently bypass judicial codes and settle disputes through dueling. Ar'Sarashar use telepathy to detect and control anti-social behavior.

The Ar'Turodain are the most friendly of the Ar towards Earth, although they often display an extremely condescending attitude; when one has a conversation with most Ar'Turodain, they'll cheerfully inform you that humanity is a stupid and backward offshoot of Ar-dom, that the Ar'Turodain know what's best for humanity, and if Ar'Terrans had half a brain, they'd listen. On the other hand, while the Ar'Turodain can be obnoxious, they aren't tyrants. If they want something from Earth, they'll get it by offering assistance, not threats. They would like to see Earth disband or centralize its nuclear weapons as a sign of maturity; they view the idea of competing nation-states as a display of tribalism that's unworthy of a civilized race (it's arguable that the Ar'Turodain society's empowerment of family units is even more tribal, but an Ar'Turodain would not appreciate an argument if it was presented in those terms.)

Positive Values to the Ar'Turodain include: swearing difficult oaths and keeping them, honoring your family head, punctuality, generosity, being diplomatic as opposed to bluntly honest in speech (though this does not seem to apply to their conversation with Ar'Terrans), sexual prowess, being able to delegate authority, being able to follow orders from family authorities, and belonging to an influential and respected family.

Negative Values to the Ar'Turodain include: oath-breaking, showing disrespect to your family and your patriarch, rebelliousness, lying, theft, and belonging to a disgraced family. The Ar'Turodain insult people by lack of praise, or deliberately faint praise; insults are considered poor behavior.

Turoda is a world with a temperate climate (a low axial tilt that provides for minimal seasons) and wide oceans and large rivers. It's a world of ancient cities with spectacular architecture. The capital city is Elshiv. The families of Turoda are old, prosperous families who keep their politics local and their power absolute. Turoda has no moons and views Earth's moon, which they remember in old legends of "the Starchangers", with great fascination.

The Ar'Turodain base on Earth is located in the Arizona desert (with the approval of the US government). The Ar'Turodain ambassador to Earth is Major Korgun, a randy and slightly conceited war hero who got the job because he asked for it and it would have been politically inexpedient to refuse him; Korgun

gets along well with most Earth heroes (in fact, he'd gladly slap on some spandex and fight villains if he could get away with it) but he's bored by bureaucracy and the ambassadorial staff do their best to circumvent his authority. The real force in Ar'Turodain state affairs is Iskari, a career diplomat who's a lot more condescending towards Earth than Korgun.

THE AR'KAYADIN (HOMEWORLD: AGGADI).

A fascist dictatorship of a genetically enhanced military overclass ruling non-superhuman citizens through force. The Ar'Kayadin are actively hostile toward the Ar'Sarashar, and not particularly friendly toward the Ar'Turodain. There are six worlds in the Ar'Kayadin sphere, however, one of these worlds, Vettar, is out of control and has been interfering in Earth affairs on a level that even the Ar'Kayadin government does not approve.

Ar'Kayadin society has three Castes: Elite (superhuman rulers), Family (non-superhuman bureaucrats and tradesmen), and Host (slaves, mostly normals with a few superhuman mutations, especially among professional gladiators). The Ar'Kayadin Elite are genetically engineered superhumans, the most powerful are as tough as Earth's best Gestalts. They settle disputes through a personal dueling code, which has evolved to a non-lethal level. The Ar'Kayadin do not like to deal with Earth's governments, whose bureaucracies they view as too weak to be worthy representatives; they prefer dealing with supers, because they're the closest thing to Ar'Kayadin Elite on Earth.

Most Ar'Kayadin Elite are expected to serve in the military, and a number of military cults have sprung up to make military life more interesting. The cults include family cults (veneration of famous ancestors), military-historical cults (veneration of great warriors, military units, and the recreation of battles), and prophetic-religious cults (apocalyptic cults of the end of the universe, which will be survived only by a small cadre of great Warrior Ar, or the sole Champion Eternal, or by two Perfect Warriors whose battle shall provide a symbolic cleansing of the Ar).

The Ar'Kayadin Elite believe in the glory of personal combat and eschew ranged weapons. As far as human Gestalts are concerned, they view melee weapon or hand-to-hand fighters as near equals, but non-meleeists (such as energy controllers) are freaks who may be exploited at will, and psionics are abominations to be shunned or killed (this attitude owes a lot to their hatred for the Eiko).

The Ar'Kayadin would like to control Earth. However, because Earth is too far removed from Ar'Kayadin space to be profitable to govern, the sole motivation for an Ar'Kayadin conquest of Earth would be bragging rights over the Ar'Turodain, who



Motherhood

Ar women carry their children for the first twenty weeks of the pregnancy, at which point they're removed and raised in incubators for about a year before being presented to the parents.

(until now) boasted greater legitimacy as successors to the Ar Empire because they controlled the oldest Ar worlds. Getting control of the Ar birth-world would be a tremendous propaganda victory for the Ar'Kayadin. The only Earth resource that the Ar'Kayadin view as profitable are its superhumans, who would become Ar'Kayadin gladiatorial slaves. The Ar'Kayadin are trying to hide this ambition, though some slavers from the rogue Ar'Kayadin world of Vettar have not waited for permission to send raiding parties, which has led to several ugly incidents.

Aggadi, the Ar'Kayadin homeworld, is a world with a thin atmosphere and strong climactic extremes. Although its temperate belt is quite livable, there are plenty of places where young Ar'Kayadin can test themselves against the elements. The capital city is Yrikar, a citadel city known for its iron military discipline and its many monuments and war memorials.

Positive Values to the Ar'Kayadin Elite include: combat ability, bravery, loyalty to the family champion (unless you are markedly superior to them in combat and the champion is clearly a poor leader), the ability to demonstrate leadership to lesser castes (also known as "bullying"), alertness, keeping your word, carousing skills, and the ability to recognize and honor another Elite's strengths.

Negative Values to the Ar'Kayadin Elite include: cowardice, weakness of body, disloyalty to family, lying, overconfidence, compassion towards lower castes, not paying attention to other people, and excessive introspection.

The major Ar'Kayadin base is in Siberia (with permission from the Russian government). The Ar'Kayadin ambassador is Tarradan, a cunning diplomat who is more manipulative than a typical Ar'Kayadin; he's more interested in preventing an Ar'Turodain-Ar'Terran alliance than in procuring cheap battle slaves.

The champion of the Ar'Kayadin – and the greatest fighter in Ar space – is the so-called Invincible Ar'aax, Champion of the arenas of Aggadi. This feared, homicidal thug (and hero of the people) may be as physically powerful as the Titan, but is far more brutal; he's been champion for nearly seventy years, given his unmatched strength and his master of the deadliest martial combat style (*painiskelenen*, a superpowered pankration variant). The only ones who've been able to challenge him are his sons, whom he usually kills before they can grow to become a serious threat. One of his sons has managed to elude him; his mother, aware she was carrying twin sons, arranged for one of the twins to be secretly removed from the womb and secreted away to parts unknown.

[General Note: The Ar'Kayadin are meant to be a more personal threat to superheroes than a worldwide threat (the worldwide threat is the Eiko's job). They're also a means for a rogue state to get advanced weaponry, which they accomplish through

backroom deals with dictators whom they hope to turn into puppets. They also allow the GM to run alien gladiator pit and/or "free the slave" plotlines, which are always fun.]

THE AR'SARASHAR (HOMEWORLD: SERASH).

Decadence, thy name is Ar'Sarashar, a wantonly and shameless race of Ar hedonists, whose worlds are protected by stolen Eiko technology. The Ar'Sarashar have a lot of psionic "throwbacks", but do not actively practice genetic engineering. The Ar'Turodain hold the Ar'Sarashar in contempt for their emphasis on unbridled pleasure. The Ar'Sarashar occupy five inhabited worlds, living in extreme decadence.

Ar'Sarashar live in huge communities called systems. They have huge computer networks and robot servants. Their decadence has become ritualized; sexual indulgence, for instance, is done on a regular schedule, like meals, and certain sexual habits are reserved for certain times (morning sex is expected to be intimate and gentle, while evening passion is public and raucous).

Powerful telepaths among the Ar'Sarashar are expected to join the Protectors, a force of Ar'Sarashar that are recruited by the system computers to answer complaints. Protectors are cop, judge, jury, and executioner. Overt violence is considered very distasteful by Ar'Sarashar, who punish criminals by telepathically determining the truth and using psionics to make them incapable of repeating the behavior.

There is a hidden society of responsible Ar'Sarashar known (internally) as the Directors, who make sure that all of the machinery is running smoothly. When an Ar'Sarashar shows powerful psionic talent and an introspective manner, they're secretly recruited into the Directors. These are real masters of the systems.

The Ar'Sarashar are the most curious of the Ar, and have done the most exploring of any Ar offshoot. The Ar'Sarashar have the best technology, except for weapons and propulsion, which are inferior to other Ar. They have psionic technology, and huge telekinetic force field domes that protect their systems from bombardment.

Positive Values to the Ar'Sarashar include: physical attractiveness, sexual prowess, helpfulness toward others, honesty, the ability to consume large quantities of recreational drugs without ill effects, and displaying a good sense of humor.

Negative Values to the Ar'Sarashar include: sexual withdrawal, physical violence and temper, dishonesty, possessiveness, and excessive seriousness.

Serash is a warm, relatively young world



Game Mechanics Note

Ar'Sarashar psi-tech is not very powerful; it only boosts existing powers by 2 ranks.

Hint

This is a plot hook for a PC or a friendly NPC.

with plentiful volcanic and seismic activity and hot springs. Most cities are domed (citizens stay inside, except when major volcanoes are unusually dormant) and there are several large undersea cities.

The existence of the Ar'Sarashar is public knowledge to humans. The Ar'Sarashar have not made formal contact with Earth, but many expect them to do so in the months ahead, and the United Nations has talked about sending a mission of interstellar ambassadors to Serash.

THE FNDNTI

(Pronounced Fin-DIN-tee) The Fndnti is a race of mysterious aliens with technology that is superior to both the Eiko and the Ar. They send powerful probes to capture specimens for study. They avoid all other space-faring cultures, and little is known about their society, motives, homeworld, or even their true appearance. When Ar ships intrude on Fndnti space, their navigation systems fail and they abruptly change direction back to their home territory. When Eiko ships intrude, they cease to exist. No one has successfully challenged the Fndnti. They live in six enclaves (each which span about thirty parsecs in radius) which dot areas of Ar and Eiko space.

THE EIKO

(Pronounced EE-koh). The Eiko are a race of inhuman sentient beings who have been at war with the Ar for sporadic periods since 500 AD. The Eiko are considered xenophobic and hostile. They possess at least two dozen colony worlds; though no Ar is exactly certain as to the composition of Eiko civilization.

The Eiko are a composite creature, its main body is a hard spine-like creature (4-8' length) called the bracket. Jellyfish-like sacs (2'-5' diameter) called drums are attached to the bracket. The Brackets take care of basic needs; circulation of necessary s and nutrients, breeding, perception and motor control, Drums give the Eiko their cognitive and telepathic talents.

Most (60%) Eiko have but a single drum, giving them telekinetic abilities. These Eiko are dumb animals, who wander their planets in search of food. Animal-Eiko are ignored by the advanced minority.

Slave Eiko, which comprise 30% of the Eiko population, are bi-drumal: they have a telekinetic drum, and a drone drum. The drone drum allows the Eiko to receive instruction from other Eiko via contact with command drums, and carry the orders out as faithfully as terrestrial insect drones.

The remaining 10% are polydrumal. No Eiko has ever been seen who's possessed more than nine drums;

THE CRIMSON BRIGADE

When the Titan was imprisoned by the Ar'Turodain, he was freed by members of a special society of Ar outcasts, the *Imag'Hurtig* ("Strong Children of Huri", Huri being the most famous of the 'Great Warrior Ar') Based in the ruins of the planet Wystad (which was destroyed in the first salvos of the original Ar-Eiko conflict), this organization is an alliance of superhumans who monitor space for threats that cross interstellar boundaries, such as *the Ever-man*, an (allegedly) immortal Ar who's an intergalactic drug dealer (his creations even offend the Ar'Sarashar!), *Magadarr the Untamed* (a seemingly indestructible mutant who's powerful enough to devastate entire continents), *Penumbra the Living Darkness* (a telepath who was thrown into a micro black hole by the Ar'Kayadin and somehow survived; now he uses vast telekinetic powers and the gravitational pull of the black hole to wreak havoc), *the Son of the Green Star* (galactic eco-terrorists who are led by a powerful mutant called the Green Man, they're rogue terraformers who want to turn as many worlds into swampland as possible), and *Radaa* (a scientific supergenius who's researching virtually every forbidden area of technological development and who —thanks to Cygnus— may have already reached Earth). However, their greatest enemy is *Dallion the Beautiful*, an embittered former Imag'Hurtig leader who was cast out of the Crimson Brigade for presiding over a massacre of Ar'Kayadin soldier. 's a vain, high-immortal thousand-year-old warrior-telepath who's almost as powerful as the Invincible Ar'aax (see page 152). Dallion hunts down Crimson Brigade members, then captures and tortures them until they're emotionally broken. Most go permanently insane.

Dismissed as rogue troublemakers by the government of all three Ar cultures and dismissed as troublemakers by the general public, nonetheless the Crimson Brigade is respected by those who get to see them in action (and secretly aided by government and/or military sympathizers). There are over fifty members of the Imag'Hurtig. Many are mutants, and one is a sentient Roykok. They are guided by Vozian (the Survivor), a mysterious entity who lives on Wystad which manifests itself as a giant human-shaped shadow draped in a crimson force field.

Note: The organization is a vehicle for players who want to play alien PCs and belong to an organization that's independent from traditional family or a government ties.



Ar and the Gestalt

For reasons that no one agrees on, the Gestalt phenomena has never been known to touch the Ar worlds. No alien has been affected in a Gestalt Wave (yet), which (given there are only two to three thousand aliens on the planet, shouldn't come as a huge surprise).

Although scientific curiosity is not a strong societal trait, the Ar are interested in the Gestalt phenomena, and investigative teams are attached to both the Ar'Kayadin and Ar'Turodain delegations. However the possible link between Gestalts and psionics is distasteful to the Ar'Turodain and loathsome to the Ar'Kayadin. So far, the lack of any connection between Ar sub-species, the Ar'Huriti, and gestalts have come as a relief to them.

include: *Command* (which make physical contact with drone drums and compel obedience), *Communicate* (which able to hold conversations with other Eiko which also have communicate drums), *Memory Membranes* (which can transfer memory and experience from one Eiko to another), *Control Temperature*, *Control Technology*, *Control Electricity*, and *Command At A Distance* (a rare drum that allows true telepathy/mind control). *Probability Control* is the rarest and most highly esteemed Eiko drum, as those individuals are viewed to be touched by the Probability Lords, and even aliens with this power are held in esteem by the Eiko, and viewed as separate from the contamination of their race.

Eiko leaders are polydrumals with memory membrane drums. The earliest memory membranes remember the Probability Lords, and the Eiko worship them as gods, cherishing the memories. They rabidly guard their space, then periodically swarm and attack nearby systems in a fit of paranoia. The presence of a Probability Lord artifact approaching Earth is leading to a probable Eiko invasion in the near future; they seek control of the Probability Lords' artifact and would destroy anyone of impure stock who has made contact with it.

All Eiko wars are fought for religious reasons. Eiko worship the harmony of a probability field that only their senses can detect. Other intelligent lifeforms, particularly chaotic unpredictable humans, register to their senses as distortions of this probability field, so as far as they're concerned, humans are walking blasphemies. The presence of a human being is an unending scream of profanity that their senses cannot shut out. As a result, humanoid life is to be exterminated wherever it is encountered. The idea of negotia-

tion or peaceful coexistence has never entered their minds once during their 1600-year conflict with the Ar, and Earth is not likely to be treated any differently.

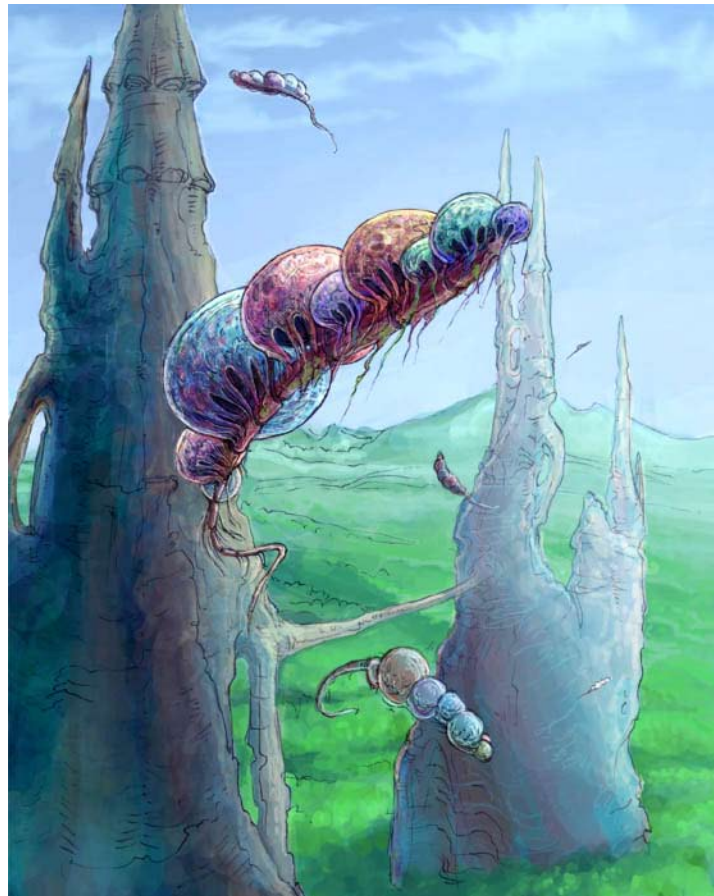
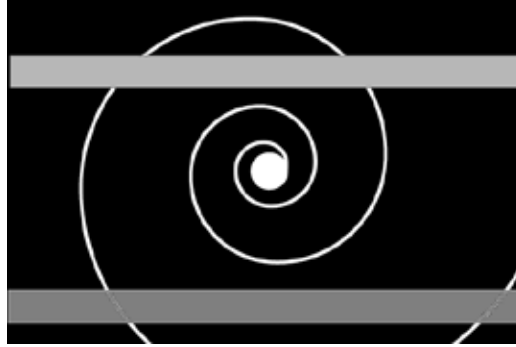
The Eiko wage war by sending down telekinetic constructs to devastate major populated areas of a planet, supporting them with pyrokinetic volleys and mind control of key planetary leaders. When the majority of the planet's population centers have been stricken and the populace's will to resist has been broken, the Eiko will then exterminate all life on the planet, making it "pure" for the eventual return of their masters. The Eiko retreat when they become convinced that an attack has become unwinnable. They never directly communicate with an organic enemy, though they have communicated with Artificial Intelligences and other support systems. This is probably because they've never felt the need to develop a new drum type for such an "unnecessary task" as communicating with non-Eiko.

Eiko have no normal senses, but navigate by a form of telemetry sense. Eiko technology contains

psionic signatures which tell a slave Eiko what the device does; human psionics can use telepathy to read and operate Eiko technology.

Very little is understood about Eiko social rituals or even their biology. They live in large pods, clustered between ten and fifty Eiko, most of who travel together within touching range. Eiko drums and Eiko brackets are born separately and there appears to be a formal mating ritual between most drums and brackets (with the exception of memory membranes). Some drums evolve over a lifetime; it's believed, for

instance, that all polydrumal Eiko instinctively link with drone and telekinetic drums at a very early age, and through mental force, the drone drum matures into a



command drum.

Eiko are a very ritualistic species, with communal dance and touching (and telepathy among advanced Eiko) being important sacraments. Rituals exist for eating, mating, and acts of learning. Flying is an important activity for sentient Eiko, and a denotation of social class; certain altitudes are reserved for elite Eiko, the higher the altitude at which an Eiko flies, the higher status they have in Eiko society.

Eiko have been observed living in clusters of tall, spindly towers, though these may just be military installations; the Ar have never made contact with a heavily occupied Eiko planet. The top levels of the towers are usually occupied by the Eiko with the largest number of drums and thus denote status.

The location of the Eiko homeworld (which means "Place of the Enemy" in the Ar language) is unknown. It's probably on the rimward edge of the Milky Way's Sagittarius Arm, separated from the Orion Arm by a gap of hundreds of parsecs.

ALIEN PCs

Players in Gestalt are allowed to play PCs of Ar (humanoid) extraction. Alien PCs are not recognized as superhumans by Gestalt detectors. All Ar families have received genetic engineering at some point in their history. See the Ar package deal on p. 164 for the mutations that are common to all Ar.

Some Ar have more extensive genetic engineering, which were done to their forefathers long ago to adapt them for survival in hostile environments. Ar superhuman offshoots include:

AR'CEEJOL'SIGAT (COLD AR)

The Ar'Ceejol'Sigat (the altered Ar of the planet Ceejol) is an Ar adaptation capable of surviving in intense cold environments. They are very thin, albino Ar, and radiate a significant heat field. The Ar'Ceejol'Sigat has a very active metabolism and a significantly shorter lifespan than other Ar (they rarely live past 100).

The Ar'Ceejol'Sigat produce a relatively narrow variety of unusual abilities. Advanced Ar'Ceejol'Sigat have superior speed and running ability, and can pass over snow without leaving tracks. Other (much rarer) mutations include energy projection and absorption abilities, invisibility in snow and frozen climates, and telekinetic control over ice and snow.

AR'ESNAT'SIGAT (BEAST AR)

The Ar'Esnat'Sigat (the altered Ar of the planet Esnat) is an Ar adaptation capable of working in highly radioactive environments. They are physically powerful, bestial in appearance, and have retractable claws capable of digging through solid stone. The Ar'Esnat'Sigat is covered with a fur (of varying colors, deep blue-black is the most common), fangs, and jutting horns.

AR

TEMPLATE

Skills: Knowledge (history) 8

Powers: Longevity (200 years, Immunity 1), Enhanced Trait 2 (Notice)

Skills 2+ Powers 3 = Total 5

CRIMSON BRIGADE MEMBER

TEMPLATE

Skills: Knowledge (history) 8, Pilot 8

Powers: Longevity (200 years, Immunity 1), Enhanced Trait 2 (Notice), Device 12 (hard to take away, 60 points)

Crimson Harness: Protection 8 (Extra: Impervious), Anti-Gravity Field (Flight 5), Communication 17 (with Vozian, PF: Subtle), Comprehend 2 (languages), Life Support Field (Immunity 9 (life support))

Skills 4+ Powers 51 = Total 55

The Ar'Esnat'Sigat produces a wider variety of mutant abilities than other Ar adaptations. The most common advanced mutation is a multi-form/shape-shift into a form with a more conventional Ar appearance. Other mutations include the ability to project energy, teleportation, energy absorption, extremely efficient regeneration, energy absorption, and (less commonly) superstrength beyond their already formidable level.

AR'GILADA'SIGAT (DARK AR)

The Ar'Gilada'Sigat is an Ar adaptation capable of resisting the effects of toxic environments. It appears to be an Ar with jet-black skin. The Ar'Gilada'Sigat has an extremely strong metabolism and is able to digest minerals directly, although this is not particularly comfortable; mineral digestion is only done in survival situations, by young Ar on a dare, or by older Ar in the presence of Ar from other worlds in order to impress them.

The Ar'Gilada'Sigat produces mutations more frequently than other Ar adaptations. It has been speculated that this was done to discourage the Ar'Kayadin from using them as slaves. Common mutations include a toxic chemical touch, energy absorption, mineral transmutation, supertoughness, and personal camouflage; superstrength is rare but not unknown.

AR'IKANTHRE'SIGAT (ELECTRIC AR)

Unlike the other Ar mutants, the Ar'Ikanthre'Sigat is not a custom created adaptations or freakish variants on adaptations. While Ar scientists have identified the genetic alterations that produce the Ar'Ikanthre'Sigat, they aren't certain what causes them to occur. Fortunately, local reli-



gious cults believe the arrival of an Ar'Inkanthre'Sigat a blessing rather than a curse.

The Ar'Inkanthre'Sigat is an Ar surrounded by an electrical field; it does not eat, but absorbs solar energy or electricity to survive. Its electrical field is usually defensive rather than offensive, but superhuman mutations are not unknown. Powers for superhuman Ar'Inkanthre'Sigat include energy blasts, force fields, force walls, and telekinesis. Rare powers include energy drain (ED, usually an AE radius), and teleport.tr

AR'WONOLA'SIGAT (AQUATIC AR)

The Ar'Wonola'Sigat is an amphibious Ar adaptation capable of surviving on land and in the water for indefinite periods of time. It can feed indefinitely from plankton, which is ingested through gills, filtered, and metabolized. The Ar'Wonola'Sigat is more comfortable in water, but its gill system is not perfect and the Aquatic Ar gets sick if it does not have fresh air at least five minutes every ten days. (This isn't as severe as a Dependence and is not treated as one.)

There are mutant Ar'Wonola'Sigat with superhuman traits; as with most Ar mutations, this is extremely rare. The most common mutation traits are strength, supertoughness, and superspeed. Rare mutations include water telekinesis (being able to shape water in versatile and sometimes deadly ways), weather control, and marine animal telepathy.

ROYKOK

POWER LEVEL 5

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
-1	+2	+0	-1	+1	+1
8	14	10	8	12	12

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+3	+2	+4	+2

Skills: Notice 8 (+9)

Powers: Flight 5, Strike 3

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +4, Damage +3 (strike), +10 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -1*, Initiative +4 (*include size modifiers)

Skills 2 + Powers 13 + Combat 12 + Saves 8 – Drawbacks 0 = 35 Total

ROYKOKS

Roykoks are not Ar, but a sentient race (slightly more intelligent than Earth's orangutans, capable of primitive communication) under the protection of the Ar'Turodain, native to the planet Darforn. These flying creatures are the only other sentient species in known space, aside from Ar, Eiko, and Fndnti. They're roughly three to four feet in height, with a 10 to 13 foot wingspan, and prehensile digits on their wings. They are vaguely avian, but with larger heads (somewhat owl-like), and their feathers have a furry texture. They are capable of surviving for long periods of time in the oxygen-poor upper reaches of the Darforn atmosphere. Roykoks are extravagantly colored, and coloration varies widely.

Roykok society is pair-driven; they do not congregate in large groups, and abandon children when they are old enough to fend for themselves. The male is the provider, the female is the nurturer; the female is usually larger and stronger. Roykoks do not lay eggs, but bear their young as mammals.

Long ago, a few Roykoks were mutated and given near-Ar levels of intelligence. They were used as slaves and although their servitude ended long ago and they were released back into the wilds of Darforn, a few families are accepted as near-equals by Ar'Turodain society. A typical Roykok is:

ENEMIES

The most commonly encountered alien adversaries are:

AR'KAYADIN SLAVERS.

These parties wander the galaxy looking to capture creatures to breed for super-gladiatorial combat (with the implicit approval of the Ar'Kayadin government, though they officially deny this). They're typically composed of one Ar'Huriti (geneti-

cally engineered Ar champion) and 3-10 support troops.

Ar'Huriti come in stranger shapes and bigger sizes, though tend more toward physical-based powers than energy. Offspring with psionic abilities are usually killed in infancy, and the few who survive never openly use their powers, for fear of discovery.

This is an Ar'Kayadin soldier as you might find in an attack squad; they've been genetically engineered to near peak of the humanoid form without serious biological replacements. An Ar'Huriti leader of an attack squad might be PL 8-10, with occasional exotic mutation (most commonly electrified touch, natural camouflage, force field generation, or retractable tendrils in the elbows, knees, or wrists).

AR'KAYADIN WEAPONS

The favorite weapon of an Ar'Kayadin soldier is the *daidehelu* or whip-sword, a brutal energy sword that can generate an energy whip. Mastery of this weapon is considered a great achievement by the Ar'Kayadin.

However, although the whip-sword is the most honored weapon, it's not the only exotic device at the Ar'Kayadin's disposal.

Trap-Spear

This 2.5 meters long has a burning energy point that stores "globs of energy". It's used when the Ar'Kayadin wish to capture their prey.

Trap-Spear (**Strike 7** [Penetrating; extended reach 2], [*Alternate Powers*: **Snare 5**])

Multi-Beam Rifle

This favored weapon of the Ar'Turodain is rarely employed by the Ar'Kayadin, as it is considered cowardly. However, many attack squads will arm a few young soldiers with these rifles as a training tool to use against installations and static defenses.

Multi-Beam Rifle: (**Blast 6**, [*Alternate Powers*: **Blast 3 Extra**: Area, **Blast 4** [PF: Affects Insubstantial)])

AR'KAYADIN VEHICLES

The squadron of Ar'Kayadin based on Earth is composed of several medium cruisers (in power geostationary orbit over Siberia) and about ten wings of fighters.

All Ar cruisers require a warp pod for FTL travel. This pod is an intergalactic tugboat that pulls the cruiser. Stationed hundreds of kilometers ahead of the cruiser, it uses a gravitic tractor beam tether to pull their mothership; the separation between the cruiser and the pod protects the cruiser from FTL mishaps, though being stranded in deep space without a pod is not much of an improvement.

AR WARP POD

VEHICLE

Str 40, Speed 15 (Flight), TGH +16, SZ Gargantuan

Features: Navigation System, Powers [Tow Line (Telekinesis 20, Extra: Perception Range), Regeneration 22 (+9 recovery, Injured 4, Disabled 4), Super Senses 40 (blindsight [extended 10]), Space Travel 12

AR'KAYADIN ODDAT

VEHICLE

Str 85, Speed 15 (Flight), TGH +14/20, SZ Awesome

Features: Navigation System, Powers [Force Field 10 (Impervious), Regeneration 22 (+9 recovery, Injured 4, Disabled 4), Deflection 10, Super Senses 40 (blindsight [extended 10]), Weapons: Point Defense (Blast 20), Nuclear Missile (Disintegrate 20, Area (2 mile burst), Extended Area 5 and Transform 20 (give someone radiation sickness, Area (20 mile burst), Extended Area 7, Sensors, Security System

AR'KAYADIN KOVVAKH

VEHICLE

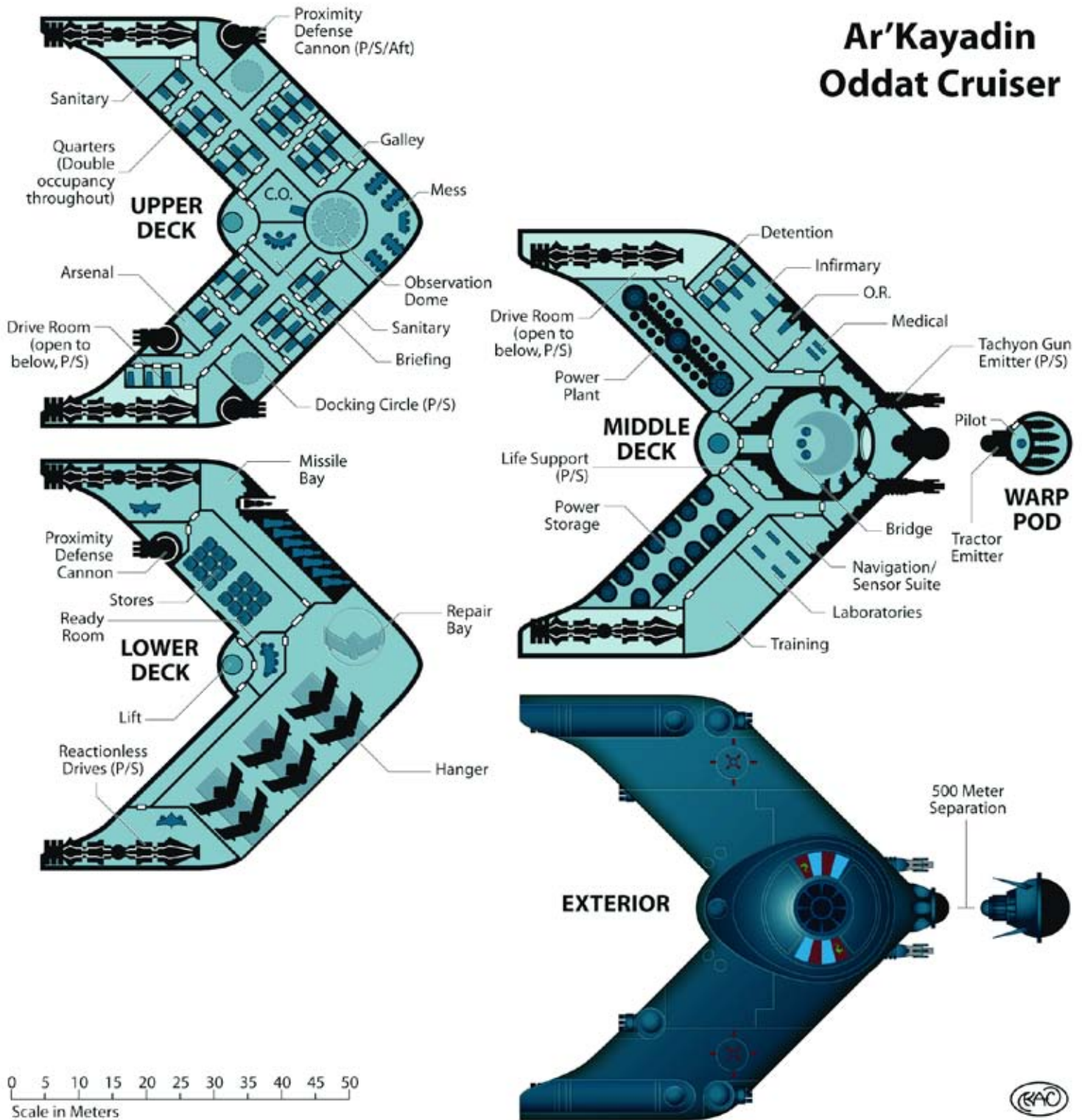
Str 40, Speed 15 (Flight), TGH +16, SZ Gargantuan

Features: Navigation System, Powers [Force Field 10 (Impervious), Regeneration 22 (+9 recovery, Injured 4, Disabled 4), Deflection 10, Super Senses 40 (blindsight [extended 10]), Weapons: Point Defense (Blast 20), Blasters (Blast 14), Sensors, Security System

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE!

Because the specific capacity of Eiko constructs are only known to a few living Ar'Kayadin and Ar'Turodain scouts, they're not general knowledge for Ar PCs. The GM can find their stats on page 284 in the character write-ups section.

Ar'Kayadin Oddat Cruiser



VII: THE GESTALT DIMENSION

"Hey!" the broad-shouldered man shouted at me, cupping his mouth with his wide right hand. "Are you with us? Tell me you're still with us!"

I had the feeling he would have shook me if I'd been within grabbing distance. I grunted a reply, though my heart wasn't in it. Triumphant, the man nodded, turned, and headed toward the Purple, and the woman went with him. With a thought. I followed them, though my heart wasn't in that either.

Americans. They never tread lightly. I had told them the tales and still they rushed into the Purple, which means death.

So what is my tale? It began on the Aegean, a hot summer wind against my body, and my skiff thrashing like a taciturn lover. I love those waters, the waters of home. The wind whipped up, and I wasn't afraid, but then the waters opened up, and suddenly I was very afraid. Into the maw of a silver whirlpool I fell, and my scream seemed to last forever. Yet I didn't die; I found myself in a sailor's afterlife, a strange barren sea of white nothing, which I could sail with only a thought.

The strangers tell me that I've sailed this Void for seventeen years. It feels longer, though I never aged. For days I starved, but a seaman's sense guided me from the White into the Pink, where orbs of light gave the void color. I was drawn to the orbs and fed from their light like breadfruit. This kept me from starvation, but sailing in a void of White and Pink – madness replaced starvation as my nemesis.

I set myself against the strange creatures of this vast deep, some like living tentacles that grab you and wrap around you like pythons, some like pufferfish that give you a headache by touching you, some unfathomable creatures that rub against your body (which feels like someone walking over your grave). Strange seas, but as time passed, so did the madness and the loneliness and I came to love them.

Sometimes, with an effort of will, I can hold the creatures at a safe distance, and swim with them. They're the only company I have in these waters, at least until Trevor and the Lady appeared, a day or so ago, filling my head with stories about characters from American funnybooks coming to life and flying around Athens like gods (or birds). They told me I had fallen into a place called "the Gestalt Dimension". Their tone reminded me of some oh-so-superior city merchant bartering with an ignorant pig farmer from a mountain backwater. If those are the manners that people use these days, I could have lived without seeing a human being ever again.

And these people want me to go with them into the Purple. Madness! And I was madder still for tagging along with them.

After accompanying them for about ten thousand heartbeats, Trevor held up his arm and paused to inspect the scene. "Things are getting darker in all directions," he said. "Do you have any clue as to where we should head next?"

I frowned and pointed into the heart of the Purple. "The monsters in the Purple are much larger and more terrifying than those in the Pink..."

"I know. Unfortunately, an even bigger monster is coming," Trevor said, and he clapped me on the back, as if that would soothe the insult. I snorted. He stared into the deep. "I don't like what I'm feeling in that direction," he said. "So that's where we go."

It had taken me months to learn that trick. Trevor, much to my annoyance, figured it out in only a few hours. He's wearing an astronaut's jacket, so I suppose he must be clever. I simply nodded. He'll have to forgive my terseness; after all, I had gone for sixteen years without speaking and my English was never that good.

White gives way to Pink, and Pink gives way to Purple. Trevor and the woman told me bizarre stories about this being a landscape of the human subconscious, whatever the hell that means, and gates to otherworlds. I only knew the Void by the colors, and the portals by the vertigo that filled my head whenever I approached. I had never bothered to touch them.

"What you call the Purple is a region of the Void around a nova protogestalt." Trevor's words may as well have been Arabic. "It's like an egg. One day, it's going to hatch and give birth to a very powerful gestalt, more powerful than anyone in existence. The King wants to imprint his image on this egg and make it his son."

I say nothing, not that this stops the chatter, "The plan is for Labyrinth and me to reach the protogestalt first, drain some of its energy, and imprint it with more human impulses."

Labyrinth, an attractive, dusk-skinned lady who wore a red swimsuit added: "Let's hope it doesn't kill us in the process."

"You promised to take me home," I noted.

"Yes, provided we survive," Trevor nodded, and turned around and headed into the heart of the Purple.

When you've been in the void, you become attuned to the sound of your heartbeat, and it becomes a measuring stick that's remarkably easy to follow with a slight mental effort. We ventured for about thirty thousand heartbeats into the Purple, when the nova — the largest, brightest orb I'd ever seen — came into sight.

When we got within a thousand heartbeats, we could begin to hear the nova, a hard throbbing sound like a hammer on a nail. Within a hundred heartbeats, its glow had become blinding, and the hammering filled my ears. The air was raw electricity, every hair on

my body bristled, and the orb babbled with thoughts that barely registered between the thunderous sound of the heartbeats.

Within thirty heartbeats, I could go no further. The pounding sound was too much even for me. I couldn't believe that Trevor and Labyrinth somehow found the strength to force themselves through the agony of distance and slowly reached toward the orb. Every centimeter must have felt like reaching through razor wire.

And that's when the Blood Red King came into view. All I needed to do was to lay eyes on him for an instant, and suddenly I understood their fears with absolute clarity....

THE VOID

The Void is the "outer" section of the Gestalt Dimension (some compare it to outer space, others to the astral plane of various myths), and it's weird: a vast featureless wasteland, a "wastescape" whose bright white color was once described by Labyrinth as "the same color as the light at the end of the tunnel of death". (In fact, many people who enter the Void report that they've "crossed over"). The Void, however, is not populated by angels but by ghosts; the faint ghostly images of living creatures from our dimension, moving in parallel motion to their travels in our world, wander without seeming purpose. The brains of living creatures can be faintly seen inside each ghost's head, emanating a slight white-blue glow (Utopia once called it "the fire of life and thought"). The brains of more intelligent creatures glow more brightly than non-intelligent ones, Gestalt brains glow more brightly than non-Gestalts, and pure gestalt brains glow most brightly of all.

So what does this Void signify? No one really knows. The few gestalts who visited it usually make jokes about being lost in thought, and trivialize its function. Those who have applied more serious study to it believe that it's a transitional zone between human function and imagination, but no one's certain. What is known, however, is that protogestalts search this place for compatible human brains and use them as nests to create new gestalts.

It's here that the energy of the Gestalt Wave builds until it floods the entire Void, washing over every subconscious human mind, bonding protogestalt to human. During this event, the Gestalt Wave, the superhuman is born.

The Void is home to a number of entities. The most important is the Unformed Gestalt, or Protogestalt. These ethereal, vaguely human-shaped entities wander the Gestalt Dimension, telepathically scanning wanderers, looking for a psychologically compatible host with which to bond. This is called the Wandering Gestalt stage of their development.

When unformed Gestalts find a suitable host with which to bond, the unformed Gestalt begins the integration process by forming a physical bond. Once they bond, they appear as a glowing fetus

shaped bump on the mind of the person they want to bond with. This is the forming Gestalt stage. When a Gestalt Wave occurs in the Void, the entity merges with the mind and empowers him, and thus a true gestalt is born.

Beyond the Void are Fantasyscapes. Every conceivable world exists as a possibility, and people can enter these worlds and interact with them. Some worlds whose mythic traditions touch our world (Olympus, Christmasland) can be entered directly from Gestalt-Earth, without necessitating travel in the Void.

ENTERING THE VOID

The only way to affect the Gestalt Dimension is to physically enter it. As far as the general public is concerned, this is impossible; many people would love to be able to build a door into the Gestalt Dimension and mess around there. However, a few exceptional people have found a way: Dr. Power, Influence, Portal, and the Leviathan King. The Tyranny League has an entrance to a pocket dimension (a Fantasyscape) which they use as their headquarters, but do not have access to the Void. Victor Eismann also has access via his Copenhagen Castle, and many suspect there's a link between Columbia HQ and the dimension (rumors persist of a mysterious entity in Columbia's penthouse who's the real leader of the team). Probability Tunnels (see page 165) can also temporarily form portals, but they're dangerous. Some gestalts (such as Santa Claus) have portals that link them directly to Fantasyscapes. These portals don't have the same mental signature as those that allow entry into the Void. Portals are either created by gestalts with the appropriate powers, or produced by old Probability Lord artifacts.

Entrances into the Void manifest themselves as blinding white energy portals. Even concealed entrances to the Gestalt Dimension are noticeable to anyone who is able to perceive mental powers.

Every portal has its own particular empathic signature. When someone touches a portal between our world and the Void, they experience a sense of profound wonder and curiosity. Some gestalts who touch them get a better sense of their place in the universe (i.e. they realize the precise nature of their Gestalt archetype, and where it fits into the greater scheme of things). For all but the most down-to-earth gestalts, it can be a very unexpectedly humbling experience.

When someone touches portals to a Fantasyscape, they get a vague sensation of the fantasy that they're traveling toward. And when touches a portal from the Gestalt to the real world, they experience a feeling of comfort, like they're going home after a long journey abroad.

FUNCTIONING IN THE VOID

The Void of the Gestalt Dimension is an unusual place in which to have a battle. The rules of the game are greatly changed when fighting in what's largely a psionic environment.

BASE STATS

- **WIS:** Wisdom and Will Saves govern everything in the Gestalt. Even attacks against alternate save throws work against Will saves.

ATTACKS

- *Initiative:* The Will Score bonus is used. The improved initiative feat applies.
- *Attack Roll:* All non-Mental Attacks (such as energy blasts, hand-to-hand attacks, and Find Weakness) require a Will Save each round (in addition to normal attack or activation rolls), vs. a DC equal to their power rank. If it fails, the hero sustains an additional fatigue level on the damage track.
- *Lethality:* There are no changes to lethal attacks in the Gestalt Dimension. However, any attack that normally targets a Will Save (such as Mental Blast) may be lethal here (at the character's option)
- *Mental Attacks:* All psionic based powers receive a +2 bonus to the Power Rank
- *Game Balance:* The Gestalt's an unusual place. Don't worry if attack bonuses and defenses get a little wacky with the adjustments in the dimension. It's part of the dimension's flavor.

DEFENSES

- **Defense:** The basic stat for Defense is the Will Save bonus. Psionic based Protection powers (such as telekinetic force fields) may add to this, as does Mind Shield.

MOVEMENT

- *Base Movement:* The base movement rate within the Void equals 10' +1' per Wisdom bonus." If a character has Flight (with a Telekinetic special effect), this functions normally.
- *Teleportation:* Teleportation functions normally in the Gestalt Dimension.
- *Space Travel:* This power does not function within the Gestalt Dimension.

PERCEPTION

- *Base Perception:* Perception functions normally.
- *Unusual Senses:* Unusual senses such as Detects function here.

SKILLS

- *Base Roll:* All Skills in the Gestalt Dimension use Wisdom score bonus in place of their normal Ability score; skill ranks apply normally.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE VOID

The Mental Trail: When people travel in the Gestalt Dimension, they leave a mental trail that can be spotted by anyone with Mental Awareness and tracked with a Perception roll. The trail fades after fifteen minutes (a -3 penalty to Perception rolls) and disappears completely after a half hour (no tracking possible)

Navigation: It's hard to navigate in apparent nothingness, and the list of those who have gotten lost in the Void is a lot longer than those who haven't. To navigate within the Void (or find a Fantasyscape), the hero must make a successful Knowledge: Physical Sciences roll (see page 25).

CONTACT WITH MINDS IN THE VOID

The Void may be featureless, but it isn't empty. As mentioned earlier, there are "ghosts" of the people who live in the real world, some of whom are bonded to protogestalts and waiting for the next Gestalt Wave to give birth to superhumans. What happens if you touch them??

There is a psychic link between Our World and the Void. If someone touches a Normal mind (one which hasn't made a gestalt bond), then back in our world, the Normal feels something ("someone just walked over my grave!") but nothing more serious than that.

If someone touches a Gestalt forming mind (one which has bonded with a Protogestalt but hasn't become a full-fledged Gestalt) he must make a Will Save (DC 20). If he fails, he suffers a Drain 6 (Wis) effect. If a hero's Wisdom score drops to zero, they become comatose. If he succeeds, he gains a Transfer 3 (Wis) effect, and the unformed Gestalt is destroyed. Now, the character will not become a Gestalt.

If someone touches a Gestalt mind (the mind of a "ghost" who's obviously a gestalt in the real world) in the Void, the person and the target must make a Will Contest. Whoever makes the highest Will save gets a Transfer 3 (wisdom) from the loser.

Otherwise, using powers from the Void to affect the Real World requires the Dimensional Power Feat.

NATIVE CREATURES OF THE GESTALT DIMENSION

Many interesting creatures are native to the Gestalt Dimension and will be encountered by travelers in the Void. Protogestalts are the best known, and Leviathans stationed in the Gestalt are always a danger, but Fleeters, Psychic Threads, Memory Sharers, Provokers and Mind Spikes can also be encountered here. These creatures die if removed from the Void.

Fleeters are frozen traumatic memories. They are usually released by Memory Worlds (see Fantasyscapes) when a memory becomes too painful for a person to bear. Fleeters appear as a frozen image of the individual who experienced it. Making physical contact with a fleeter can be extremely painful, as the person touching them will briefly experience

their trauma. Fleeters search for psychic phenomenon (usually the entrance to Fantasyscapes) in which to die, but many of the inhabitants of the Gestalt Dimension will put them out of their misery.

If a Fleeter senses someone present in the Void, it will go to them and share its emotions (misery loves company). If someone goes undetected by a Fleeter, it may lead him or her to interesting places. Sometimes Fleeters are not traumatic, but are filled with other intense emotions, such as happiness or anger.

Psychic Threads are much more pleasant, although still an annoyance; these are playful thoughts that cannot be easily contained by a Memory World. Psychic Threads seek out moving minds in the Gestalt and will try to get telepathic contact with them. They are very long and thin and have a white body but a bluish sheen that makes them stand out in the Gestalt. They're usually content to drift behind someone, although they will try to wrap themselves

around someone if they feel threatened.

Memory Sharers resemble bat-winged brains with short-milky tendrils on their underside. They wander the Gestalt looking for mobile minds; when they find them, they latch on, look for subconscious memories (especially ones which are well hidden), then look for another creature with which to telepathically implant the acquired memory. Travelers hate memory sharers.

Provokers are attracted to suppressed emotions. When they make contact with a mind, they try to bring emotions to the surface, directed at the nearest mind. Whatever emotion the target feels most strongly at the moment is what will be expe-

PROTOGESTALT			VARIABLE		
Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
0	+3	+0	+0	+8	+0
10	16	10	10	26	10

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+0	+0	+0	+12

Skills: Notice 16 (+24), Search 16 (+24)

Powers: Transform 20 (into compatible archetype, *Extra:* Continuous PF: Extra Dimensional, *Flaw:* Requires a Gestalt Wave), Dimensional ESP 5 (visual, detect), Super-Senses 5 (detect gestalt, acute, analytical)

Combat: Attack +8 (mental blast), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -0, Initiative +3

Abilities 22 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 0 + Powers 94 + Combat 28 + Saves 4 = **156 Total**

PSYCHIC THREAD			VARIABLE		
Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+3	+10	+0	+2	+0
30	16	30	10	14	10

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+8	+10	+3	+7

Skills: Notice 8 (+16)

Powers: Super Strength 5, Flight 5

Combat: Attack +8 (strength), Defense +10, Knockback -5, Initiative +3

Abilities 40 + Skills 2 (8 ranks) + Powers 20 + Combat 28 + Saves 5 = **95 Total**

FLEETER			VARIABLE		
Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
0	+3	+0	+0	+8	+0
10	16	10	10	26	10

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+0	+0	+0	+9

Skills: Notice 8 (+16), Search 8 (+16)

Powers: Telepathy 10 (*Flaw:* Touch Range), Mental Blast 4 [*Extra:* Aura, *Flaw:* Only on those who've been telepathically scanned]

Combat: Attack +8 (mental blast), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -0, Initiative +3

Abilities 22 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 0 + Powers 26 + Combat 28 + Saves 4 = **88 Total**

MEMORY SHARER			VARIABLE		
Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
0	+3	+0	+0	+8	+0
10	16	10	10	26	10

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+0	+0	+0	+12

Skills: Notice 8 (+16)

Powers: Telepathy 10 (*Flaw:* Touch Range), Flight 10

Combat: Attack +8 (strength), Defense +10, Knockback -0, Initiative +3

Abilities 18 + Skills 2 (8 ranks) + Powers 30 + Combat 28 + Saves 4 = **82 Total**

rienced; for instance, if the target is afraid, they may suddenly fear their closest teammate.

Mind Spikes are psionic servants of Metagestalts. They look like puffer fish with a wrinkled skin texture that resembles brain matter. They seek intruders in the Gestalt Dimension and when they encounter them, they will strike them and cause intense pain.

There are many varieties of these creatures; Mind spikes in particular have varieties that are more powerful than the norm, depending on which Metagestalt created it.. Protogestalts having varying strengths (it's believed that the more powerful the Protogestalt, the brighter it is, and the more powerful the Gestalt bond will be). The most powerful are called Nova Protogestalts, huge shining beacons in the Void that absorb the fabric of the Void around them, turning it from white to the color of twilight (as depicted on the cover of this book).

CHANGELINGS

Just as the gestalt waves produced beings out of wholecloth in our world, people have discovered that gestalt waves produce a "backwash" that can sweep humans from our world into the Gestalt, or even cause humans to be spontaneously born in the Gestalt Dimension. These humans are sometimes called Changelings, based on Faerie stories. "Pure" changelings are humans who are of the appropriate age as their gestalt wave (as of 2006, the '89ers are only beginning to approach adulthood).

Changelings usually have no gestalt powers (except for a very few who were swept into the Gestalt Dimension at the moment they received their powers), but learn to manipulate the fabric of the Gestalt Dimension to their will. Furthermore, when they're brought back into reality, they maintain the ability to manipulate our reality (albeit to a much lesser extent).

Some changelings have been taken in as "children" by the metagestalts, others have learned to form Fantasyscapes, which they rule as absolute kings. A few have returned to our world, most famously *Odyssey*, a profane Greek superhero and occasional Columbia ally who hunts down Leviathans with a Captain Ahab fanaticism. In the Gestalt Dimension, Changelings encountered by wandering PCs are either "wild" (surviving by psychically feeding off other denizens) or "raised" (by other Changelings, communities of native creatures, metagestalts, or the denizens of Fantasyscapes). A few unlucky ones are captured by Leviathans, who program them to enter our world and betray Gestalt-kind.

FANTASYSCAPES

The Gestalt Dimension is also shaped into illusory forms by the collective unconscious. When these illusions take on the forms of places from the human imagination, they are called Fantasyscapes. Fantasyscapes can literally be anything, from

PROVOKER			VARIABLE		
Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
0	+3	+0	+0	+8	+0
10	16	10	10	26	10
Tough		Fort		Reflex	
+0		+0		+9	
Will					
+0					
+9					
Skills: Notice 8 (+16), Search 8 (+16)					
Powers: Telepathy 10 (Flaw: Touch Range), Mind Control 10 PF: Telepathic, Flaws - One command only, act on suppressed desires, Touch Range					
Combat: Attack +8 (mental blast), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knock-back -0, Initiative +3					
Abilities 22 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 0 + Powers 26 + Combat 28 + Saves 4 = 88 Total					

MIND SPIKE			VARIABLE		
Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
0	+3	+0	+0	+8	+0
10	16	10	10	26	10
Tough		Fort		Reflex	
+0		+0		+0	
			Will		
			+9		
Skills: Notice 8 (+16), Search 8 (+16)					
Powers: Mental Blast 8 [<i>Extra:</i> Aura], Super Sense 7 (detect non-native of the Gestalt Dimension, acute, analytical, tracking 2)					
Combat: Attack +8 (mental blast), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knock-back -0, Initiative +3					
Abilities 22 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 0 + Powers 47 + Combat 28 + Saves 4 = 109 Total					

GESTALT DIMENSION CHANGELING		TEMPLATE
Abilities: Wisdom +10		
Skills: Knowledge (earth science) 4		
Powers: Background Energy Manipulation (Create Object 4, PF: Precise, Subtle, [Alternate Powers: Blast 5 (cosmic), Boost 5 (any ability score), Healing 5, Dazzle 5 (visual)], Flight 5 Flaw: Only in the Gestalt Dimension, Super Senses 7 (detect variations in the gestalt, analytical, acute, tracking 2)		
Abilities 10 + Skills 1 (4 ranks) + Powers 26 = Total 37		

the Christmasland dimension where Santa Claus lives, to the Mt. Olympus remembered by the Mythological Reincarnation Gestalts of Greek Gods to Mundane World, where no one has super powers except for characters in comic books. *Anything.*

In these illusory “sub-dimensions”, combat acts normally (or according to the laws appropriate to the Fantasyscape. For instance, in the Wold, a Sylvan World of Nature, gunpowder and electronic/technological weapons and devices will not function. For more detailed examples, see the sample Fantasyscapes on pages 166-7).

The kingdoms of the Gestalt are not well known, and those few who worry about them sometimes wonder if Gestalt-Earth is the “real” world, or just another Fantasyscape with a superhero motif.

METAGESTALTS AND PROBABILITY LORDS, OH MY!

There are some mysteries of Gestalt-Earth that are not known even to Gestalts. The players might uncover these during the course of the campaign.

Within the Gestalt Dimension are very powerful intelligent entities who manipulate humanity through the production of Gestalts. These entities are called Metagestalts.

Metagestalts keep themselves away from human contact. In fact, they are the most imperious beings in existence, entities who take archetypal roles and who look upon all humans, gestalts or otherwise, as flowers in the garden in which they weed. Few Metagestalts have any concern for human moral standards or lives, as long as they safeguard the collective unconscious from overload. Metagestalts decide when a Gestalt Wave will occur and create

entities within the Gestalt Dimension to deal with intruders. Metagestalts with adventurous qualities may take on human guise or even try to enter “the Shellworld” to directly affect human affairs (although this is forbidden by the general consensus of the Metagestalts).

The decision to create the First Gestalt Wave was a very heated and controversial one. Those Metagestalts who liked humanity felt that Gestalts would provide leadership for humanity in a difficult time, and also wanted to use them to enjoy fellowship with ordinary humans. Those Metagestalts who didn’t like humans felt that Gestalts would kill lots of the two-legged vermin and decrease the surplus population.

A few Metagestalts bitterly opposed the decision to create Gestalts and exiled themselves from the Metagestalt community. This may have been a wise decision; now that Metagestalts have pawns with which to play their games, politics in the Dimension is getting very dirty.

Note: The capabilities, numbers and nature of the Metagestalts have been left deliberately vague. In general, Metagestalts should have a high Ego and Endurance stat, a Change Environment usable in the Gestalt Dimension (any special effect, with a large area of effect), mental powers, Summon (any of the creatures listed in the Native section, and Transforms usable against Protogestalts). They should be at the Beyond power level. Most are at Beyond power level, but unable to survive in the Shellworld without a



physical host .

The Gestalt Dimension may have been engineered by the Probability Lords, the same race that took the Ar to Turoda eight thousand years ago, a race worshipped by the Eiko. The Probability Lords still exist, and are attempting to manipulate humanity's timeline; their motivations are a mystery.

PROBABILITY TUNNELS

There are a few Probability Lord artifacts around the world; these artifacts, sometimes called Probability Tunnels, are enclosed areas, buried underground in remote mountainous areas, where the laws of physics don't quite work right. The tunnels are bored in straight lines, usually between a 20° and a 30° Angle. The walls are constructed of a sleek silver-blue metal that Dr. Power calls Nanonium. This metal has a faint blue luminescence, but is not radioactive.

Probability Tunnels are holy places to the Eiko, who suspect they might exist on this new world discovered by the Ar'Turodain. They are not known

to the general public.

There are a number of effects that occur in a Probability Tunnel. Events occur every five rounds when people are between 1500-6000 feet from the end of the tunnel; every two rounds when between 300-1500 feet of the end, and every round when 0-300 feet of the end.

To determine what happens, add everyone's Will Saves together, and divide it by the number of people present. Add that number to a d20 roll and consult the Probability Tunnel effects table.

At the end of every Probability Tunnel is a Probability Shimmer. This is a faint purple-white glow, identical in color to the Void, that appears as a crack in reality from which energies from another dimension come through.

Any Mental power used on the shimmer will trigger a random roll on the Probability Effects Chart, but will also (with a Will Save DC 13) widen the shimmer enough for people to be able to travel into the Void of the Gestalt Dimension. The crack closes after 1d3 rounds

PROBABILITY TUNNEL EFFECTS TABLE

Roll Result

- 10- Nothing happens
- 11-14 *Psionic Feedback Event*. If a Psionic Surge is happening, it ends immediately. The event lasts for 1d3 rounds. Every round, anyone in the tunnel with psionic powers must make a Will Save DSC 20 or suffer a (non-lethal) Damage Condition.
- 15-16 *Psionic Surge Event*. If a Psionic Feedback event is occurring, it ends immediately. This event lasts for 1d3 rounds. All psionic Powers gain 2 ranks for the duration of the surge.
- 17-18 *Temporal Fracture (Backwards)*. Characters encounter past versions of themselves (GM Option). This event lasts 1d6 rounds.
- 19-20 *Temporal Fracture (Forwards)*: Characters encounter future versions of themselves (GM Option). This event lasts 1d6 rounds.
- 21-22 *Telekinetic Storm*. The tunnel seems to come alive, shaking wildly as if it were at the epicenter of an earthquake. An invisible wave of force tries to hit someone. Treat it as a Telekinesis 10 attack. Every round, two random heroes will be grabbed (Attack Roll +12)) and tossed into a wall.
- A character with Mental Super Senses (such as ESP) may attempt to locate the center of the storm and then make Will Save (DC 20) to take control. Once under control, the psionic may either pacify it (causing it to end) or direct it on each round at two targets(which is useful if there's a fight happening in the tunnel). The storm lasts 1d6 rounds.
- 23-24 *Telepathy Effect*. People are randomly exposed to other people's darkest secrets. Every round, choose two different people at random. The first automatically makes Mind Reading12 on the second (or, if they already have Telepathy or Mind Reading, add 4 ranks to the power). This effect lasts 1d3 rounds.
- 25-26 *Teleportation Effect*. Every person is teleported somewhere on the Earth's surface, 1d6*1000 kilometers in a random direction (they will always end up safely on dry land)
- 27-30 *Power Drain*. Everyone suffers a power loss, Drain 6, affecting. all Gestalt powers and any ability score that's over 20. The effect is instantaneous. Pure Gestalts vanish (transporting into the Void of the Gestalt Dimension) for 1d3 rounds, then return.
- 31+ *Power Surge*. People experience a surge in their powers. All Gestalts must make a Will Save DC 15; I). If successful, they receive a Boost 4 to all Gestalt powers and to any ability score that's over 20. If they fail the roll, they fall into a coma for 1d6 days (or until healed).

SAMPLE FANTASYSCAPES

Christmasland: This is the land of Christmas, where every day is the holiday season, giant snowflakes are constantly falling, and Christmas music is constantly playing in the background. Any attempt to say anything negative must include: "I'm not feeling the Christmas spirit", and anything that attempts to be profound must include: "And that's what Christmas is all about". Sleighs appear out of nowhere to carry people back and forth, jolly snowmen provide PCs with directions, little boys wander around looking for their lost drums, and an incredibly bright star shines over a town with an empty manger as shepherds watch their flocks, and islands of unwanted playthings learn that they're just as valuable as any other toy.

The centerpiece of the Land is Santa's workshop, where reindeers play their reindeer games (even with the one with the bright nose) and happy elves ply their trade, ignoring all union laws. At Santa's Workshop, eggnog and hot cocoa flow like wine.

The enemies of Christmasland are the enemies of Christmas: grasping Christmas-hating businessmen, German bureaucrats and mean green-furred Santa impersonators who speak in rhyme, evil ice goblins, miserly spirits who hoard heat and cold. When someone of a pure and noble heart is killed or knocked unconscious, an angel will appear and restore them to life.

City of Bullies: Welcome to Paradigm City, a mighty metropolis on an alternate Earth, where the ardors of recovering from an alien invasion have turned the city's thousands of superheroes into packs of undisciplined thugs! Are you a person in gang colors standing on a street corner who's chilling out and having an innocent conversation? Prepare to get jumped by some overly tattooed shirtless martial artist, a "heroic" guy who looks like a demon from the 616th level of Hell, or a woman in an outfit that shows enough skin to embarrass a stripper!

Do you want to help out your fellow superheroes? Don't! When you give someone a helping hand, they accuse you of "grief-ing" and "kill stealing", laugh at your ability to "pull a mob", and even taunt you with juvenile, homophobic remarks.

Worse, no force on Earth will allow you to harm or enter any of the buildings (except for a few shops). Vehicles are similarly invulnerable, and despite all the superheroes having incredible superpowers, no one has successfully leapt on top of a moving vehicle or the tram. No one in Paradigm City is very self-reliant; everyone's trying to give you missions (many of which involve tasks they could easily do themselves, or tasks under such a strict time limit that they should consider themselves lucky you showed up when you did, or missions that take place in caverns whose architecture is so complex it would frustrate Labyrinth). Also, people will never give you more than three missions at a time (why you never get four missions is one of the world's great mysteries).

Obviously the hero's task is to find a way to escape this crazy place or surrender to the insanity and have hundreds of hours of your life sucked out by this madness.

Island of the Gods: In the timeline of this parallel world, in order to escape persecution from the early enemies of the gestalts, Dr. Astra raised a mammoth island out of the central Pacific and most of the world's gestalts moved there. Sustained by gestalt powers that have created unlimited supplies of food and water, protected by an impervious force field dome, the supers of this world built colossal, larger-than-life cities with classic architecture in which to live, work, and (mostly) play. People who are normally enemies took a different path here, and view each other as brothers and sisters (which does not, of course, prevent sibling rivalry). Meanwhile, outside the dome, the few gestalts who chose to remain have been killed, and the envious normal world views the Island of the Gods as a threat that must be dealt with, especially after hearing widespread reports that normals are being kidnapped for a slave labor force — reports that are not altogether inaccurate.

The gods have sent "messengers" into the normal world to retrieve persecuted gestalts and bring them to paradise (and sometimes, they will grab a pretty or promising normal to use as a toy or servant). And even the most benign gestalt like the Titan refers to normal human beings as "insects" and to the world outside the dome as "the ant farm". People who are normally Good Samaritan or Regional Protector Gestalts have other archetypes in this world (that don't involve service to others).

Even the humblest PC who enters this world instinctively believes they're a god. They gain an additional Psychological Limitation "Contempt for Normals" (Common, Moderate), which goes away when they leave the world.

Kingdom of the Id: Do you know the dimension where everyone who's good is evil and everyone who's evil is good? Well there is one place that's even worse than that one: the Kingdom of the Id, where everyone is rotten and depraved. Here, people are compelled to be selfish and twisted. Essentially, people act as they do in our world, however their character flaws are twice as pronounced: people who are normally cowards become twice as desperate to avoid harm; people who are prone to anger management problems lose their temper at a moment's notice, and people who are normally a little randy and flirty are demanding and have no self-control over their appetites.

This place was so frightening that even the Tyranny League stayed here only for a few hours before returning home. Imperator wondered whether some greater intelligence wasn't using the world as a plaything: "how such a world could keep from nuking itself is a true mystery," he said. (Most scenarios involving the Kingdom of the Id will probably involve an escape.)

For PCs who enter the Kingdom of the Id, any act of helpfulness (even if the PC doesn't have to make a sacrifice to do it) requires a Will Save DC 13; any act where the PC puts himself at risk to help someone requires a Will Save DC 18.

Land of the Dead: As people live out their lives, every moment and every thought is stored in the Gestalt. The Land of the Dead is a huge world where anyone who has ever died is recreated at the age which they felt was their prime (or aged to early adulthood, if they died as a child), doing what they most enjoyed doing in life, but with the full knowledge of their entire life. Since many people may have lived in a particular spot at one time, however all eras are replicated, which makes it a confusing, vast, and

interesting place to visit (people moving through London may have to move through the Piccadilly Square of a dozen eras before making it to one of seven eras of subway).

The Land of the Dead is generally an excuse for PCs to meet old, departed friends and relatives and enjoy a few moments together. It's not without its dangers; what would happen if your PC's old deceased enemies team up with Nazi stormtroopers who were augmented by supervillain technology ("told you that you shouldn't have killed off Weaponsmith") and there's no exit portal in sight? And of course, the adage "dead men tell no tales" is simply not true when you have the Land of the Dead around. Surely it's a perfect place for your heroes (or their enemies) to go to uncover secrets!

Land of Stories: This Fantasyscape, accessible through the pages of a giant book, is a nightmarish world of fiction where an insane metagestalt called the Storyteller casts hapless humans as fictional characters and forces them to recreate the stories. There's low grade mind control (8d6) to force people to act according to character though strong-willed characters (or those who are ordered to perform acts that completely violate their character) can resist them.

Megaddon: This is the very macho dimension of cheezy sword and sandal movies, where all men look like well-oiled musclemen and all women look like sexist fantasy objects in jewels, silks, and excessive make-up. Every city is ruled by a tough-but-fair musclemán king or prince, an aging king whose son is a tough-but-fair musclemán, the scrawny evil brother of a tough but fair musclemán, an evil sorcerer or tyrant who's deposed the rightful ruler (who's a tough-but-fair musclemán), or a beautiful sorceress who gets to be seduced by the tough-but-fair musclemán.

When people enter this dimension, everyone's physique gets blown up to heroic proportions, and everyone's clothing gets changed into the appropriate skimpy attire (tight blouses for women, shirtless for men). Any attempts to change back will be futile — this is a fetish dimension. And although Megaddon is almost laughably homoerotic, no one would ever consider anything except a heterosexual relationship here (either with the "nice girl" they're destined to marry, or the "bad girl" who seduces them), as such things are beyond the comprehension of characters in those movies. However the men do wrestle each other an awful lot. (Heroes typically fight each other before teaming up to face the real enemy.)

In Megaddon, all characters receive the following stat bonuses: +5 STR, +5 CON, and +5 CHA. All females get +5 DEX, +5 WIS, and +5 CHA. All characters gain 2 levels of the Attractive feat

If characters have an offensive focus (a battlesuit or a gun) then it gets converted into a HKA/magical sword equal to the highest offense power that the character possesses before advantages are applied. If they have a defensive focus, it gets converted into a shield with a defense power equal to the highest defensive power in the weapon.

Combat: There are only two ways to fight in Megaddon: swords or wrestling. Anyone who attempts a low blow or any combat maneuver that doesn't involve striking someone with a sword or grabbing a hold and trying to squeeze or wrench a limb from its socket must make a WILL Save DC 20. Villains who have been thrown to the ground, however, may throw sand in a hero's face (aDazzle 3 again, regardless of the quality of the sand) without penalty.

Only villains strike unarmed people with a sword (a PC would have to make a Will Save DC 20, unless he's under evil mind control ("hello beautiful sorceress", or they've just disarmed the villain in a (climactic) sword duel. Visually, weapons do not draw much blood, regardless of the damage rolled.

Memoryworld. Take a fragment of a personal experience, often traumatic, recreate it, loop it so that characters and events repeat themselves, and that's a Memoryworld. They vary in temporal length and sophistication, and often involve death. Those who enter it are trapped in the experience until they find a way to leave; sometimes that's a physical door, other times it's through resolving the person's trauma.

Sixworld: As A.A. Milne said: "But now I am Six, I'm as clever as clever./So I think I'll be six now for ever and ever." In this world, everyone is frozen at the age of six. How do they survive? Who knows, probably by a few plucky young kids who go off and hunt, or by girls playing adult games, and washing and making clothes as good as any mother. New kids arrive by stork, grow up to the age of six, and stop aging. If anyone is unfortunate enough to grow to the age of 7, they're mercilessly hunted down in a *Lord of the Flies*-like ritual and forced to jump off a cliff to their doom.

Sixworld is the world of Peter Pan crossed with the surreal qualities of dreams and the terrors that can only be found in a child's nightmares.

When the PCs enter this Fantasyscape, they revert to their childhood (or, in the case of pure gestalts, attain a child's form) and are forced to live in a world without parents — but where childish fears are real, and where kids who end up on the wrong side of a playground clique learns of just what petty malice the human soul is capable.

VIII: EVERYDAY LIFE

Edge walked into a bar in the heart of downtown Baltimore and ordered a pint of Sam Adams, his favorite beer (though his sponsorship deal with Coors didn't allow him to say it publicly). His costume was dirty but not torn, so he decided he was fit to go blue collar, at least in the late afternoon before the dinner crowd hit the place.

It had been a long tiring day, more from a long stakeout than from the actual fight. As far as supervillain teams went, "Destiny's Krewe" might make a good boy band if they learned how to sing, but giving superpowers to a gang of juvenile delinquents did not make them into a team of supervillains. Yes, like most of Columbia's combats, the fight had been ridiculously easy; the only thing close to a setback was when one of the kids used a telekinetic hand to hurl giant gobs of mud at them, hence the state of Edge's costume. Unfortunately, Columbia didn't lay a glove on the real villain of the day.

"Rough day?" The bartender asked. Edge nodded.

"George, if you see a three foot tall flying green imp wearing a derby, bash it over the head," the Columbia member answered.

"Maligno. Gotcha."

"I swear the little bugger causes more trouble than anyone else out there except the Tyranny League," Edge muttered, drowning his throat with his first drink.

Edge settled into the stool and listened to the conversation ebb and flow around him. People were mostly talking about politics, money troubles, and the Redskins, but occasionally he heard something that hit a little closer to home.

"Gestalts!" exclaimed a burly half-drunken man whose tool belt identified him as an off-work carpenter said. "They really stick in my craw."

There was general agreement from his fellow trade workers. Edge, a smile on his face, sat down in the booth behind them.

"Every time I turn on the bloody television, I see some gestalt half away across the fricking country has had a fight with another gestalt, and I don't care about that, I just want to watch my damn baseball game."

Again, there was general agreement from the work crew.

"Like who cares if the Hollywood Knights have fought Los Animales for the 9000th time over in California? I sure as hell don't."

"I'll bet they don't either!" Edge shouted.

"Yeah!" the loudmouth replied. "We didn't have gestalts in the old days, and I tell you, life was a whole lot better."

"You know, gestalts really didn't start to come

into their own until Clinton was in charge!" Edge smiled, egging them on.

There was some argument with that statement, though most seemed to take it in stride and one, the lone Democrat at the table, rolled his eyes.

"Well, I think the problem is that the gestalts are running this country!" another man said. "You need a problem solved? Call a gestalt! Launch a rocket? Call the Titan! Fight a war? Send in the Vanguard! Need to cure cancer? Don't increase the research budget, let's just find the Gestalt of Cancer!" The man paused to take a deep breath. "They're turning us into a pack of monkeys who spend all day sitting on our asses watching the high and mighty do all the things we that should be doing!"

"They're like a drug!" Edge continued to goad, his grin getting larger. "The fix may be as sweet as heaven, but the addiction sucks like hell!"

"Right on," one man said. Edge couldn't believe that anyone still used that phrase.

"Screw the addiction," the original loudmouth said. "Just look at the destruction they cause. Maybe I shouldn't talk, seeing that I'm in construction, but I'm telling you, they're just a pack of steroid-ridden maniacs in tights, and the world would be well-rid of each and every one of them..."

Edge stood up, and walked around the corner so he was in plain sight of the men at the table. The loudmouth recognized him and blinked.

"...except for the ones guarding our neighborhood, of course," he stammered.

Edge's smile narrowed and he put his hand on the man's shoulder. The tradesman suddenly kept himself very still.

"Do you know, friend, just what this steroid-ridden maniac in tights does to people who talk smack behind my back?"

"I... I..." The tradesman seemed to have lost his opinions.

"First, I tell them the world's changed and they need to deal with it without going nostalgic or joining the nearest Dawn Brothers cell. Second, I tell them that if I were to do what you suggest — which is to sit on my ass and do nothing that might overshadow a non-gestalt or bruise their ego — you'd be complaining that I wasn't doing enough to solve the world's problems, and telling me that I need to get off my ass. I can't win. Third... well you know what I'd do after I said all that?"

"No."

"I buy them a drink, and tell them to keep on saying whatever crap comes into their head, because my job is to make sure they stay alive and free so they can keep doing it."

Edge turned and began to walk away. Before he left, one of the workers called out: "Hey, Edge. I got one question for you, buddy."

"Go ahead and shoot."

"Does Liberator pay taxes?"

ATTITUDES TOWARD SUPERBEINGS

WHAT THE PUBLIC THINKS

The general public's reaction to gestalts can be summarized as a mixture of fear and curiosity. The general public likes certain superhumans on an individual basis, but for the most part, considers them to be violent and unbalanced. The general public tries to get out of the way of superbeings, but loves to watch them at what they think is a safe distance. Then there is the loony extreme, which worships some gestalts as gods. Some gestalts have portrayed themselves as ancient deities who have returned (or are linked with public admiration and fascination with mythology and actually believe that they are ancient gods reborn), but these cults are not particularly influential as a group.

The attitude becomes more extreme the closer one gets to large areas of gestalts. Examined objectively, Gestalt crime is not particularly common. There are approximately 5 to 10 crimes committed daily by gestalts in the United States (not counting the spikes that occur when a gestalt criminal is in the middle of a crime spree). Violent crimes, crimes where people get hurt, compose about 10–20% of these crimes. Most crimes do not result in a physical confrontation between gestalts. "Superfights" occur about once every two to three days, and major superfights occur about once every eight to ten days. Most superfights occur in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington DC in the United States, and in Berlin, Moscow, London, and Hong Kong overseas.

Individuals who live in areas where superfights occur adopt two attitudes. They either adopt an overly protective and forgiving attitude toward local gestalts and accept the possibility of losing property in a superfight (it should be noted that it's rare that a superfight results in a lot of collateral damage and large numbers of injuries or loss of life, and even rarer outside the major cities) or they become incredibly nervous about the possibility of becoming victimized by supervillain violence.

Support groups do exist for those who have been victimized during super battles, and major American cities have "Gestalt Conflict Insurance" to pay for damages caused by super battles. Most businesses don't purchase this insurance, but sales do increase after major incidents (such as the Tyranny League's recent attack in Atlanta).

The demographics of prominent gestalts are skewed: most gestalt superheroes and villains are Caucasian males. This demographic finds the superhuman ideal more attractive than others do, and

women and ethnic minorities are more likely to hide their powers or not adopt a heroic (or a villainous) motif. Unfortunately racism and sexism are very active in the superhero community, especially among villains (no woman has lasted long in the Tyranny League, while the Psionic Seven has a decidedly female bent that have made them heroes in certain feminist circles).

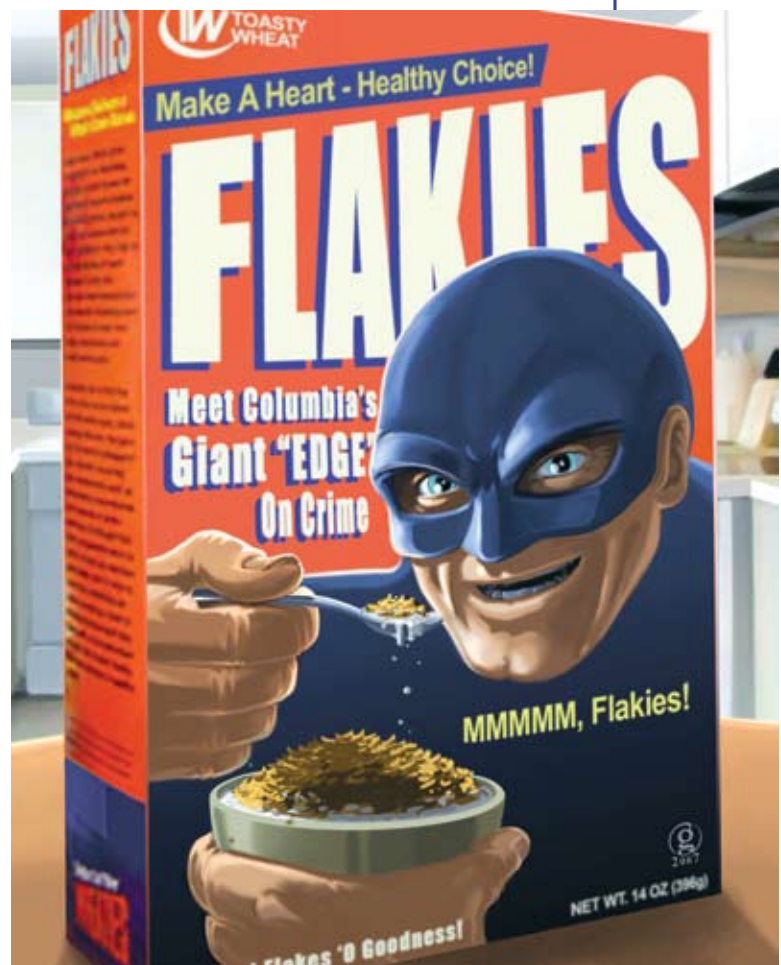
WHAT THE MEDIA THINKS

"Gestalts are like politicians. They think they can get away with anything, they hate our guts, and they do their best to hide who they really are. The public has the right to see their real faces!"

— Wally Jackson, LA Talk Radio Host

For the American media, superheroes are as important to their sales as the British Royal Family is to an English tabloid; they're Bread and Butter. Superhumans who play along with the media have become major celebrities. Even certain villains, such as the Psionic Seven, have achieved celebrity status.

The presence of gestalts in the media has not helped Gestalt/press relations. The most famous gestalt reporter is Dani Jensen, a Journalism Gestalt who broke the existence of the Copenhagen tournament (see page 185) to the outside world, and who has an uncanny ability to pinpoint corruption in law enforcement. Gestalts fear that unscrupulous



THE SIX EXECUTED AMERICAN GESTALTS

Blackmark (1992, Texas, for killing an off-duty police officer).

Persecutor (1995, Illinois, for 1st degree murder in the deaths of Rugged and Molecula)

Clint Wisdom (1997, Idaho, for a serial rape and killing spree that was facilitated using Telepathic powers)

Braeden Foster (2000, Mississippi, for a triple homicide which included a pair of six-year old girls).

The Ghast (2002, Maryland, for scaring to death 5 police officers who tried to apprehend him for a petty crime).

Dr. A (2004, California, For numerous offenses, including the death of Streethawk.)

There are at least six other gestalts currently on Death Row in various states, the most famous of which is Bronco the Urban Cowboy.

There's also an underground list of gestalts (leaked by the US Justice Department), which instructs district attorneys "to aggressively pursue maximum sentencing" for them if they're ever brought to trial. It's a very long list. It's also known that the US government has spent tens of millions of dollars researching alternate execution methods for individuals like Blackmark and the Blood Red King who are known to be immune to death.

gestalt reporters, particularly those who are obsessed with getting the scoop on a story, will break through all of their precautions and reveal their secret identities to the world. Dani Jensen, even though she's shown herself to be trustworthy when she gives her word not to reveal information, is still a pariah in most gestalt circles. Columbia refuses to deal with her on any level, and will pull out of any situation where she is involved. (This may be due to potential conflicts with Labyrinth's Gestalt of keeping secrets).

For their part, the press dislikes gestalts in their midst, believing that they have an unfair advantage in the competitive world of journalism, and many journalists shun associates who are suspected of having a "Gestalt advantage", or even deliberately leaking them false information.

The tabloid press (and its broadcast equivalent, talk radio hosts) make outrageous claims about gestalts, most of which are untrue, but many of which are widely believed. It's very easy to smear a gestalt. The history of gestalt teams is riddled with scandal, and internal disension within a team rarely goes unreported.

Few gestalts (and none with secret IDs) have been known to sue the tabloids, but Gerald Curry and Columbia's legal staff spend a lot of their time fighting these false claims; Curry believes that this helps protect all benign gestalts.

Gestalts are often the subject of heavy press coverage, but ironically, only a small percentage of fights (less than 5%) are actually captured on film. The competition to get superhuman combat on film (and show it) is really fierce. In particular, the Copenhagen tournament tends to produce a media feeding frenzy.

GESTALTS AND THE (U.S.) GOVERNMENT

"Yeah, we'll work with Gestalts. We don't have much choice. But one day... well, you never know, do you?"

— Special Agent Carl Chambers, ATF

The United States government, and indeed most national governments, treats gestalts with a mix of fear and misgiving. The government's initial instinct was to control superhumans through restrictive legislation (which was ignored by the superhumans) and covert operations such as Project CounterMeasures (which was not ignored). Both efforts failed miserably, and some powerful early gestalts (especially Labyrinth of Columbia) still retain a cool attitude to the government because of the early skirmishes. Most government agencies are trying to retreat from this position — most, but not all of them. Local government

agencies are more eager to promote good relations with heroes.

At present, there is no openly Gestalt politician in the United States. In England, Colin Ackerman, a member of the House of Commons (Labor – Liverpool), openly admits he's a Mathematics Gestalt (he can perform complex calculations, temporarily give other people mathematics knowledge, and force weak-minded people to stop and think about math problems). He hopes to be a cabinet minister one day.

There are a number of gestalts active in politics (behind the scenes) worldwide. Vlastitel, the Russian mastermind who had manipulated Russia's government and its relations with supers, is probably the most famous, followed by Sung Yong-sun, the Vice-president of North Korea (though the latter's Gestalt nature is not public knowledge). Major Havoc was President of Sierra Leone for eight days in March 1999.

There are no known gestalt heads of state, although many people worry about a shapechanger replacing a head of state and secretly taking over a nation or a psionic mind controller taking over behind the scenes. Because of this, anti-psionic technology is a research priority for many governments, including the United States.

The only major gestalt to have stepped forward in American politics is the deceased activist Freebird. Major Jonathan Clark is often cited as someone who could run for public office should he ever leave the Vanguard. Other gestalt heroes, including "that Hollywood Knights Liberal" Stuntman, have been very forthcoming in their views, and have been heavily mocked for it.

In the 1996 US Presidential election, a militant extremist candidate was nearly elected, thanks to a Public Relations Gestalt who gave his candidate the perfect packaging and "spin". With the variety of gestalt abilities out there, the possibility exists that one day a Gestalt of Electability will emerge, a gestalt with the superhuman ability to be so attractive to the electorate that it will be impossible for him to lose an election. There is a call for gestalts to be barred from political office, but an Oregon referendum on the issue was defeated by the voters in 1994 and no other proposals have come close enough to be tested for constitutionality by American courts.

Most governments want to take greater steps to control gestalts, but in a manner which don't offend gestalts to the point where they lose superhero support, or alienate the electorate (it doesn't help that voters don't like their government to be seen as weak and indecisive). It's a balancing act, but the pendulum has swung in recent years towards anti-Gestalt sen-

timent, and the number of confrontations between gestalts and the government is definitely on the rise.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OPERATION STRONGBOX

"You know, when you work for the government, and you see how much damage these Gestalts can do, the whole 'big brother' riff don't start sounding too bad."

— Special Agent Carl Chambers, ATF

Government efforts to investigate and control supers fall under the FBI (Department G), the NSA, and the ATF. Critically important information on known supers (known secret IDs, etc.) is held in Operation Strongbox, a computer system (location unrevealed) that is protected against machine telepaths and intrusion specialists in a Refrigerator, and which can only be opened by the President, the Secretary of Defense (if the President is incapacitated), or the Head of the NSC (if the two people listed above are both incapacitated). It is available to officials only on a Need to Know basis, which is defined as a hero turning into a national security threat without evidence of mind control. The President has broader latitude with the files, but has never chosen to use them.

There are relatively few gestalts in public service. Recent actions by the Tyranny League have intensified fear and misgivings, and there have been several attempts to resurrect Project CounterMeasures in one form or another.

There is also a secret government sponsored Gestalt think-tank, Project Electra, which has at least five members. The members of the Think-Tank are a mystery, but they provide advice on economic and foreign policy, and defense strategy. The government would like to expand Electra's membership, but wants to make sure they find gestalts which they can trust.

There are a few other gestalts in high places. As mentioned in the Local Heroes section, two of the secret service agents assigned to protect the President are gestalts. The effect of telepaths on the President or the Supreme Court is a matter of grave concern to the Secret Service and other government agencies, and has been an issue in the last three presidential elections.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

"Trying a case involving gestalts is very much like getting a root canal while listening to fingernails scratching on a blackboard as you're forced to watch a marathon of Pauly Shore movies."

— Hartley Tristam, attorney at law

When gestalts appeared in 1989, they threw the legal system for a loop. The following legal precedents have been set for the use of Gestalt abilities in the United States.

1) Attacking someone with a Gestalt ability is assault and battery; attacking someone with the intent to kill is attempted murder. There are mitigating circumstances (see Point 3, below).

2) The existence of psionics has been established in a court of law beyond a reasonable doubt. The use of psionics to read memories has not been decided by the court, and is not yet allowable as evidence; psionic lie detectors are not (yet) permitted. (This is generally true worldwide; in emergencies, some countries with less than complete respect for civil liberties allow government telepaths to use their gifts to gather evidence; this practice is extremely controversial; the use of a Philippine government telepath on an American citizen in 1998 caused a major diplomatic incident.)

3) The Supreme Court has recognized that super-powered vigilantes may perform law enforcement duties in a costumed identity and maintain that identity if they are vouched for by law enforcement agencies and if they use reasonable force. Penalties for costumed vigilantes who violate this are often quite severe (Chris Turgeon v. The State of New York, 1991).

4) Masked vigilantes who are associated with law enforcement identities may be allowed to maintain privacy in their costumed identity if they are vouched for by law enforcement agencies, even when charged (but not if convicted) (Kinestar v. The State of New York, 1992).

5) In the United States (and most Western countries), Pure gestalts are considered citizens of the country in which they first appeared, and are subject to the laws of that country. If the court can show they have the emotions and cognizance of an adult, they're tried as an adult. The archetypal nature of a Gestalt is not a valid defense against committing crimes (i.e. the Blood Red King is still guilty even though it's an invariable part of his nature that he promotes misery and suffering).

6. Evidence gathered through the use of a precognitive or retrocognitive is invalid (this was established in a rather spectacular fashion during the O.J. Simpson trial).

These rulings are *highly* controversial, and some feel that they were established under secret psionic duress. Nevertheless, they have survived many challenges. In addition:

The technology to effectively contain supers is only a recent accomplishment, and may affect future laws regarding gestalts.

Killing someone who resembles classical patterns of monsters and the undead is still technically murder. (Pastor Brown v. State of California, 2002)

Law enforcement authorities may use super-prison technology if they view a suspect as "a probable escape risk" and get a judge's consent. "Extremely probable escape risks" are sent to the Orbital Containment Facility, which also requires a judge's

consent. "Probable escape risks" may attend trials remotely (watch and testify on closed circuit television), but this requires the courtroom to be heavily monitored, and two lawyers (one sitting at the accuser's side, the second in the courtroom) must be present. Three times, the United States Supreme Court has refused to hear challenges to circuit court rulings on this matter. It is possible to get a court order to overturn "probable escape risk" rulings.

Of course the death penalty does apply to gestalts. Six gestalts have been executed to date in the United States (and many more worldwide); Blackmark, a Texas bank robber and killer, was executed in 1992, but returned to life in 1995 and killed the judge and jury who convicted him.

Many gestalts find it difficult to defend themselves in a court of law. Gerald Curry of Columbia has set up the Gestalt Defense Fund to ensure that gestalts know their rights and obtain proper legal protection, though there's been some controversy over Columbia enemies being denied access to the foundation's resources.

TECHNOLOGY

MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY

"It's a real bear trying to keep up with all these new drugs and experimental technologies. If they save lives, I'm not going to complain, but I sure wouldn't want to be a member of the FDA right now."

— Dr. Steven Temple, chief of surgery, Pinehurst General

Nowhere are new developments in technology more noticeable than they are in the field of medicine, and the advances in medicine on Gestalt-Earth have been spectacular.

ARTIFICIAL ORGANS

Artificial prosthetics to counter loss of limbs, sensory organs, bad hearts, and spinal damage are available, but very expensive. The occurrence of rejection is much lower with this new technology.

"Bionic" technology is inferior to possessing an actual organ; cybernetic superhumans are not fea-

sible with commonly available technology (there are exceptions, as noted in the Technology section, but combat capable cyborgs are created with extremely expensive military technology. Adjust origins accordingly.)

The most noteworthy invention is the artificial spine, which has improved the lives of thousands of people since it was invented in 1995, despite a cost pf over \$100,000 for the operation. When an artificial spine helped Columbia friend Chris Turgeon recover from paralysis, Columbia's legal counsel Gerald Curry started the Turgeon Foundation to help those with a low-income pay for the operation.

Progress has been made in the field of organ budding, regrowing organs such as bladders and hearts and nerve cells from a host's cells; this is one field where rapid improvement can be expected.

Early efforts are being made in the field of budding replacement, using a patient's own tissue to create cellular replacements. The next major emerging bioscience (perhaps inspired by Dr. Power) will likely be virology, as the creation of benign viruses holds great promise in the treatment of disease.

OTHER MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS

Some progress has been made in fighting cancer and AIDS, with new drugs that strengthen the immune system (and combat allergies). The treatment for diabetes is greatly improved on Gestalt-Earth, and there's even some hope in treating Alzheimer's disease.

Late-term cancer is still nearly impossible to treat, even by gestalt healers. However, following the death of Jordan's King Hussein, medical experts are redoubling their efforts.

The human genetic code has been completely mapped, and a definitive gene map is freely available to major laboratories worldwide. Practical genetic engineering using this data has already been started, and by 2012, it may be possible that major strides will be taken in the fight against most genetic defects and cancer. Cosmetic genetic engineering (engineering for specific physical, intellectual, or emotional properties) will also be feasible by 2012, as will practical life extension.

Unfortunately, the news isn't all good. The world has not forgotten 1993's Red Plague epi-

REGENERAN

Gestalt research has discovered a substance called Regeneran, which (marketed under the brand *Celutol* and *Viggomar* by Bristol-Myers) can heal wounds in an amazing amount of time. Regeneran has three varieties:

Regeneran Type I: Regeneration 1 (Only for recovery rates from Lethal damage)

Regeneran Type II: Regeneration 3, Recovery Rate increase 1, Recovery Bonus +3 (Only for recovery of Lethal damage, side effects Cramps, Diarrhea)

Regeneran Type III: Regeneration 7, Recovery Rate increase 1, Recovery Bonus +6 (Only for recovery of Lethal damage, side effects Cramps, Diarrhea, possible carcinogen)



demic, with its accompanying images of millions of dead bodies strewn over the streets of Calcutta. The Plague was a deadly contagion invented by the (now deceased) supervillain Dr. Typhus that raged out of control in many parts of the non-Industrial world between 1993 and 1995 and even ravaged a few isolated towns in Europe and North America. There are fears that other Mad Scientist Gestalts are engineering plagues to use as weapons against humanity.

Controlling health care costs is still one of the great debates for most western societies. One way that is commonly used to sidestep this issue is the use of Healing Gestalts. Superheroes with healing abilities sometimes volunteer to help people in clinics. In America (and around the world) the Healing Gestalt is a common one.

The AMA frowns on this practice as unfair competition for available medical professionals. The medical profession privately refer to Gestalt healing as "quackery with a better track record". They, however, insist on medical certification and training for full time gestalt healers. The medical profession doesn't hesitate to broadcast horror stories of phony gestalt healers, and has tried to make it illegal for anyone to use healing powers unless they're a trained and licensed medical practitioner. (The general public

doesn't appreciate their efforts, however fraud cases and the power of the medical lobby continues to make this an ongoing concern).

Another factor that discourages gestalt medical practitioners is the 1994 case of Dr. Shannon Ford, a British Medical Doctor Gestalt, who was kidnapped by the *Red Chain*, a Slavery Gestalt. The Red Chain had learned about her powers, grabbed her from a hospital in Bristol while she was in the middle of performing surgery and then offered to give her services to anyone who would meet his price of \$1 million. When it became obvious that the Red Chain was going to be captured by British authorities, he killed her out of sheer spite.

After this incident, many of the most powerful gestalt healers went underground.

Columbia has its own Medical Gestalt (Dr. Cross) and a Medical Gestalt stationed in Washington DC works for the executive branch (Dr. Leo Leonard).

INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY

"Did you expect to drive a rocket car to work? Did you expect to commute into orbit? The New GM, for a New Age. Keep watching the stars, because we're going to give you a good look at them."

The last ten years have seen a quantum leap in the development of industrial technology, and some have labeled this “The New Industrial Revolution”. The key revolutions behind modern technology include:

NEW ELECTRICS FOR OLD

The foundation of the New Revolution was the Astra-Volt, a mass-produced battery invented by the Gestalt scientist Dr. Emilio Astrada (better known as “Dr. Astra”) in 1991 that has twenty times the equivalent energy storage of a “normal” battery at room temperature. Once this was developed, a lot of other technical innovations became possible.

In 1992, the first New Electric engine was developed that used the Astra-Volt technology. These cars, capable of reaching speeds of up to 90 miles an hour with a range of 600 miles, were the first electric vehicles to provide a practical rival to gasoline cars. When Detroit initially refused to back the car, Dr. Astra found his own financial backers and founded his own company, Aztech. Aztech’s first line of electric cars came out in 1997, priced well below their Detroit rivals. By 2004, the Big Three had switched most of their production facilities to Electrics, with diesel trucks being the sole area of automotive engineering unaffected by Electrics. Electrics comprise 46% of the 2007 new car market, and the Aztech Nucleus is the best selling car in the world.

This is causing a downturn in the petroleum industry, as well as drastically turning the balance of power in the Middle East; the use of petroleum in New Plastics is cushioning the blow. It’s also helped control smog in many major metropolitan areas in North America and Europe, and to ease the environmental effects of growth in China and India.

Attempts have been made to develop a New Electric jet engine, but so far, no practical working models have made it to prototype. A lot of companies (and a few independent gestalt researchers) are considering the problem.

NEW PLASTICS

First developed by a gestalt researcher at Dow in 1992, this material is slightly harder and more durable than steel but is much lighter, cheaper, and easier to recycle than metal, and is rapidly replacing wood and even steel in construction. This has seriously affected the steel industry, and hurt the timber industry. On the other hand, the prices of homes, cars, and consumer goods are down; it has had a mixed effect on the American economy. It has also, however, reduced the price for repairs of damage caused by superbeings, and kept insurance rates from going through the roof.

BULLET TRAINS

Large sections of the U.S. Eastern seaboard are being linked by a new generation of bullet trains that

use a New Electric engine and New Plastic construction. These trains are not quite as fast as air travel, but much less expensive. The United States West Coast, however, is resisting this new form of transport in favor of automobiles. An exception to this is the recently opened (July 2002) Los Angeles–New York train. An average bullet train reaches 320 kph (200 mph) and is usually underground with a lot of security devices to prevent tampering. The bullet trains have pretty much filled the niche of buses and passenger trains, and are starting to be used to haul freight. They have about twice the travel time of an average airline flight, and fares cost about 60% of an average airfare.

FUSION ENERGY

The commercial development of fusion plants to provide a limitless source of energy is expected in the next two years. Cornwallis Fusion plant, outside Washington DC, was the first operational fusion plant in the world; El Viejo Grande in Mexico has just come on-line (and is selling cheap electricity to California), while eight others near completion.

COMPUTERS

Personal computers are faster, more powerful, less expensive, and easier to use. Voice recognition systems are now commonplace. In 2007, a standard home PC might be \$800 (US) for:

- 2 TB onboard RAM
- 128 GHz processor clock speed; Wireless Internet (2 MB/second) data connection.
- 8 GB Video memory, displayed on a 27” flatscreen monitor
- 8 TB Optical Read/Write Removable Drive
- 500 GB USB Drive
- Advanced Speech Recognition/Display Operating System, w/auto-translator.

Computers and televisions are beginning to merge. Many HDTV stations are accessible over the Internet through encrypted sites. GTV is available via cable television and by high quality streaming video.

The introduction of Quadrant computer chip in 1992 (a “quantum chip” developed by Dr. Richard Greer and integrated into general PC architecture in 1993) was responsible for much of the current generation of computing machines. Most modern machines are based on evolutions of the Quadrant. The major problem with computing is that developments are occurring so rapidly that the infrastructure does not exist to support machines at maximum specifications, especially in communications (which is only now beginning to support the current limit).

Most devices are becoming computerized; computer home managers (systems designed to turn homes into “smart homes”) can now be purchased at an affordable price. Computer video is com-

monplace, employed for personal messaging and security. It's rather easy to cover areas in a home with a camera system for cheap home surveillance. The only thing keeping it from becoming widespread is the glut of new technologies; there's been so many new advances that it's hard for consumers to know where to spend their bucks.

Another important computer field is the development of "Artificial Intelligence" (or, as Dr. Astra liked to call them, "Machine-Tooled Sentient Personalities"). Als do exist, but they're extremely rare. Als are more or less created by trial and error; it's virtually impossible to predict an A.I.'s personality or capabilities before it's created. An A.I. can be a useful tool, but they can also be a grave liability. Few individuals have constructed Als; Dr. Astra, Dr. Power, Dr. Cyrus Barrowman of Columbia, and Dr. Gunther Strauss, a friend of the Hollywood Knights. Dr. Power is known to have a half dozen Als in her service, assisting her in her research.

Ever since the 1930s, people have dreamed of the ultimate computer: the home robot. There have been incremental improvements in robot technology; for a few hundred dollars, very life-like cat and dog robots are available, and remote control vacuum cleaners can separate most valuable objects (coins, rings) from dirt. However, the home robot servant or companion still has a long ways to go.

AUTOMATION

Perhaps the most revolutionary changes in society are going to be in the area of automation. Advances in computing and robotics are allowing various tasks to be completed much more quickly and efficiently. This potentially puts a lot of people out of work (or force many people to shift careers). There is a lot of public resistance to new automation technologies, but it's likely to be widely accepted in all areas within the next ten years.

WEAPONS

"These things aren't a real weapon. Who the Hell invented these, Clinton? No recoil, no regular maintenance, and mandated computer locks! Why the %\$#\$ do they need to put locks on &\$^& toys?"*

— Scotty Riggs, gun show organizer

As one might expect, developments in the public sector has also been met with equivalent efforts in the military, and the battlefield of the 21st Century is going to be an interesting —and deadly—place.

ENERGY WEAPONS

Developments in New Electrics have made energy beam weapons (blasters) possible and viable. The military has adopted beam weapons as a minor part of their arsenal, and energy weapons are beginning to find their way into the hands of police and citizenry.

Most people, however, still prefer conventional weapons systems, and many true gun fanatics view these weapons as abominations.

Smith and Wesson's Gauss series of blasters is the most popular. Ammo is a rechargeable battery pack (one-hour of household current restores one charge) that slides into a module. The Gauss fires a momentary discharge of hot gas in a magnetic sheath (about .05 second discharge) which fires along the path of a laser beam.

The pistol is a hard black plastic, about ten inches long, and weighs about 1.5 pounds. The rifle measures about thirty-nine inches, and weighs about nine pounds. Both blasters have a Mysteria computer instant targeting sight that calculates the trajectory of the shot and provides a small but clear targeting diagram.

The Gauss series has an optional thumbprint ID lock; the blaster cannot fire until the owner or an authorized user successfully does a thumb print ID on the gun's sensor. This has made the weapon popular with the gun control lobby — and deepened the antipathy of gun affectionatos.

PISTOL

Smith and Wesson 2400 Gauss: **Blast 5**, PF: Accurate, Extra: Autofire
Power Cost: 17; Device Cost: 12

RIFLE

Smith and Wesson 3200 Gauss: **Blast 8**, PF: Accurate, Improved Range, Extra: Autofire
Power Cost: 26; Device Cost: 18

STUN WEAPONS

The Japanese have made great strides in developing stun gun technology (as well as rivaling the United States' faltering battlesuit program with their own secret developments).

The Japanese stunning weapon is the *No-boseru* (dizzy) gun, which fires a subsonic signal that scrambles sensations in the target's inner ear, which paralyzes all but the toughest individuals. The weapon has started being exported in the United States.

Noboseru Sonic Pistol: **Stun 6** (Extra: Range, Flaw - Sensory Shield defends) and **Dazzle 6** (hearing, Linked to Stun)

Power Cost: 18; Device Cost: 12

TARGETING SYSTEMS

Advancements in computing have made laser sights very cost-effective and even more efficient than those found on blasters. The best are military grade gunsights found only on advanced army weapons or on the creations of a Gun Gestalt like Weaponsmith. They have the following bonuses:

SMARTSUIT	DEVICE
Skills: Knowledge (tactics) 8	
Powers: Protection 6, Datalink 5, Super Senses 7 (detect friend or foe, analytical, acute, direction sense, distance sense, timesense, <i>Flaw</i> - requires an available satellite view), Comprehend 2 (languages)	
Powers 18 = Total 18, Device (hard to lose) Cost: 16	

PISTOL SIGHT

Accurate, Improved Range 1

RIFLE SIGHT

Accurate 2, Improved Range 2

MILITARY HARDWARE

"I gotta admit, this new drone and computer suit technology is pretty cool. Just as long as someone doesn't end up putting them together so we end up flying giant frigging robots."

— Captain Robert Heikens, 71st Infantry Division, US Army

More impressive in terms of military technology is the new generation of combat drones. The M-28R Wainwright (first fielded in 1998) is a light mounted tank, the first in this new generation of computer controlled ground combat tank. The Wainwright is the first tank that employs New Plastics in the construction, it has advanced computerized electronic systems (and a newly developed anti-EMP technology that was developed by a researcher and is still top secret), travels at over 80 mph over rough terrain and is armed with a 90mm recoilless rifle as its main weapon.

The Wainwright has room for a two-man team that assists in operations (a driver and a gunner), but can operate independently with a 100-km range via remote control. It is purchased as a Tank (see *M&M*, p. 103-104), but with a Speed 4 and the Remote Control feature.

DRONES

The major breakthrough in military technology has been in drones; the US Army is fielding drones in large numbers. Equipped with sonic weapons, the latest generation of drones have a fuel and control range of up to 750 kilometers, and is equipped with bombs or screamers (sonic weapons) that are detonated above enemy troops. These weapons are being added to the arsenal of several major American police forces, and used as an anti-Gestalt weapon. The most common drone is produced by Zhengcorp's Freedom Industries Division, one of the most profitable branches of the infamous Hong Kong based conglomerate.

Treat them as a helicopter with the armament of a Military Helicopter, a Toughness of 12 and remote control.

There are other types of drones: the army has developed microdrones, which run off tiny solar battery engines and are used as scouts. These robots are the size of a spider, with full radio listen/transmit scramble/satellite capabilities.

[Not to be outdone by a mere country, Dr. Power has her own microdrones – which are the size of dust motes and use gravitic technology to fly.]

THE SHARP DRESSED SOLDIER

The other military development is the Smart Suit. Currently fielded by some US Army units, the smart suit is the ultimate weapon for the ultimate soldier.

The smart suit provides a lot of important benefits, from armor, to a satellite link which allows a soldier to access a drone or a satellite camera to access an overhead view of the battlefield, which includes a HUD that identifies objects on the battlefield. This technology is also being applied in the civilian sector, with GPS transmitters being implanted in children in order to track them if they go missing (a technological development that alarms both civil libertarians and teenagers).

The smart suit does not work well when the satellite data is not available, and can be damaged by intense magnetic fields (such as those produced by EMPs).

PROXSYS COMPUTER RECOGNITION SYSTEMS

The final recent development is ProxSys; or Proximity Profile Recognition System, or Smart Missile technology. This technology allows a computer aboard a missile to check and identify the visual profile of every object in the sky and maintain a target lock on objects identified as enemy craft, rendering stealth technology useless. Believed to have been developed in a Syrian computer lab (probably by a gestalt) ProxSys missiles recently made their presence felt in Lebanon, where the first generation of this missile shot down two Israeli jets. The proliferation of ProxSys technology is of extreme concern to the United States, as its accurate enough to negate the advantage of Stealth technology and make their air force vulnerable to enemy fire. So far, the general public doesn't know about ProxSys technology, but that should change soon.

THE FUTURE

The future of military technology can probably be summed up in one word – gravitics. Thanks to the research of "The Genius Dr. Berkov, Pride of Russia" practical gravitic vehicles will soon be on the market. Gravitic engines are smaller and more streamlined than fuel cells; once this technology reaches the States, it will likely be integrated into the developing drone technology and allow for compact drone propulsion systems. The Tyranny League is worried about battlesuit development, but it may be drone technology that will turn out to be the real threat to

gestalt supremacy. The army of 2017 may be vastly different than that of 2007.

THE REFRIGERATOR

"I've heard of a 'revolving door prison system'; but this... is ridiculous!"

— Julius Fannon, warden, Blood Mountain, Georgia
Maximum Risk Corrections Institute

The only known technology that can effectively contain supervillains is "The Refrigerator", which was invented in 1998 by Dr. Roland Adams under Columbia's sponsorship. Dr. Adams was a "Eccentric Inventor" Gestalt, and the Refrigerator is true Gestalt technology; according to all conventional analysis, there is no way on Earth it should work, and people can barely reproduce it, let alone understand it. It is known as "the refrigerator" because Dr. Adams' original purpose for it was to keep his beverages cool.

Dr. Adams disappeared in 2003, while designing his "telescope" (which turned out to actually be a spacecraft; he flew off into orbit and has not been seen since).

Refrigerator trucks that have a single (weaker) Refrigerator installed in a huge rig are available in Chicago, New York, Washington DC, and Los Angeles. Most major cities have a lock-up of one or two Refrigerator cells. It's rumored that Columbia has its own private Refrigerator to deal with criminals that the team views as too dangerous to risk letting loose into the world. There are eight permanent Refrigerator strongholds in the world. They are located in Olancho, California USA, Blood Mountain, Georgia USA, Troy, Illinois, USA, Orkney Island, United Kingdom, Sholapur, India, Haikou, China, and the Orbital Unit (which circumnavigates the equator over the Pacific Ocean south of Hawaii).

Six new refrigerator units are under construction: one is scheduled to open soon in Texas, and a second Orbital, allegedly built to hold just the Tyranny League (when they're captured), is under construction.

The Refrigerators vary between sixteen to twenty-four cells apiece, with four criminals to a cell block, each in a separate cell. It is possible to converse with people in the same cell block. Television signals are beamed onto a bare wall, and inmates can request programming; excessive sex and violence is generally edited, but the level of censorship depends on the inmate and on the administrator of the facility; most inmates can get access to television and movies of PG-13 level without restriction.

The Refrigerator units are effective at containing most gestalts, but having people capable of guarding the Refrigerators against external attack has been virtually impossible without gestalt guards or equivalent technology. Recently, the government has started offering huge salaries (\$500K and higher) to gestalts willing to serve as guards, but given the incredible hazards of the position, few gestalts have

REFRIGERATOR

TEMPLATE

Toughness: 15; Size: Large; Features: Communications, Computers, Fire Prevention System, Holding Cell, Infirmary, Living Space, Power System, Security System.

Powers: Affects Insubstantial on Toughness

Cost: 14 power points

taken the offer. Most gestalts who have the power and the spirit of risk-taking needed for the position are already superheroes or supervillains.

THE ORBITAL CONTAINMENT FACILITY

The largest and most important Refrigerator is the Orbital Containment Facility (codenamed the Icebox). It was launched in 2001, and is currently in geostationary orbit around the equator over the Pacific Ocean south of Hawaii.

There are sixteen containment modules on the Orbital, plus a command module in the central core. Each module is an independent unit, and can break away from the central core in the event of an escape. This is meant to discourage anyone who's trying to escape from getting access to the other inmates.

It requires a court order to have a gestalt imprisoned in the Icebox, and the order must be reviewed and confirmed by a federal circuit court judge. Felons can be placed in the Icebox only if it is proven beyond a reasonable doubt that no terrestrial facility can safely prevent them from using their powers in a hostile manner. No one has ever broken out of the Icebox.

There is a staff of eighteen guards and workers permanently stationed on the Icebox. They rotate on ninety-day tours of duty, and receive a lot of financial compensation. Some villains make it clear that they hold the guards in complete contempt and would kill them at the slightest opportunity.

SPACE

"The stars are being given to the common man. I only hope we prove worthy of the gift. But if we are, what a time to be alive!"

— Ted Chess, Gestalt of Space Exploration

One major difference between Gestalt-Earth and our world is that the space program is more advanced. Titan is a NASA employee and serves as a delivery system for the US space program. Between Titan and the space research of Dr. Astra, NASA is substantially more advanced, and with exposure to extraterrestrial cultures, there is far more incentive for government and taxpayers to fund space development.

There are six fixed near-space habitats; each of which is capable of housing over fifty inhabitants. One of them is the Icebox, the orbital penal facility for the world's most dangerous gestalts. The farthest

near-space facility is the Tombaugh Space Telescope (a larger version of the Hubble) which was launched in 2006, and now occupies a stable orbit around the moon.

There are permanent survey satellites around all major planets, moons, and asteroids in the solar system, and a tracking device has been placed on Halley's Comet. A great deal of effort has been spent tracking asteroids whose orbits might pose a danger to Earth; plans are in the works to safely break up the larger threats. Operation Blowtorch, Earth's asteroid neutralization program (under NASA supervision, with help from other world space agencies), is scheduled to begin construction in 2007.

The first manned (non-gestalt) mission to Mars is scheduled in late 2008, probably with a gestalt escort. Work on a Martian colony is scheduled to begin on January 1, 2010, with gestalt assistance, pending the outcome of the survey missions.

Perhaps NASA's greatest asset is Ted Chess, a gestalt known in the press as the Surveyor. He ranks with the Warder of the Hollywood Knights, the Titan, and the Russian cosmonaut Plasma Sun, as one of the few gestalts capable of flying at FTL and surviving in space. Chess is an Exploration Gestalt who spends his life journeying to nearby star systems, delivering and examining scientific equipment.

The problematic effects of long-term space debilitation (bone weakness, loss of muscle tissue) have yet to be solved. Considerable work is proceeding in this area.

While space science marches on, space industry is still lagging. There is only one major facility, the Dow Chemical Orbital, which leases space to sixteen companies for space-based production of chemicals and pharmaceuticals. It has yet to come even vaguely close to making a profit; the companies participating in the project do so out of altruism and in the hopes of making substantial profits over the long term. One project that is expected to greatly accelerate these efforts is:

THE MEGALITHIC ORBITAL NAUTICAL DELIVERY OPERATIONS SYSTEM (MONDO)

In 1997, Dr. Astra had become dissatisfied with conventional launch systems; space exploration and colonization was not happening at a pace that satisfied him. Using the plans of a rogue Canadian weapons designer as his base, he built the Ecuadorian Low Orbit Cannon, a giant linear mass driver that was completed in 1999 at the Equator at a cost of forty billion dollars. The ELOC mass driver has a two-kilometer long "barrel" (really a linear accelerator) that shoots payloads directly into low orbit, where a docking arm catches them and adjusts their trajectory. It is limited to packages with a maximum weight of about 200 kilograms. (Two Thrillseeker Gestalts have already died while attempting to hitchhike a ride into orbit.)

The ELOC was an impressive piece of engineering but its mass limitations bothered Astra. He looked over a lot of the work that had been done in low orbit engineering and proposed that humanity spend a trillion dollars to build MONDO, the greatest technological wonder of the modern world. He was unable to procure funding prior to his death in 1999, but his memory (combined with the fear of alien invaders) persuaded the world's governments to change their minds. At a cost of over one trillion dollars, when this structure is completed it will be 100 kilometers tall and 300 kilometers long, an elevator that lifts payloads as heavy as 10 tons directly to low orbit, where small rockets will carry and direct them to their location. While still several years from completion, it is already an impressive sight.

Several gestalts have secretly been helping with construction and the manufacture of special materials, which has cut costs by an order of magnitude (in today's world, it would probably cost about ten trillion dollars). Once MONDO is completed, the human colonization of near orbit (and the moon) will begin in earnest.

ORBIT CITY

The largest human off-planet habitation is Orbit City. This station, twenty modules connected in space, was designed by Dr. Astra, the most renowned gestalt scientist in human history. The first module was launched in 2000; it is currently 22 modules (including 10 habitation domes capable of comfortably housing 144 families each, in a space equal to a spacious terrestrial apartment). The city rotates at a spin that provides it with gravity equivalent to earth gravity, though one of the facilities is tethered to avoid the spin (and hence serve as a zero gravity environment).

The city is organized into two rings; an inner ring for industrial work, and an outer ring with habitation modules; both rings orbit a fusion plant at the core that partially relies on collected solar wind particles for fuel. (Dr. Astra considered the solar wind magnet his finest technical achievement, though some might argue that the docking scoop that can board ships onto a station that's rotating at a velocity of 80 mi/sec is an even more impressive achievement). A series of airlocks and a tram system connects the modules.

Construction has begun on a third ring, which is scheduled to expand to thirty modules by 2008 (including three permanent astronomical observatory modules).

Orbit City is officially a United States colony in orbit. It has a population of 868; in 2006 a girl named Heather Chesterton was born aboard the station, the first human born in space. Orbit City has an elected government, and its citizens vote in federal and Florida (its launchpoint) state elections. It's a thriving little town in orbit with a tourist port and a lot of merchandising on Earth, which helps

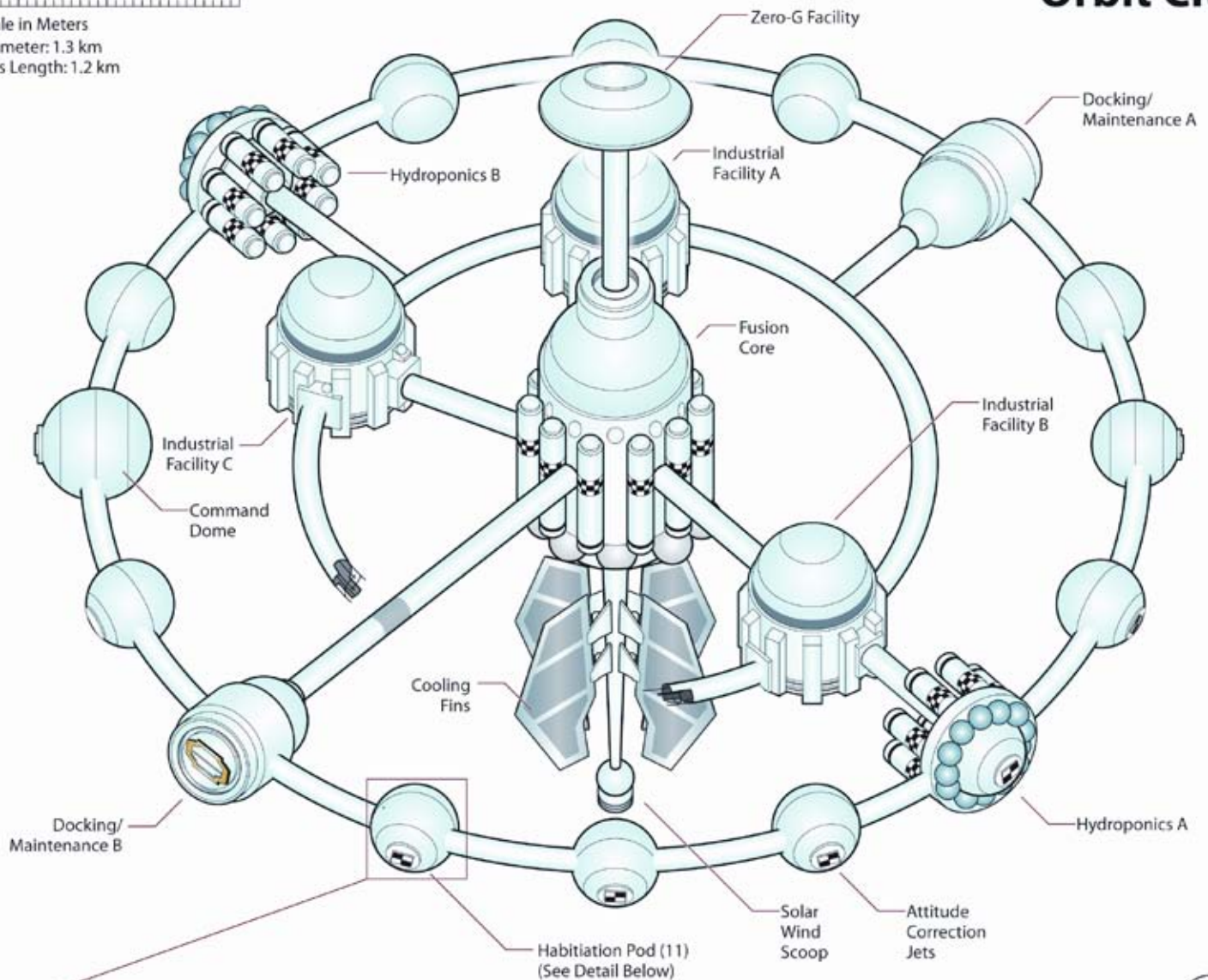
0 50 100 150 200 250 300

Scale in Meters

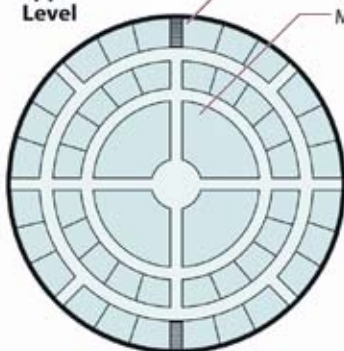
Diameter: 1.3 km

Axis Length: 1.2 km

Orbit City



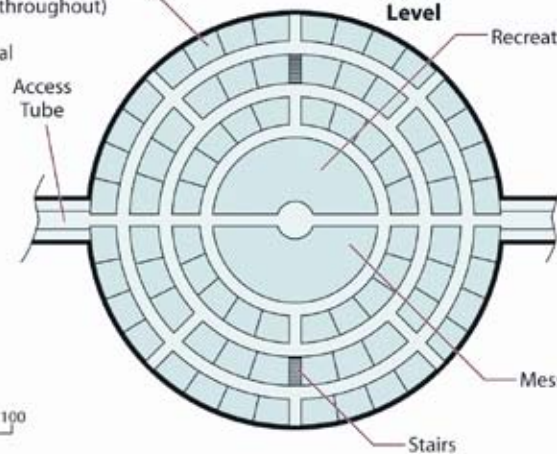
Upper Level



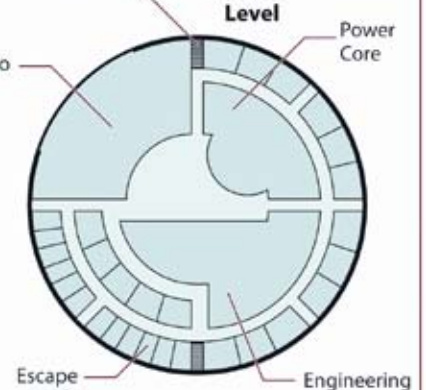
Stateroom (throughout)

Access Tube

Central Level



Lower Level



HABITATION POD

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Scale in Meters

EVENT HOOK: ICEBOX COWBOY

Okay, What Happened?:

You were one of the Virgin Twenty, one of the first team of twenty security guards ever sent up into orbit in the Icebox. It was a miserable experience, the worst time of your life, but the money and the benefits were worth it.

One thing no one was expecting was that every member of the Virgin Twenty would draw superpowers on the next gestalt wave. Even the one who'd committed suicide came back from the dead as a zombie, the Gestalt of Loneliness. How'd this happen? Was it that funky cosmic ray storm that the eggheads were worried about? Did one of the prisoners somehow chain gestalt you?

Worried that the authorities will dissect you, you and the other eighteen survivors have formed a pact to keep the source of your powers a secret from your former employers.

pay the bills. The individuals who live in Orbit City are a mix of space researchers, chemical engineers and biotech researchers who perform experiments for major corporations, and mavericks who want to become colonists. Orbit City is not self-sufficient, and is not expected to become self-sufficient until well into the century. Its town motto is "Who Needs Gravity?" (a hangover from the early days, when the station was zero-G).

Orbit City is run from a partnership between the government and several private foundations. The city is run by Lt. Colonel Cheryl Lee, a US Air Force officer. Two gestalts have chosen to live at the City: *Discovery* and *Highpoint* (better known to the locals as Rich and Steve). The two gestalts proved their worth in a fight last year against a "space monster" that attacked the station last year (later identified as a creature native to Ar'Kayadin space) and two rescues of the zero-G module when it broke free of its tether.

The Titan, the Warder, and Ted Chess have also been given residences at the station.

THE ASTRA FOUNDATION

When Dr. Astra died, he left behind a number of very special projects, many of which he kept as a carefully guarded secret, lest they fall into the hands of people like the Tyranny League. The Astra Foundation, administered by Astra's late wife Amelie Astrada and his 12-year-old son Rocket Astrada (who's always getting himself into trouble) is the culmination of Dr. Astra's noble dream. One of the greatest projects — and most carefully guarded secrets — is Project X, Astra's own personal battlesuit program.

Eager to keep them out of the hands of the world's governments, the X-Brigade trains out of a secret underground facility in New Mexico (a former nuclear testing ground which, unbeknownst to the general public, has been cleansed of radioactive effects), learning how to harness the wonderful and terrible power of the X-Suit. The Foundation chooses people from Astra's many industrial concerns, looking not for the best and the brightest, but for the most passionate and honest; Dr. Astra fervently believed that a person's ability to dream and pursue their dream was the highest exemplar of the human spirit, so the X-Brigade often chooses ordinary (but dedicated) people to fill the suits.

There are currently 20 suits in existence; production currently costs about \$50 million



per suit. Surprisingly, Astra (and his survivors) encouraged the pilots to learn about the suits' inner workings and make personal modifications. Some of the people who master the suits tailor them in ways that make them look like gestalt superheroes, and are slowly emerging into the world to fight evil.

The Foundation is cautious about going public so soon — Amelie would like to wait until the Eiko invasion lands before going public. However, members of the X-Brigade are naturally irrepressible, and there's a lot of evil in the world that needs to be fought. Fortunately, no one's noticed four newly emerged superheroes scattered across the globe with extremely similar powers (though this lack of recognition will almost certainly not last.)

A big threat to the project's security is Rocket Astrada. He *really* wants to become a superhero, and is making his own version of the suit. His childish enthusiasm may lead him into glorious adventure — or it could get the little fool an early grave.

If the situation starts to unravel, Amelie has what she calls her trump card: a more primitive version of the suit. If people get too close to the truth, she'll field her own superhero *Captain Astra* and trumpet the arrival of "the all-tech superhero", equipped in an "advanced prototype". This will be a suicide mission for

whoever takes the role, because Amelie is counting on supervillains like the Tyranny League going after the prototype and destroying the research facility to keep the X-Suit from being developed. Only the bravest of men or women would dare to take up a challenge that leads to such a certain death.

ASTRA-ONE

Dr. Astra loved the idea of going out into the stars, and while he helped develop NASA's current fleet of space planes, he saved the best for himself. Similar in appearance but sleeker than a conventional space plane (which is itself an advanced version of the first generation of space shuttles), the Astra-One uses an experimental reactionless drive to rocket out of the earth's atmosphere and head into deep space. Piloted by former NASA astronauts Alvin "Skip" Meyers and Petra Corrigan, Astra-One spends eight months out of each year exploring the solar system between Mercury and Saturn, and four months in dry-dock. In extreme emergencies (First Contact with the Ar'Kayadin and the recent battle with the Eiko probe), the Astra estate has allowed superheroes to take control of Astra-One and use it to defend mankind.

Astra-Two and Astra-Three, with a 30% higher drive speed and a larger defense cannon, are currently under construction (in a secret factory located in New Mexico). They're expected to be completed in late 2006 and mid-2007, respectively.

Astra-1 can be treated as a Space Fighter (see *M&M*, p. 144) with a speed of 14.

ENTERTAINMENT

"Damn it, nothing's more entertaining than a couple of gestalts going at it in the middle of Times Square. If they'd just tell me beforehand when and where they're gonna fight, I'd bring a camera crew. C'mon guys, work with me. We'll be generous with profits on the DVD, I promise!"

— Hartley Ferguson, television producer

"Marge! Why can't I be the Gestalt of Donuts?"

— Homer J. Simpson

There are a number of interesting entertainment trends caused by developments spurred on by the Gestalt phenomenon.

COMIC BOOKS

"Gestalts gravitate to comic books like dolphins to a Japanese fishery." Edge once said, though the remark doesn't fully reflect the changes that have taken place in the industry over the last fifteen years. Marvel and DC Comics and its heroes are still published and are still popular, but most other comic books are adaptations of real world or quasi-real world heroes. Unlike the real world, comic book sales are not in decline, though it's still viewed as a pulp

X-SUIT

DEVICE

Powers: Device 18 (battlesuit)

Battlesuit: Enhanced Ability 5 (all Saving Throws), Force Field

Control: Blast 12, [Alternate Powers: **Create Object 10** [Impervious; Limited: force walls only], **Snare 12**, **Telekinesis 10** (PF: Precise)];

Protection 5, **Immunity 9** (life support), **Communication 10** (PF: Subtle), **Flight 6**, **Super Senses 9** (time sense, distance sense, direction sense, detect physical properties, acute, analytical), **Super Strength 1**

Powers 72 = Total Cost 72

medium (and thus not worthy of respect). Many long-time comic book creators are a little amused at the world taking on comic book overtones – when they aren't frightened by it.

DC Comics' Superman is the most popular book in the world. It's a little more popular on Gestalt-Earth than on our earth, perhaps because mainstream comics fans are looking for good role-models (Titan refuses to license his likeness to any comic book company, and usually points would be Titan Comics fans to the Man of Steel. "A lot of people think I'm the universe's way of ripping him off anyway, so why not read the original?" he says)

Columbia was once the most popular book based on real world supers, but has been surpassed in the last two years by Streethawk, posthumously published adventures of the deceased LA vigilante, published by Street Legal Comics. The Dead Columbians is an unauthorized British satire of dead members of Columbia coming back from their graves to deal with problems created by gestalt heroes (with tons of social and political satire, not to mention violence): this popular cult book is from Dead As A Doornail Comics, a British firm.

Most adaptations of gestalt superhero adventures are highly inaccurate; generally, the writers and artists create their own villains (some of which are close analogs to the real thing); the one attempt to use the Blood Red King as a Columbia antagonist was stopped when the heroes warned the publisher that a comic book with a Blood Red King portrayal might literally eat the child who was reading it. Supervillains generally don't like to be portrayed as losers and some villains are really picky about portrayals: Bloodkite, a now deceased member of the Tyranny League, once gutted a comic book artist who redrew his costume slightly because he thought the talons looked "stupid". The only supervillains who have voluntarily allowed themselves to be put into the public domain are Armageddo (who views the portrayal of his "defeats" to be a good disinformation tactic), and Cygnus ("why should I care about the scribbling of children?")

MOVIES

Movies on Gestalt-Earth are much the same as those in the real world. There are a lot of action-adventure movies that feature a human good guy vs.

a nasty gestalt villain. There have been two adventure movies featuring Columbia, and a Hollywood Knights movie (whose script had been uniformly rejected by the members) has been in the works for close to two years.

There have been over a dozen attempts to make serious dramatic movies involving gestalts. The most commercially successful of these was *I Can Fly* (1994) with Matthew Modine, as a young gestalt trying to cope with his powers and the get rich schemes of his friends, although most critics dismissed it as overly sentimental. Tom Cruise starred in *The Invincibles* (2003); a controversial and surprisingly good drama about a team of young gestalts who violently break apart because of their egos; the fight scenes are noteworthy for their brutality and their use of real time (most previous gestalt movies used slow motion). Last May, HBO aired *Give Me Liberty*, a four-hour documentary-drama on the life of Liberator that raised a major controversy and spurred several lawsuits.

Movie presentation technology is not particularly more advanced on Gestalt-Earth; the theater-going experience is much the same on both worlds. On the other hand, movie making is a little more advanced. The use of CGI is extensive and relatively inexpensive. The technology exists to create computer-generated actors that are completely convincing; so far, they have only made their appearance in computer multimedia.

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The most controversial Gestalt movie was 2003's *The Real Life of Jesus Christ*, which was filmed by someone who claimed to be a Time Travel Gestalt. The film was later exposed as a fraud.

There are a few gestalt actors, though they're quiet about it. The best is probably Jade Townsend, an African-American woman who performs in independent films, and who is absolutely riveting. Jon-Alan Thompson is a Charisma Gestalt who got

rave notices (and a rapidly growing cult of teenage girls) for *Bloody Day*, a slasher flick. Of course there are rumors that nearly every major actor or actress in Hollywood is a gestalt (many rumors center on Tom Cruise). The one prominent Hollywood gestalt who openly admits his powers is Jim Goddard; the Stunt-

man of the Hollywood Knights was a professional stuntman even before he received his powers.

TELEVISION

Television on Gestalt-Earth is quite similar to television on our own world. There are gestalt characters on soap operas, comedies, and some dramas. Columbia has guest starred on a number of programs, including the Simpsons. An episode of Friends where Joey got beaten up by a gestalt was hailed as one of TV's finest moments by critics (at least those who hate Joey), *It's Gestalt Stupid* was an ABC

sitcom satire of a superhero team that lasted for four seasons between 1994–1999 (like other "TGIF Friday" shows, it was a bomb with critics). *Dimension*, a 2003 FOX drama about a teenage gestalt, lasted six episodes before cancellation, and the 2004 UPN drama *G-Cop* lasted fourteen episodes. *Boston Gestalt* is a low-rated David E. Kelley show that aired on ABC in 2005, and still airs sporadically (though it's been criticized for its unfocused wackiness and its excessive emphasis on Gestalt Law).

Most people find gestalts not particularly engaging for comedy (at least in a way that works well for television, although some argue that the Gestalt shark episode of Baywatch was one of television's most hysterical moments), and too melodramatic for good drama (although an episode of ER depicting the aftermath of a Tyranny League battle against a Chicago superhero team won both an Emmy and a Peabody for its writing.)

The best-selling television set in the world is a Zhengnaut 36" stereo plasma HDTV, which lists for \$899 (US). The same HDTV with a built-in satellite



feed (or a 42" without satellite) sells for \$1299. The top television programs in the world are much the same as those in the real world.

The major networks remain in control of the television roost. They have one new rival; the major cable services have formed their own programming services, or DirectVu channels. DirectVu allows a viewer to input from a library of thousands of old television programs and movies and watch whatever they want to watch, when they want to watch it. The viewer can even pre-program a week's worth of programming on their own customized channel, which is then sent into the home (parents have been known to use this to censor their children's viewing). This has eroded the major networks slightly (there is still considerable demand for new programming); its greatest impact has been on small cable channels, syndication, and video rentals.

There is also (in the United States), GTV, the Gestalt Channel, which (since 1992) runs news, fight footage, and endless reruns of *It's Gestalt Stupid*. Most Gestalts consider it a nuisance and an embarrassment; *Today in the Gestalt Dimension*, GTV's prime time news, however, is an exception to the rule; most gestalts consider it a "must-see".

The most anticipated television event for the coming year is *Ar'Amaga* ("The Song of Man"), an eight hour documentary on the history of the Ar that's being produced by HBO for next February's sweeps, and will be Earth's first major glimpse into Ar history and culture. It will also be the first time that most Ar'Terrans will hear about the Eiko.

MUSIC

The music world remained much the same as it is in the real world; rock, country, hip-hop, and rhythm and blues remain America's most popular musical forms, and are imported to the rest of the planet.

There are a number of gestalt musicians and Gestalt-themed albums. *I Am Not Hendrix* is a popular band of speed-metal guitarists who (thanks to some clever videos on MTV's Buzz Bin) have captured the imagination of a lot of fans. Musicians tend to be less middle-of-the-road on Gestalt-Earth, and there is some interesting experimentation from many of the alternative bands; Extreme Alternative is a buzzword for a combination of industrial, speed metal, and art-rock that is emerging.

After the Ar'Turodain landed, there was a major surge of interest in alien culture, mostly in music, fashion, and literature. Several collections of Ar'Turodain military music have been released commercially, and have been wildly successful. (Ar'Turodain military music consists of a slow

paced rhythmic chant, accompanied by percussion). It is probably a fad.

There has been some cultural cross-pollination between the Ar and the Ar'Terrans; old human poetry and opera are big fads on several Ar'Turodain worlds. And, perhaps appropriately; heavy metal (especially speed metal) has caught on with a few of the younger Ar'Kayadin. Beethoven is also popular – after a careful examination of human culture, the Ar'Turodain officially recognizes "Ode to Joy" as the de facto Ar'Terran anthem.

MULTIMEDIA

Computer entertainment is similar to the real world. Virtual Reality simulations are a little more popular (VR goggles are less expensive and of higher quality) on Gestalt-Earth than in ours. A VR simulation: Microsoft VR Hero, a gestalt simulation that supported a virtual bodysuit technology, was released in 2004, but produced only mild interest. Network games are popular; many of them multi-player real time strategy games and elaborate fantasy worlds. The content in multimedia entertainment does seem to be juvenile and violent (fighting games and shooters are big sellers), although 3D modeling technology is beginning to produce realistic looking human actors.

Multimedia is one of the highest money earners in the entertainment industry, but due mostly to public perception of its market and its content, it doesn't receive much critical respect.

Some gestalt powers have useful applications on the Net. There are a number of gestalts with cyberkinesis (machine control ability) who are able to maintain an Internet presence. One unusual gestalt has a web page where he says that people can log on and experience mind control; he's able to send a mind control command via his web page that forces people to send him \$10 every time they access it. The author of the web page openly advertises that people who view this page will lose money, and requires people to click on a disclaimer before they view the page. Government and major ad agencies are very interested in this service...

There are (of course), plenty of web pages and web sites devoted to all manners of Gestalt. The Armageddo Home Page, where Armageddo describes many of his master plans (before he commits them), is quite entertaining. There are plenty of Titan and Cygnus and Columbia and Hollywood Knights pages (the Saga! Quote page is also extremely entertaining). Dynamo Jack also has over ten thousand websites (most of them made by teenaged girls, though sites (like beatthecrapouttadynamojack.com) is very popular with teenage boys).

EVENT HOOK: COMIC BOOKS

Be Careful What You Wish For

During your career as a comic book artist, you had the opportunity to meet more than a few superheroes and even a few villains. Once you remarked to one of the heroes you were drawing. "I wish I could be a superhuman" and the subject said "okay".

You later discovered you had superpowers. Furthermore, you also learned that the hero you were supposedly sketching was rescuing a cat from a tree two hundred miles away at the time of the interview. You have no idea who gave you your powers! Maligno in disguise? Some other trickster gestalt? A mentor gestalt looking for "worthy" pupils?

The Black Orion home page (no one's quite sure of Black Orion's actual identity) is a great place to go to get the latest data on supervillains (Black Orion is sketchier on the good guys). Cape Gossip is the best place on the web to go to find the inside dirt on Gestalt teams and their problems.

PRINT MEDIA

Few avenues of popular media have opened up to gestalts as much as magazines. *G-World*, a New York based magazine, is the most popular Gestalt rag; it's a People magazine style montage that focuses on Gestalt gossip that can be found in the checkout of every supermarket in Canada and the United States. It's main rival, *Pure Gestalt*, is a Los Angeles based magazine that's even tackier and less reliable. *Fighting Gestalt Journal* is an Atlanta based magazine that focuses on gestalt battles and gestalt combat abilities; its analysis of Gestalt battles can be downright unnerving. Miles Wilson, its editor-in-chief, is an Analytical Gestalt with abilities similar to the Measurer's. *Gestalt Combat* is a martial arts magazine focusing on martial arts styles and their gestalt practitioners. Wilson is often a guest on Nightline and This Week in the Gestalt Dimension.

For more serious types, *The New England Journal of Gestalt Studies* and *The New England Journal on Gestalt Psychology* are required reading.

FASHION

The fashion world often seems to be its own entity, with no real relationship to what anyone really wears or would want to wear. Nonetheless, the fashion and style world has had some reactions to gestalts.

The few attempts to try to mass-market superhero fashion have failed miserably. The general public doesn't particularly look attractive in tights. Superhero underwear and pajamas have been marketed to kids (although targeting a children's market engenders accusations of exploitation on the part of heroes). Still, superhero fashion has an eroticism that appeals to designers, so attempts to introduce superhero designs into mainstream fashion continue. Fashion designers enjoy designing superhero outfits, several groups (most notably Columbia) outfit its members in designer costumes, and Carnival of Columbia does sidework as a model.

The most successful piece from the superhero fashion ensemble to be adopted by the fashion world is the cape. Cloaks have also made a comeback, particularly in men's formal wear. Hats and headpieces are also more popular on Gestalt-Earth than on our Earth. There is a lot of superhero jewelry; many people like to wear pins and other accessories shaped like superhero emblems.

Some clubs, particularly in New York, have had parties with a Gestalt theme, and some rap DJs (and dancers) have taken to wearing superhero masks to

enhance their self-expression.

ATHLETICS

"Today's professional athletes bear a greater resemblance to the Gestalt of Moneymaking or self-aggrandizement than to a Gestalt of Competition. We lived for the glory of sport. Of course they had to ban us."

— Tom "Red Dog" Clarence

Athletic events have been wildly affected by Gestalts. Body contact sports were the most badly affected: gestalts not only dominated the sport, they frequently inflicted permanent injury to their competition. Until the invention of the Gestalt detector, the NFL, the NHL, and (to a lesser extent) the NBA, were plagued by crippling injuries, scandals, and wild accusations about gestalts, including the forced resignation of a rookie NFL head coach when (after taking a last place team to the Super Bowl in one year) he was accused of being a Coaching Gestalt.

Early scandals were extensive and spectacular. Tom Clarence of the New York Giants ran for 458 yards in a single playoff game in 1990, and was driven out of professional sports because of innuendo; more seriously, light heavyweight boxer Val "The Hammer" Quaid killed three opponents in succession in the ring and was charged with manslaughter; the DA successfully argued that Quaid knew he was a gestalt and it was criminally irresponsible for him to step into the ring when he knew he had that advantage. (Quaid soon found work as the criminal mercenary supervillain Breakout, but his criminal career has been lackluster at best – he never quite picked up the art of fencing loot without leaving a trail, and he's spent the last eight years in prison, courtesy of Cosmic Man).

Gestalts were officially banned in most sports in 1990, but the ban has proven unenforceable until recently. It's suspected that at least half dozen of the top professional athletes of the last decade were gestalts who were smart enough to tone down their performances when it looked like they might be attracting too much suspicion. But few people in the sports establishment wanted to press the point.

In 1992, the summer Olympic games were wracked by scandal, and Olympic records set during these years were asterisked (some of the asterisks were removed when the Gestalt detector was invented and the athletes passed a Gestalt detection test). Nearly three-quarters of the world's nations boycotted the 1996 Olympics, and even with a Gestalt detector system, that figure only improved to 60% in 2000. Professional sports didn't fare much better.

In 1993, at a meeting of owners of major American professional sports franchises, there was a "gentleman's agreement" to respect the bans of 1990 and not employ obvious gestalts. The invention in 1999 of a Gestalt Detector has greatly helped enforce the ban, but the blacklist has not gone over well

with everyone, especially with Athletic Gestalts who thrive on competition. Some gestalts have earned money and fame by competing in exhibitions, and there is talk about "Open Games" in 2008, an Olympics-style competition that will be open to anyone.

But for the most part, being a Gestalt athlete is an exercise in frustration. Gestalt athletes cannot earn the money or prestige that "normal" athletes make, and Gestalt exhibitions are "freak shows". Some wonder whether the very existence of gestalts cheapens human athletics (though as one former Olympic decathlete put it: "Female athletes have had to put up with male swaggering for years and it didn't hurt our competitiveness or diminish our achievements. Now male non-Gestalts have to put up with someone raising the bar over them. Live with it boys. It's not going to make a difference. Greatness is greatness, and competition will survive. The existence of Michael Jordan didn't make a WNBA player any less of an athlete.")

Some gestalts are developing original sports unique to those with Gestalt abilities. One team of American gestalts created glider ball, a hybrid of hockey, basketball, and Frisbee tossing remains a local custom, on par with beach volleyball; there are three persons per team, one of who must be able to fly.

One venue of Gestalt athletic events that has been accepted by the public is fighting competitions. Occasionally, Gestalt heroes will stage fights for charity, and one major feud between gestalts (Thor and Cosmic Man) was settled on Pay-per-view in 2004.

A Gestalt fighting circuit has recently started, but it has a cheesy "American Gladiators" atmosphere, and has not gone over well as bloodsport (something which the promoters may fix really soon now). There is, however, one fighting event that is essential to Gestalt-Earth...

THE ANNUAL COPENHAGEN TOURNAMENT

"Copenhagen gets in your balls; it has violence, dick-waving, more violence, and cutthroat politics conducted with a you-know-what-eating grin. No wonder we keep coming back year after year."

— Chris Turgeon

The highlight of many gestalts' calendar is the Copenhagen superhuman martial arts tournament, held every two years from September 22 to September 29 at Castle Eismann outside the Danish capital. Eismann himself is a man of mystery, virtually omnipotent within his castle (he has to be, in order to be able to discipline the Tyranny League). The castle itself is highly unusual; Eismann has a large staff of

knowledgeable hand-to-hand fighters, and the castle has a larger interior space than exterior, does not show up on satellite photos, and only individuals with an invitation, or those who are well known to Eismann, have the ability to find it.

Copenhagen is Neutral Ground; heroes and villains are free to meet and socialize, threaten or goad each other, party, discuss master plans, and recruit new members (superheroes and supervillains held informal job fairs in 2001). Most heroes and villains were curious enough to accept Eismann's invitations when he first offered them in 1997, and the experience proved a positive one for the majority of the attendees, so within four years, Copenhagen has become a Gestalt tradition. An Investigative Journalist Gestalt revealed the existence of the Copenhagen tournament to the general public in 1999. Since then Eismann has welcomed the media, but only the contestants or a designated companion is permitted to record the events (which does not prevent media leaks). The tournament is now well known to the public, and some have attempted to use it as a propaganda tool against gestalts.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the Copenhagen tournament. It's considered a mark of the highest status to be invited, and doing well in the tournament really enhances a Gestalt's reputation.

The highlight of Copenhagen is the hand-to-hand combat competition; where acknowledged hand-to-hand fighters compete for the title of the world's greatest fighter (some mastery of a martial art is required, although prominent powerhouses and paragons are also invited). Competitors may bring friends and make filmed records. Last year the tournament had a heavy government presence, as national security agencies strong-armed some heroes to invite them and record the fights for government files.

Outside the competition, the people in the castle may not have unsupervised fights; those who violate this rule are instantaneously expelled from the castle.

A good question is: who is Victor Eismann? Is he an extremely powerful regional Gestalt? Is he the Gestalt of "the mysterious patron" archetype? Is he a Metagestalt come to Earth to directly manipulate human fortune? Is he an alien who uses the tournament to spy on the abilities of Gestalts? Does the castle actually exist within the Gestalt Dimension itself?

PLAYER BACKGROUND HOOK: COPENHAGEN

High Security

You began your life as a young man on the streets of Copenhagen. Victor Eismann took you in and trained you to become a devastating fighting machine. You met many heroes and villains, some of who asked to spar with you, and you even received a few offers to join them.

You accepted one of them, but people know where you came from, and people—not only villains—want you to divulge as many of Victor Eismann's secrets as possible.

Time And Again

The great gestalt tournament isn't the only competition that takes place at Copenhagen. To compare historical fighting styles, he plucks warriors out of time. He forces them to compete, heals whatever injuries they may suffer, induces amnesia and sends them back to their home time. However, you, a Spartan warrior, escaped before he could return you to antiquity. How do you get home? What role does a Spartan play in a world of modern heroes?

EDUCATION

"People are so worried about gestalts that we're forgetting the important things. Like education."

— Amanda Blaylock, teacher

The basic public education system in Western society still exists. Improvements in computers allow inexpensive and effective home education programs, usually as a supplement to the public school system. There are improved learning disability recognition tools, increased communication between schools and parents, and new tools are being developed all the time. Most educators are having problems keeping up with the rapid technological advances.

There are still insufficient funds for public education (in the opinion of many analysts). There is a strong push from libertarians and conservatives for the adoption of the "voucher" system (at least in the United States and Canada), but this does not seem likely to be adopted at any time in the future.

There have been several Teaching Gestalts who have emerged in the public school system; some of them look like stereotypical "school marms", others are mavericks who clash with the school's hierarchy and the general educational establishment. These gestalts have one thing in common: students in their classrooms learn, and they are sometimes filled with a thirst for learning that they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

One Teaching Gestalt, Isaac Roy, a high school social studies teacher in Delaware, regularly turned his students into fanatical learners who studied compulsively and did little else; it became obvious that he was making his students chain gestalts. Roy was temporarily suspended, but later returned to teaching when he agreed to teach his students about moderation in their study habits (some parents objected to their kids being exposed to "mind control" and pulled their children from his class). Once Roy was offered over \$200K/year to teach military cadets by the US Marines, but refused the offer.

There is no publicly known formal training institute for young gestalts. Prior to his disappearance, the Stuntman tried to raise financing to start one, using Baltimore's Anti-Crime Squad as its first class. Victor Eismann, the mysterious patron of Copenhagen, has a large but informal school, specializing in combat training. The Laidley Institute in San Francisco has been accused of being a training ground for supervillains.

Academics have been keen to study gestalts and to get their hands on gestalts to train them to their full potential. New technology to detect gestalts has opened up academic opportunities; there is now a bursary for gestalts who volunteer for medical research at UCLA and a full scholarship for gestalts in the department of Physics at Cal Tech. More gestalt prizes can be expected to be awarded in the next few years, though some fear a public backlash will develop if universities get into a race to see if they can recruit the smartest gestalts.

RELIGION

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible."

—Matthew 24:24

It should be expected that changes as drastic as the emergence of superhumans and aliens would have a drastic impact on the world's belief systems. And they did.

Opinions about gestalts by religions vary widely. A few cults believe that gestalts are a type of divine being, because they are clearly greater than human. Some religions view gestalts as separate but equal to humanity. Most mainstream western religions officially view gestalts as "gifted humans". In 1991, Pope John Paul II spoke out and declared that gestalts were human and had "human souls" (even pure gestalts and monsters like the Blood Red King). Other Christian, Judaic, Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, and Islamic religious leaders largely followed suit. It's been (perhaps ironically) the non-mainstream theologians who have been the most vocal challengers to the Declaration of Souls, claiming that pure gestalts were too different from humanity to qualify as human. The debate continues with great intensity in religious circles.

A few Christian fundamentalists are also vocal opponents of the Declaration; they concede that a bonded gestalt probably has a human conscience, but that's far from certain about pure or chain gestalts (at least those who take on an inhuman or demon appearance). Some believe that the coming of Gestalts is a sign of the end times – clearly they are capable of the miracles that Christians have said always existed, and some resent that non-Christians who scoffed at their belief in the supernatural for so long refuse to admit they were wrong.

The anti-Gestalt stance is even more militant among certain extreme Islamic factions, particularly Iran's Shiite clergy and Afghanistan's Taliban, who refer to gestalts as "devils" and "American Satans".

The coming of aliens has turned the religious world on its ear, since their presence challenge certain terra-centric beliefs, such as certain interpretations of the prophecies of the Christian book of Revelation. The general consensus of religious leaders is that the Ar are human and have human souls. The Vatican has made no formal pronouncements, and their invitation to Ar religious leaders to discuss their theological beliefs have not yet been accepted, in large part because religion plays a very minor role in Ar society (the only extensive religious beliefs are in Ar'Kayadin war cults and a crude polytheism lingers on the Ar'Turodain world of Ikanthre); the Ar have no comprehension of the importance of religion to humans.

Because non-human intelligent species (the Eiko and the Fndnti) are not known to the general public, religions have yet to make a formal pronouncement on their spiritual status.

The presence of old mythological gods is another



er complication. Certainly fundamentalist Christians are not happy to see the reappearance of the icons of the old faith. Athena and Apollo are both objects of fanatical cults; Athena views her worshippers with pity and occasionally attempts to direct them away from useless pursuits, while Apollo is far more active in gathering adoration and useful servants. The Internet is a gathering place for many cultists.

Gestalt society is more religious than our world, as the presence of gestalts have cemented many people's faith in religion, and encouraged others that there's more to life than logic and empirical evidence.

A number of Religious Gestalts (such as Pastor Brown) have made an impression on society, and while mythological deities have reappeared, no major new religions have emerged around the worship of a gestalt (although Brazil's Adoração Luzente may change that), and no one who claims to be the reincarnated Jesus Christ or Mohammed has appeared. One Gestalt expert (an avowed athiest) speculated that if a Christ Gestalt ever did appear, the psionic energy of the unconscious might attempt to trigger the events of the prophesied Armageddon as the logical response to His return.

The presence of Religious Gestalts like the Carpenter, Cornerstone, and Peacekeeper have done a lot to curb extreme reactions to gestalts from the religious community. Cornerstone has also constructed a "chapel in the sky," a great stone church that was built on the ground, but which rose into the sky upon its consecration and now hovers 300 feet above one of Toronto's poorer neighborhoods. A crystal elevator takes the congregation into the church.

Recently, the Carpenter found an organization called the *Christian Gestalt Alliance*, to protect Christian gestalts from persecution and to encourage them to use their powers to help Christian Aid organizations around the globe. To this end, they've struck up close ties to several major hero teams, including Columbia.

THE UNITED NATIONS

"The United Nations' mission remains unchanged in this difficult time of gestalts."

— Ali-Abu Aisha, UN undersecretary

The role of gestalts in government is a heavily debated one, and they're just as highly debated at the U.N.. Presently, no United Nations agency officially uses gestalts, and gestalts are officially barred from peacekeeping duties, although this has not prevented the United States from sending the Vanguard into Somalia, Bosnia, or Liberia; Canada's Pax Warrior was also active in Canadian peacekeeping actions. United Nations rescue agencies and medical agencies, however, have quietly employed gestalts since the early 1990s.

When the Ar'Turodain arrived, there was a general call for the United Nations to represent humanity and present a united front to the aliens. The Ar quickly realized that the United Nations was only a minor power broker, and that the nations of Earth were the true political powers, and after the 1999 UN Disarmament Vote was defeated in the Security Council, the Ar'Turodain ceased to deal with them and went directly to the United States and

other prominent nations. This has badly shaken the credibility of the United Nations. The Ar'Kayadin occasionally courts the United Nations (if only because the Ar'Turodain don't, and the Ar'Kayadin feel it gives them a certain status), but they don't take it particularly seriously. The alien presence has generally heightened the need for international cooperation, and the United Nations, the United States, and the world's other major political powers are a lot closer in Gestalt than they are in the real world.

A number of heroes, especially those who feel that the world needs to present a more united front, are pressing for a greater gestalt presence in the United Nations. One of the most noteworthy of these heroic alliances is...

UTOPIA 2100

"We can make the world a better place. Why on earth shouldn't we try?"

— Soulkeeper

Even though it gets little recognition in the United States, Utopia 2100 is one of the most prominent voices for Gestalt unity. This is an informal network of benevolent gestalts from around the world who go to crisis points and use their powers to help people. Thus if (for example) a gestalt is able to assuage people's hunger with their touch and there's a famine, Utopia 2100 will contact the person and arrange for transportation to the famine zone, and the gestalt will attempt to treat as many people as possible. Utopia 2100 focuses on natural disasters and major crises, and attempts to avoid political confrontation. The leader and founder of Utopia 2100 is Soulkeeper, the respected African gestalt.

Soulkeeper has made no bones about her long term goals: she wants a world free of hunger, poverty, lack of shelter, war, sickness, and major environmental problems by the year 2100. She wants gestalts to stay out of the military. She feels that gestalts will solve the world's problems if they unite and shun politics.

Many people, especially in the West, have viewed her dream as unrealistic, and worry that she (or some other gestalt) may use the organization's laudable aims as a stepping stone, and attempt to impose a version of utopia by force. Utopia 2100 has suffered from serious funding problems, and two Utopia 2100 Gestalts were recently murdered while healing refugees in East Africa. Soulkeeper is attempting to get United Nations sanction and protection for her organization, but the UN is hesitant to recognize her efforts, at least for the moment. She's also attempting to recruit a permanent force of superhuman protectors to serve as bodyguards for her Gestalts.

Perhaps Soulkeeper's most interesting project is *Unueco* (Esperanto for "Unity"), a superhero alliance from around the globe who would keep in contact with each other and unite against threats no individual hero team could oppose. A number of heroes have ex-

pressed varying degrees of interest in Unueco, including the Titan, Mr. Australia, Ruskiy Znak, Cormorant, Technarch, Valószínűtlen, Gobugson, Bright Dragon, Denshi, Speed Freak, Penthesilea, Lulu Al-Islam, Jersey, Corazon, Hanuman, Arrocho, and the Warder.

Whether Soulkeeper can form any sort of successful alliance remains to be seen. Superhumans are not the only people interested in joining Unueco; Soulkeeper wants to include the world's most respected non-superhumans as members of the alliance. The world may be surprised when the group that's unveiled also includes Desmond Tutu and Muhammed Ali.

GESTALT SLANG

The Gestalt world has picked up more than its share of slang. Although most of the following are not commonly used, these one-liners are gradually working their way into the public's vocabulary:

Action Figure: A superhero who tries too hard to drum up favorable publicity.

Aloha Boy: A would-be sidekick or teenage super.

Aloha Girl: A really vacuous (or well-built) superheroine.

Armageddon: The next fight between bitter enemies, such as Columbia/Tyranny League or the Hollywood Knights/BRK. Also, a really long fight between Gestalts.

Avon (Started) Calling: Supervillain slang for tripping an alarm.

Battle Boy: A technological super, especially someone who wears a battlesuit.

Bicep Job: A powerhouse, or any muscle-bound Gestalt. Really big ones are called "Double Bicep Job"; recently this expression has been expanded to the cloying "triple bicep job" (no hyperbole is too exaggerated for certain members of the media).

Big Boom: A successful supervillain job, especially one involving terrorism.

The Big Ouch: The Copenhagen superhuman fighting tournament.

Black Cape: A supervillain. Also "black mask".

Blinded by Science: Any Gestalt who's obsessing, first applied to Reactor of Columbia.

Boo Boy: A Gestalt whose powers have mystical overtones; this epithet is never applied to the really nasty ones, such as...

The BRK: The Blood Red King.

Butthugger: An overly tight or sexually provocative superhero costume. This expression is evolving, and now often refers to all superhero costumes.

Capage: The power level of a Gestalt, especially, their combat ability ("Dynamo Jack may look like he's all show, but there's actually a lot of capage under those tights"). Capage is also used as slang for the aggressiveness level of a Gestalt or (more crudely) a measure of their sexual prowess.

Cape: A superhero, also a non-secretive superhero.

Capeless: A Gestalt who doesn't become a superhero or supervillain.

Cash Register: Supervillain slang for banks.

Chain Gang: Slavery or servitude due to a chain Gestalt. ("The bank president joined Sinistrado's Chain Gang of zombies last night.")

Cliffhanger: A really close fight.

Closet Cape: Someone who refuses to acknowledge his or her Gestalt, also refers to a Gestalt who refuses to join the superhero/villain scene. Closet capes are sometimes outted ("gestoutted") by the press.

Columbia Just Showed: Supervillain slang for any operation (especially robberies) that's interrupted by a superhero team.

Commercial Spot: A court appearance, testifying in court about a crime.

A "Could Be Better" Piece: Getting smeared in the press, any unwanted article or exposé

The Crater: Washington DC. More Columbia slang; Edge refers to it as the Crater in Give Me Liberty "because if we aren't careful, that's what it's going to become."

Crater-maker: A haymaker or a really powerful energy blast.

Cult Case: A resurrected deity.

The Dark, Annoying Place: Being knocked out in a fight. (Another Edge-ism).

"Doing a Cromwell": Any incredibly reckless and impulsive action by a Gestalt.

Double Masking: A super who won't reveal his true identity to his teammates or feeds them false information.

Dragon: A supervillain. Commonly used in the early to mid-90s, this expression has fallen out of favor.

Firebritches: A battlesuit.

Fire's Out: A Gestalt combat is over. A Columbia codeword.

Fireworks Factory: An energy controller, or any overly colorful Gestalt costume. First applied to Carnival.

First Bagging: One of the three seminal events that are considered essential to a Gestalt superhero's baptism – the first time they ever see a corpse in the line of duty.

First Bashing: One of the three seminal events that are considered essential to a Gestalt superhero's baptism – the first time they ever use their powers in a fight.

First Bleeding: One of the three seminal events that are considered essential to a Gestalt superhero's baptism – the first time they ever see their own blood in a fight.

Flash-Fragging: An attack (usually from a villain) that kills many innocent bystanders at once.

Flat-Fragging: Death, originally someone dying as you're talking with them, although sometimes applied to any time an innocent bystander dies in a hero's presence when they weren't "flash-fragged".

Force Field of God: A great performance or incredible luck demonstrated by a Gestalt. "He was protected by the force field of God" describes someone who survived a powerful attack.

Fragile Alert: Columbia codeword for "protect in-

nocent bystanders at all costs".

FTL [fill in the blank]: Columbia codeword for "get [someone] to a hospital as quick as possible."

Fuddling: Refusing to verbally acknowledge combat orders, or disregarding orders without informing teammates about the change in tactics.

Funeral Bait: A Thrillseeker Gestalt.

Giving Out Your Address: Sharing your secret ID (or worse, having your secret ID exposed.)

Glow Boy: Any Gestalt with a visible force field. Also "Glow Girl".

"Gone moral": A retired supervillain, also used when a supervillain hasn't been seen for awhile.

Happyland: The Gestalt Dimension.

"I'm melting": A Columbia codeword for being hurt real bad in a fight.

Khaki Cape: A military super.

King Cheese: The winner of the Copenhagen tournament.

Last Call: A punch or a blast that puts a wobbly opponent down for the count.

Lazarus Lad: A Gestalt who comes back from the dead. One that does so in a spectacular manner is called a "flaming Lazarus".

Leak: A wound that bleeds during a fight.

Liberator Surprise: Supervillain slang for staging an ambush.

Lost An Eye: Losing a fight to someone you should have beaten, or someone you didn't expect to lose to ("fighting Armageddo was fun until we lost an eye.")

Main Event: A major fight between superheroes and supervillains.

Man of the Hour: The person who gives the best performance in a (winning) fight, especially when it's unexpected.

Mask: A superhero. Also a Gestalt who's very secretive.

Missionary Work: Actions committed by a superhero while he's gone AWOL from his team when he's compelled by his Gestalt to follow the obsessions of his archetype.

Moon Man: A person with an unusual Gestalt. Also "Moon Girl".

"Night Must Fall": Columbia codeword for "retreat is not an option".

Ooopsville: A battle with a lot of collateral damage. Someone who causes a lot of collateral damage is sometimes called "Ooops boy".

Open Channel Boy: Someone who talks too much in a fight.

Ouchland: Copenhagen.

Panel Hog: Someone who shows off a lot during fights.

Photogenic: Being unconscious when the press arrive at the end of a fight.

Pulling Down Trevor's Tights: A Gestalt who has made or is making a really big mistake. ("You don't pull down Trevor's tights" refers to making the Titan mad. The fact that Titan usually doesn't wear tights is an unintended irony)

Puncture: A serious cut or wound in a fight, but

not as bad as a leak.

Pure: A very noticeable pure gestalt. (Often combined with “really” or “one hundred percent”)

Pyre: A funeral for a superhero. (“They lit Rex’s pyre last night.”)

Rabbit Job: Supervillain slang for an operation that goes terribly wrong.

Religious Experience: Being knocked out, especially when you’re badly overmatched.

Rename Yourself Shame: A joke by Edge directed at Rex and Utopia, after their costumes had been burnt off during a fight. This refers to any superhero who ends up naked or nearly nude during a fight (“you need to rename yourself Shame.”).

Rocking Chair Club: A Gestalt from the first wave, or any long active Gestalt.

The Royal Treatment: Being transformed by the Blood Red King.

Rule One: Columbia slang for “take out the telepath”.

Rule Two: Columbia slang for “take out the enemies’ delivery system”.

Rule Zero: An Edge-ism meaning “don’t lose”. Still a Columbia in-joke.

Sensor Platform: A Gestalt with a lot of superhuman senses.

S-Humans: Early term for superhumans. Fell out of common usage by the mid-1990 (although a derogatory derived term “schuberts” is still used in a few places, particularly in New York City).

Shokol: A local protector Gestalt, particularly one who doesn’t like prominent Gestalts from out-of-town (condensed form of local “super hero yokel”)

Shot Out of the Sky: A supervillain whose bloody career makes superheroes want to kill him (“he needs to be shot out of the sky”). A reference to deceased Tyranny League member Bloodkite. “Needs Therapy” has much the same meaning, and so does “needs to join the Devastators” (which refers to the famous team of dead supervillains).

Show Cape: A normal impersonating a Gestalt or a Gestalt with little or no combat ability.

Smear Job: A bloody Gestalt death.

Swiss Army Knife Gestalt: A Gestalt with a lot of useful skills.

Soul Man: Someone who has draining or leeching abilities.

Space Cape: Any Ar’Turodain with superhuman abilities.

Space Nazis: The Ar’Kayadin.

Speaking In Tongues: Using telepathy as a form of communication.

Spite Job: Supervillain slang for an operation that’s motivated solely by revenge. *Supergoose*: A superhero in the employ of the government (derives from goose stepper).

Superior Boy’s Club: The Ar’Turodain (a reference to their condescending attitude to Earth).

T-Gang: The Tyranny League.

Tactically Creative: Derogatory term for a Gestalt who can’t follow orders or who always “fuddles”.

Theresa: Dr. Power Jr. Usually spoken with well-deserved trepidation or fear.

Top Cape: Leader of a superhero team. Also called (sarcastically) “Supreme Cape”, “Big Cape”. “Big Bad Cape”, or “El Cape-ola”.

Under The Hood: Telepath slang for a person’s memories. (“Let’s see what’s under the hood” means finding out someone’s secrets.)

Voodoo: Psionics, especially mind control.

“Voodoo alert” is the Columbia codeword for hostile telepaths in the area; “[fill in the blank]’s a voodoo doll” is Columbia’s codeword for someone being under mind control; “[fill in the blank] sees strange voodoo” is their codeword for someone reacting to mental illusions.

W2 Club: A Gestalt who works for a major corporation.

Wackoland: The Internet, especially those sites devoted to Gestalts, and the people who frequent them. Wackoland is used in a humorous, self-deprecating way; it’s based on a one-time off-hand comment by Columbia’s Reactor. Columbia fandom has particularly embraced the term, and Columbia’s fan sites on the Internet are part of “the Wackoland Web Ring”.

Internet sites devoted to supervillains such as the Tyranny League or the Blood Red King are also referred to as “Sickoland”, especially by hard-core superhero fans.

Wall Bouncer: A Gestalt who gets knocked out frequently in fights. Also called a “Harvey Wall Banger”.

IX: CHARACTER WRITE-UPS

Edge leaned back on his chair and smiled like a cat. Next to him, Kid Mercury cleared his throat and Chris Turgeon tapped his cards. Liberator frowned.

"The whole point of the exercise is to teach you people how not to betray your emotions," Columbia's leader snapped.

"For those of us who have emotions..." Mercury snarled.

Edge smiled. "The purpose of poker is to have fun. Anyway, you're interrupting the story. So there I was, with Starbird in Podunk Kentucky, rescuing the leaders of the agricultural community from Farmer Ray's combine of doom..."

"He did not call it that!" Turgeon wondered aloud.

"He did," Rex grinned. "You need to read the debriefs."

"I can't believe there's a Gestalt of the Family Farm..."

"C'mon guys, let me finish." Edge interrupted. "So me and Starbird fought through Farmer Ray's manure elementals, and we're just buried in the stuff, and it completely reeks, and then this yokel reporter comes up to us with this camera and we're both trying to get away so we can get to a shower ASAP, but Mr. Local News keeps badgering us with questions about what it's like to be a gestalt."

"This will not end well," Chris Turgeon remarked, flipping a chip into the pile.

"So Starbird tells him to take a hike, and the guy can't take a hint to save his life and he grabs her. Starbird being Starbird, suddenly takes off into the air with him, flies over to Farmer Ray's field, throws the guy (though not too hard) into what remains of one of the manure elementals, and shouts: "That's what it's like to be a Gestalt!"

"Lessons from the PR master!" Mercury exclaimed.

"Oh, it gets better," Edge said. "The guy gets to his feet, looks Starbird straight in the eye, and says to her in this sort of Davie Crockett baritone: 'So you mean it's like living in Kentucky?'"

NPC HEROES

Every world needs heroes and contrary to popular opinion, they shouldn't always be the PCs. If a campaign world is to be believable, there must either be other superheroes in the campaign setting, or the GM must account for their absence. Gestalt-Earth has many superheroes, since I believe that a large number of NPCs offers more to a campaign world than they take away. But since handling NPC heroes is a delicate art, here are a few tips.

Other superheroes **DO NOT**:

- Upstage the PCs and make the players feel silly, unless you (the GM) are going to give the PCs a chance to get back at them and make them feel foolish. Friendly rivalries are good; inferiority complexes are bad. Know when to stop pushing.
- Rescue the PCs every time they get into trouble. They should occasionally be allowed to provide back-up, at the PCs request; for the GM who hates NPC intervention, this is best employed in situations where either the PCs do not need backup, or where the villains can muster an additional force of their own to delay the back-up (which can give a scenario an epic feel).
- Make themselves available at the PCs beck and call. They're busy people with their own agendas. On the other hand, if they're always busy, the PCs won't interact with them, and in role-playing games, you want character interaction.

Other superheroes **DO**:

- Encourage friendships, camaraderie, and rivalry (i.e. role-playing) between PCs and NPCs.
- Often come into conflict with PC heroes over petty misunderstandings and conflicts of interest.
- Hunt down the PCs or (even better) their friends when they've been framed for crimes they did not (or did) commit.
- Have enemies who get nervous when the PCs are getting too cozy with their hated foes.
- Use the PCs to test the waters when they're facing an uncertain situation (sometimes putting our boys in really bad situations).
- Fight our heroes in friendly scrimmages and at the Copenhagen tournament.
- Fall victim to nefarious mind control.
- Screw up big time when they try to help the PCs.
- Obnoxiously grandstand and put down our heroes to such an extent that the PCs are forced to "defend their honor".
- Provide vital clues, information, and plot hooks which they may hand to the PCs.
- Provide romantic interest for our PCs.
- Have weird things happen to them that the PCs are forced to investigate.
- Occasionally lend PCs cool vehicles, threatening to kill them if they get wrecked, and encourage PCs to put their points into vehicles and bases.
- Provide good examples of how to be a super-

hero to the PCs.

- Grow and get experience points , too.
- Allow the GM to practice talking in funny accents.-
- Die like flies when something really big happens, telling our heroes to be cautious and setting up dramatic foreshadowing.
- Add a sense of depth to the campaign world.
- Congratulate the heroes after a hard won victory – and attend funerals for the fallen.

THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY

On Gestalt-Earth, there is a sense of community between superheroes, particularly between veterans and new heroes. Heroes generally support each other with information and encouragement. It's expected when a hero learns something new about a villain, he or she will disseminate that information through various contacts to other superheroes.

Heroes from other cities and nations, however, rarely directly intervene with other superhumans' battles, unless it's an obvious crisis situation or a mismatch, or their personal enemies are involved.

Other heroes are expected to "stand on their own two feet"; why, for example, should Columbia help some Cleveland based superhero team fight a battle that they should be able to win when that could put them out of position to counter the next Tyranny League attack?

On the other hand, information on the Tyranny League is almost certain to interest them. Heroes have their own agendas, and the most successful heroes learn them and manipulate them to their best advantage. Heroes who refuse to participate in the superhero community are usually judged to be and get shunned.

One area where supers in Gestalt tend to band together is threats to non-superpowered family and friends. When a superhero's spouse, children, or parents are harmed, there's an unspoken code that every superhero needs to stop what they're doing, and get them as quickly as possible to send a message to everyone out there that this is not a line which should be crossed, and that an attack on one hero's loved ones is an attack on all of theirs. (Which, of course, provides little comfort to superheroes when their DNPC is dangling over the acid pit).

COLUMBIA

Membership: Liberator (leader), Carnival, Edge, Kid Mercury, Labyrinth, and Starbird. There have been other members: Bombard (resigned, deceased), Dr. Zenith (resigned, deceased), Reactor (deceased), Rex (deceased), Thrillseeker (missing), Utopia (transformed into the supervillain Lamia by the Blood Red King; this is considered the equivalent of a resignation), Kinestar (resigned), Blossom (resigned). Ascensión and Bellweather are newly recruited members, pending approval from the INS.

Background: The first year of the superhero phenomena was considered an age of innocence. Most villains weren't psychotic maniacs out to destroy society, and costumed adventurers were still a novelty. There was, however, one entity who was out to destroy that innocence. His name was the Blood Red King, and he succeeded admirably.

After following a long trail of carnage left by the Blood Red King, several superheroes decided to get together to stop him once and for all. These three superheroes were Reactor, Thrillseeker, and Liberator.

They did stop the Blood Red King, at least temporarily, and decided that it would be in the best interest of the country if they remained together. They really couldn't afford to remain as a team — until Liberator found financial backing from a still

AUTOCRATS ASSEMBLE! THE GENRE VS. CAMPAIGN LICENSE:

In the public eye, and in the opinion of many superheroes, Columbia is a very tainted organization. They're autocratic and occasionally underhanded. Liberator has many high ideals, however "the ends never justify the means" isn't one of them.

It must be noted that Columbia's ventures into malfeasance is actually inspired less by conspiracy theories and more by the autocratic actions taken by certain leading superhero groups in the comics ("The Assembly just captured Magnetron!" "Did they surrender him to the authorities for a fair trial?" "Nah, they imprisoned him in the center of the Earth"). It's just that people actually question what they're doing when Columbia does something like that (or when any group pulls this sort of stunt in an RPG).

unrevealed source (Ross Perot is the most popular rumor). By the time they formally announced the team, they had recruited Dr. Zenith. Labyrinth joined the group less than a year later.

Over the years, Columbia became established as America's premier superhero team. New members joined, old members retired. There were scandals,



Columbia Scenario Hooks

Boom

Columbia is holding a conference of superheroes to discuss important issues. A psionic supervillain captures and brainwashes either a PC or an NPC into carrying a small nuclear device and planting it in a training field where Columbia is going to hold wargames.

Custody Dispute

The PCs capture a supervillain and Columbia shows up on their doorstep and demands that he be released into their custody. They refuse to explain their reasons. If they refuse to hand him over, the villain later disappears mysteriously from lockup; if they do, the villain's walking the streets within days.

Raiders of the Last Gestalt

Columbia's looking for new members. They're traveling through America, holding auditions, and they want to raid your team for talent (this is a good scenario to run to retire one of your PCs if a player is leaving the campaign or wants to play a new PC).

triumphs, and the occasional setback. Columbia fought every major villain on Earth: Los Vecinos, the Blood Red King, two generations of Dr. Powers, the Anti-American, the Devastators, and many, many more. Nonetheless, the more things changed, the more they stayed the same — until recently.

The Tyranny League and Columbia had danced around each other for years, but eventually Imperator decided to end the dance. In a vicious ambush, they killed Rex and Reactor. Columbia found itself down to five members and outnumbered by their archenemies two to one. They've been on a desperate recruiting drive ever since, including blackmailing Kid Mercury into rejoining the team.

Columbia remains the most prominent and popular superheroes in the world. Much of it comes from good public relations and a strong support organization, but Columbia has also been through troubles that no other superhero has ever faced. Despite of all of their infighting and manipulations, Columbia is dedicated to protecting America and the human race. Although some of their members believe that (in extreme situations) the ends justify the means, for the most part Columbia is as honorable and as dedicated a cadre of superheroes as you can find (and if they seem a little arrogant, perhaps the number of times they've put their lives on the line against world-threatening maniacs has earned them the right to be treated with a little respect.)

Tactics: Columbia tends to rely on individual effort rather than tactical brilliance. The most common tactic is to divide the group into two sub-teams: Liberator, Carnival, and Labyrinth on one side, Edge, Starbird, and Kid Mercury on the other; each sub-team concentrates on a single target in a fight, takes them out, then moves on to the next objective. Columbia rarely fights defensively; one of the side effects of their high power level is that they often rely on raw offense rather than tactical intelligence.

If Columbia watches you, you present a threat, directly or indirectly, to the future of the United States (or Liberator has sensed that one day you'll betray the United States). If they hunt you, you're a sworn enemy of the American way of life.

Group Relations: Columbia has been compared by those who know them well to a dysfunctional family. Liberator is clearly the leader, but his callousness isn't very endearing; the other members respect his ability and judgment, but are repulsed by his ruthlessness and lack of humanity. Most of them are freaked out by Labyrinth's mysterious nature. Edge is a mischievous brother who occasionally goes too far with his jokes. Carnival's flamboyance causes her not to be taken too seriously. Starbird is frus-

trated that no one shares her political agenda. Kid Mercury holds everyone in contempt, but feels a special hatred towards Liberator.

Nonetheless, Columbia hangs together. The primary reason is probably their extensive support staff that provides them with people who they can rely on when the pressures of superheroing get too great. The reputation and public perception of the team's responsibility, while adding a great deal of pressure, also imbues them with pride and purpose.

There is no one else in Columbia's league in the world of superheroes (with the possible exception of Titan and the Hollywood Knights). If Columbia falls, America (and maybe the world) may be open to anarchy. That thought keeps them together, and sometimes keeps them awake at night.

The other (less altruistic) reason that Columbia holds together is marketing. The team does a lot of business, and a good chunk of the organization is devoted to public relations and merchandising. Columbia makes a lot of money. All of the members take their money and donate healthy portions to good causes (only Carnival is financially secure of all the members of Columbia), but Columbia is as much a commercial organization as a superteam.

Reputation: Numero uno. The greatest heroes on Earth. Association with Columbia gives a great deal of esteem; even the support staff is highly respected. At the same time, newcomers

PCS AS COLUMBIA RESERVISTS

One set up for PCs is to make the heroes "Columbia reserve members", the B-Team. While some PCs hate the idea of being second stringers, this campaign can work very nicely if the GM follows these rules:

- Play up the politics of the **situation** and give the PCs to manipulate or foil Liberator's dirtier tricks;
- Make sure the PCs get plenty of credit for what they do (don't turn Columbia into glory thieves);
- Cultivate friendships and romances between the two teams and the support personnel;
- When they get too comfortable with (or too stifled by) the main team, suck them into the Gestalt Dimension (or kill them) and cast the PCs as a team that has to live up to Columbia's legacy.

COLUMBIA RESERVE MEMBER

TEMPLATE

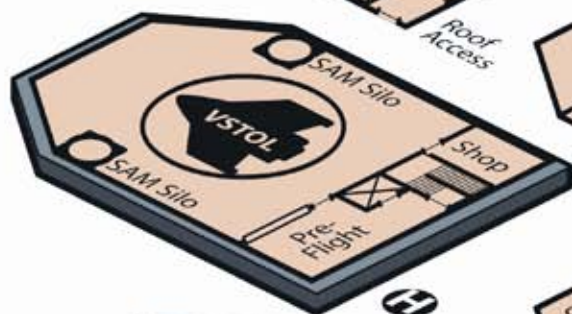
Skills: Diplomacy (4 ranks), Knowledge (current events) (4 ranks), Knowledge (tactics) (4 ranks)

Feat: Benefit (Columbia Member) (1), Connected, Contacts, Teamwork, Well Informed

Devices: Columbia Communicator (1)

Cost: 9 power points

Columbia Headquarters



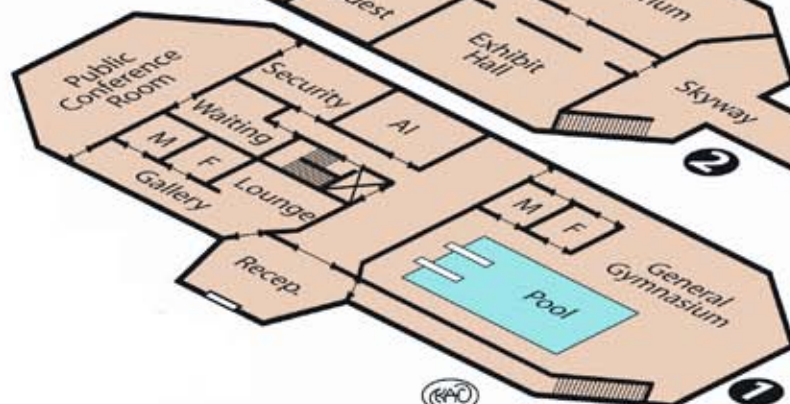
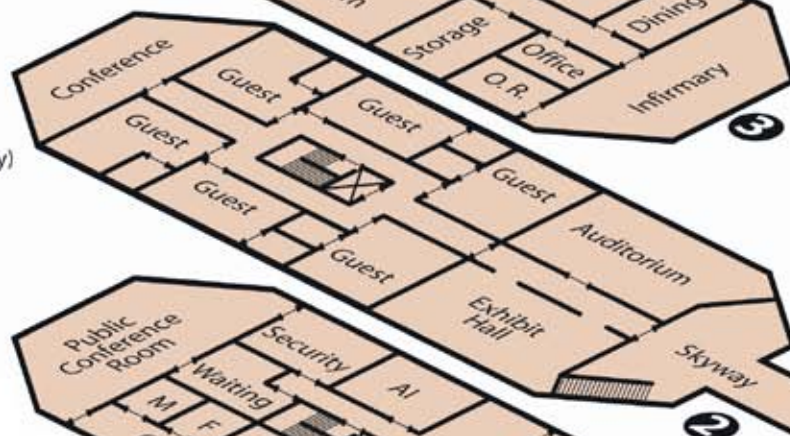
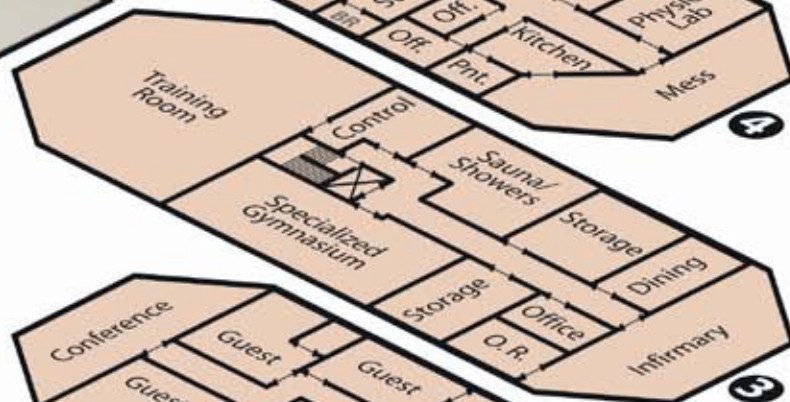
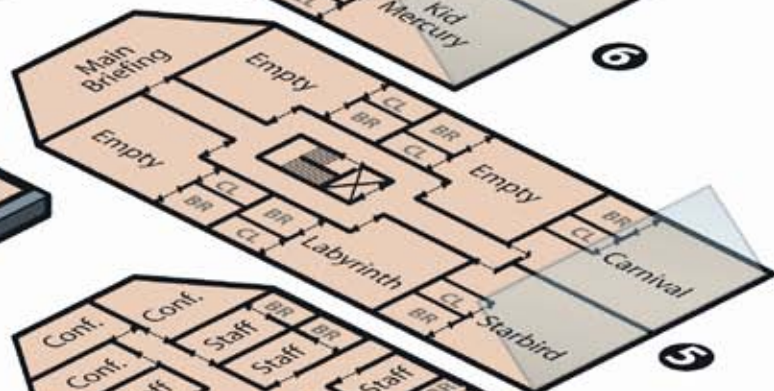
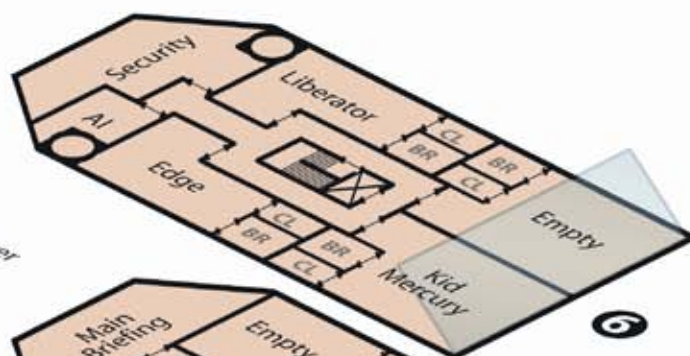
Levels

1. Reception
2. Public/Guest Level
3. Training/Infirmary Level
4. Staff/Dining Level
5. Team/Briefing Level
6. Team/Security Level
7. Penthouse

H. Hanger/Roof Access

Building Dimensions

Height - 47m
Width - 28m
Length 77m
(Excluding Skyway)



COLUMBIA HQ

HEADQUARTERS

Toughness: 10; **Size:** Large; **Features:** Combat Simulator, Communications, Computers, Fire Prevention System, Garage, Gym, Hanger, Infirmary, Living Space, Power System, Security System

Agent Complement: 1 Commander (SWAT Leader) 3 Squads (15 Squad members and 3 SWAT Leaders), 5 Technical Staff, and 6 Support Staff.

Devices: Vehicles: Columbia Jet (12 points)

Cost: 9 power points

will find that expectations (and what's needed to prove one's worth to the organization) is extremely high.

It's easy to play Columbia as "supervillains in superhero's clothing", but that's not an accurate portrayal. Yes, they're manipulative, they can be underhanded, they have an aura of smug superiority and sometimes they act like they're their own little government for whom the law is a minor inconvenience. But they do think of themselves as the "good guys" and they usually fit that role. They have no ambitions to overthrow the system, and they generally don't screw over other superheroes unless there's a lot on the line. On the other hand, when they do screw you, it's usually big time.

There are more than a few superheroes who hate Columbia (particularly Liberator) with the intensity that's usually reserved for government agencies or supervillains, and many of them (most notably the Titan and America Man) want nothing to do with them. Columbia is a brand (like certain large real world corporations) that is sometimes associated with the "jackbooted establishment", and they generate an extraordinary amount of animosity in some quarters (if you think of them as the "Microsoft" or "Disney" of superheroes, and you'll get a good idea of the sort of vitriol that's directed their way).

Rogue's Gallery: Columbia's opposite number is the Tyranny League. Their other arch-nemeses are Dr. Power and the Blood Red King (Columbia gets to deal with all of the fun on Gestalt-Earth!). Most supervillain teams have crossed swords with Columbia at some point in their careers; currently their biggest concerns are the Tyranny League, the Leviathans, the Dawn Brothers, and Portal.

Columbia has a very busy caseload these days. Aside from facing their enemies, they're currently investigating the Ghost Patriots, an army of spirits who rose out of the graves in Arlington Cemetery to attack Washington DC, tracking down a shapechanging gestalt artifact known as the Book of a Hundred Lies (which convinces its readers that outrageous lies are true and telepathically compels them to commit acts of violence against the subject of the book), and locating a band of Ar'Kayadin slavers who abducted Columbia's trainer Chris Turgeon.

COLUMBIA HQ

"Darkness on a hill /Masquerading as light,/ Carry flames to Columbia/ And bring down the blight."

—A song of Red August

Columbia HQ is a seven story building in downtown Washington DC, constructed in 1993 when an office building was destroyed in a fight between Columbia and the now defunct Devastators supervillain team. Liberator paid for damages, bought the property, and remodeled it into a team HQ. The walls are constructed from reinforced concrete and steel, and the windows are black shatterproof glass.

Those who visit the HQ are greeted by *Martha*, an extremely exuberant Artificial Intelligence invented by Columbia's computer expert, *Dr. Cyrus Barrowman*,

Next door is Columbia Museum, which contains team mementos, exhibits on Gestalt related themes, and tributes to deceased Columbians. It's one of the most frequented tourist spots on Earth.

Columbia denies that their HQ has concealed SAM missile ports on the sixth floor of their building and two armed military helicopters in the helibay. No one believes them, and with good reason.

NPCS OF COLUMBIA

Background: Gerald Curry was in his senior year at Harvard Law when the First Gestalt Wave hit. He immediately guessed at the impact Gestalts would make on the law, and he was determined to become the leader in the field of Gestalt Law even as it was being born. He persuaded America Man to allow him to represent him on some "disturbing the peace" charge he'd evoked, and his acquittal brought Curry to national prominence. Soon afterward, he was

GERALD CURRY

POWER LEVEL 7

"I THINK WE SHOULD SUPPRESS THAT EVIDENCE, YOUR HONOR. IT ISN'T OFTEN WHEN 'THE FRUIT OF THE POISONOUS TREE TURNS OUT TO BE MORE THAN A FIGURE OF SPEECH BUT HERE WE ARE."

Str 8 (-1) Dex 8 (-1) Con 8 (-1) Int 23 (+6) Wis 16 (+3) Cha 20 (+5)

Tgh	Fort	Ref	Will
-1	+3	+3	+8

Skills: Bluff 10 (+15), Diplomacy 10 (+15), Gather Information 8 (+13), Knowledge (civics) 8 (+14), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+14), Notice 8 (+11), Profession (lawyer) 12 (+15), Sense Motive 12 (+15)

Feats: Benefit (Status – federal police powers), Connected, Improved Block, Improved Defense, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Well-Informed

Combat: Attack +4, Grapple +3, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 Flatfooted), Knockback +0, Initiative -1

Abilities 23 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 8+ Combat 16 + Saves 13 = 79
Total

contacted by a rival of America Man's, a young hero named Liberator who shared an intensely interest in Gestalt Law. An immediate partnership was formed.

Though not a Gestalt, Curry became one of the important people in the Gestalt world. Curry exposed CounterMeasures to the public, saved USMC Vanguard leader Jonathan Clark's career, helped prevent legislation that would require Gestalt registration, and he's protected (dubious) laws that maintain a Gestalt's right to privacy. Often described as a "high-strung workaholic", Curry's managed to maintain a degree of personal integrity even when Liberator's showing his Machiavellian side.

Gerald is a tall, slim man in his late 30s, with a hairline that is receding faster than he'd like. He has short-cropped brown hair, blue eyes, and a slender build. He usually wears a three-piece suit.

Background: One of the first criminals ever caught by Kinestar was an eighteen year old kid named Raymond Sinclair, a minor league Gestalt of Heat who called himself "Hotshot" While in prison, he entered into correspondence with the young super-heroine Carnival. Carnival persuaded her teammates to give Ray a break, so when he was paroled, he got a job as a Columbia security guard (one of the benefits of Columbia being a private organization was the freedom to hire people who might otherwise be considered security risks). Sinclair proved a model security guard, and eventually rose to the position of security chief.

Ray would like to become a full-fledged member of the team, and is accompanying the team on more and more missions to learn the ropes.

Ray's an African-American male in his early 30s,

RAY "HOTSHOT" SINCLAIR POWER LEVEL 8

"IT TAKES A HERO TO PROTECT A HERO, AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT!"

Str 20 (+5) Dex 22 (+6) Con 24 (+8) Int 14 (+2) Wis 12 (+1) Cha 16 (+3)

Tgh	Fort	Ref	Will
+10/+7*	+8	+8	+6
*w/o armor			

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+8), Computer 4 (+6), Craft (electronic) 4 (+6), Disable Device 4 (+6), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+6), Medicine 2 (+4), Notice 4 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+5)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee), Equipment, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Power Attack

Equipment: Armor (Protection 3, Subtle)

Powers: Environmental Control 3 (heat 2, distraction 1), Fatigue 5 (Burst Area, Continuous; Linked to Environmental Control), Immunity 6 (breath in smoke, fire/heat damage), Speed 1, Strike 10 (Extended Reach 10)

Combat: Attack +4, Grapple +3, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 Flatfooted), Knockback +0, Initiative -1

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (Cold Attacks; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2 pts)

Abilities 23 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 8 + Combat 16 + Saves 13 = 79 Total

with movie star good looks. He wears a solid blue bodysuit with white trim and an eagle symbol on his left breast. He's 6'3", a little over 230 lbs., with an athletic build. Ray radiates a continuous heat field (the temperature in his immediate vicinity is 140°F/60° C.)

OTHER IMPORTANT NPCs

Dr. Cyrus Barrowman, Computer Specialist

Dr. Glenn Cross, Physician, Expert in Gestalt Medicine.

Major Cynthia Forrester, Government Liaison

Christine Gregory, Secretary

Archibald Kent, Butler

Martha, Artificial Intelligence

Celia Montoya, Publicist

Andre Mattson, Chef and Nutritionist

Hank "Unholy" Rossem, Team Pilot

Chris Turgeon, Personal Trainer

LIBERATOR

GESTALT OF THE AMERICAN WAY

POWER LEVEL 13

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+9	+6	+9	+4	+3	+8
28	22	28	18	16	26

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+14*	+12	+9	+10

(*+11 flatfooted, +9 w/o armor and flatfooted)

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+10), Bluff 8 (+16), Computer 6 (+8), Diplomacy 8 (+16), Intimidate 8 (+16), Knowledge (civics) 8 (+10), Knowledge (history) 6 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+8), Notice 12 (+14), Profession (lawyer) 6 (+8), Sense Motive 12 (+14)

Feats: Attack Focus 4 (melee), Benefit 2 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth), Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Stunning Strike, Sweeping Attack, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Armor (protection 2, subtle), Commlink.

Powers: **Enhanced Feat** (Fearsome Presence 5), **Gestalt Immortality** (Regeneration 9 [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection; Not if U.S. Government collapses)]), **Regeneration 7** (Recovery +1; Injured 1 per 5 minutes, Staggered 1 per 5 minutes, Disabled 1 per hour), **Sensory Shield 2** (all senses), **Speed 1**, **Super Senses 6** (danger sense, detect future traitor [acute, ranged]), **Super Strength 3** (Heavy Load: 4.8 tons)

Combat : Attack +16 (melee), +12 (ranged), Grapple +28, Damage +9 (unarmed), Defense +11 (+6 flatfooted), Knockback -7 (-5 flatfooted), Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Foreign Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 75 + **Skills** 21 (84 ranks) + **Feats** 19 + **Powers** 41 + **Combat** 46 + **Saves** 13 – **Drawbacks** 2 = 213 Total

"WE HAVE TO GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN. WITHOUT FAITH, THE NATION IS ULTIMATELY DOOMED. AND NOTHING'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN PREVENTING THAT, RIGHT?"

Actual Name: Not applicable

Occupation: Superhero team leader, occasional lawyer.

Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record

Gestalt Type: Pure (1989 wave)

Goal: Hunt the Tyranny League

Power Level: Respected

Height: 6'0" (185 cm)

Weight: 235 lbs. (107 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Green

Birthplace: Washington DC

Current Residence: Washington DC

Group Affiliation: Columbia

Known Relatives: None.



Background: Can America endure? All other civilizations have risen and fallen, so what makes America believe that they're going to be different, that their government will never falter, that their monuments crumble, that their history will always be remembered?

The fear of a national catastrophe is buried deep in the psyche of all great empires. For the United States, the empire of the age, the need to fight against this fear became manifested in Liberator, a pure gestalt. This hero's very existence is a quest to preserve the democracy of the United States – and the American status quo.

When the Blood Red King rose to prominence, Liberator helped form Columbia to deal with the threat; afterward he realized he could use the team to pursue more general goals, so he seized control of Columbia and transformed it into his instrument to preserve the American way.

Liberator's greatest triumph came behind the scenes: when Columbia was formed, Liberator immediately entrenched himself as its leader, using the position to obtain nearly unlimited funding from an unknown benefactor (see Campaign Secrets). Thanks to Liberator, Columbia's members were made deputies of the Washington DC police, and Liberator's aggressive public relations campaign gave it such a high profile that even CounterMeasures left it alone. Once the team had good finances and official sanction, the only obstacle in Liberator's path were the villains, especially the Tyranny League.

Liberator's current goals are to increase Columbia's firepower, to destroy the Tyranny League and to keep the team's public support from eroding.

Liberator believes that his cause is just and honorable, and this has allowed him to justify many questionable acts that he's committed to advance his cause. He does have a respect for life, but is willing to compromise rights and freedoms in order to preserve his team and his country. He's not above threats and blackmail (including against the President of the United States) to force people to do what he wants, and he's been known to turn his back on those who need him, because the team would be better off without them. The number of conspiracy theories that are attributed to Liberator's doing are even more impressive than his actual misdeeds; when one becomes admired for their mastery of realpolitik, people will believe anything about you. And Liberator is adept at manipulating this aura of distrust to get

what he wants.

Liberator isn't a total scumbag; he's put his life on the line for his teammates and innocents in a heartbeat (to the surprise of those who think he's the Anti-Christ), but his callous and calculating nature often overshadows his positive qualities. He has made many enemies, including heroes, such as America Man or the Titan, who have never hidden their dislike for him.

Personality: Unlike many pure Gestalts, Liberator is capable of seeming to act in a less than totally driven manner. He can be charming and engaging, and seems quite broad-minded in conversation. This is a facade. Liberator is as single-minded as any pure gestalt; his cause just gives him more room to maneuver in social situations. Liberator is cold and often callous in his relations with his comrades and the authorities. If asked for an opinion, he can be brutally honest. He is laconic, not moved by emotional displays, nor is he given to them. He's never, for example, had a romantic relationship with anyone, though he's often linked with Labyrinth.

Although the press often portrays him as arrogant and self-absorbed, he has no ego beyond his cause.

Powers/Tactics: Liberator's Gestalt gives him superhuman capabilities, including immortality and the ability to inspire American citizens. His exceptional combat abilities come from intense training, with Chris Turgeon and other martial arts masters to bring his combat abilities to a premium level.

Fighting alongside Columbia, Liberator serves as a front line fighter. He attacks ground-based targets, preferring protracted fights that allow him to outpace his opponents to short fights that require riskier power moves. Slow, overconfident opponents (especially if they're superhumanly strong) are his favorite opponents.

Appearance: Liberator is a six-foot tall Caucasian male, with light brown hair, green eyes, and a handsome face (complete with a cleft in his chin, perfect teeth and dimples). His costume, a circle of 13 stars around the Columbia eagle, symbolizes Columbia's dedication to the principles of the original Founding Fathers. His costume includes an empty holster for a gun, but as he has never used any firearm, it's probably symbolic.

LIBERATOR SCENARIO HOOKS

Dad?

Liberator discovers he's the spitting image of a lawyer who died just before the First Gestalt Wave, a lawyer whose death is linked to a friend of one of the PCs. Liberator's determined to learn the truth about that death; the PCs' friend is determined to hide it, and you're caught in the middle.

Incontrovertible Evidence

A supervillain offers to turn State's evidence against Liberator, saying he has proof that Liberator's involved in a political cover-up. Before the PCs can react, he's murdered, and the friendly NPC to whom the villain gave information disappears. Liberator dismisses the allegation, claiming it's just another supervillain attempt to frame him. But then the trail to the captured NPC indicates he was kidnapped by Columbia security.

(Options: Either (a) Columbia is really dirty; (b) somebody's doing a great job of framing Liberator; or (c) Liberator's innocent of the larger charge but thinks that the friendly NPC knows something, and he's being heavy-handed at getting the information. In any event, Liberator and Columbia are too close to the problem to be trusted to investigate it, so that burden will fall on the PCs' shoulders.)

ASCENSION

GESTALT OF HEAVY LABOR

POWER LEVEL 14

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+7	+6	+7	+0	+3	+7
24	22	24	10	16	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+15*	+8	+8	+9

*+7 w/o Force Field

Skills: Craft (electronic) 4 (+4), Craft (mechanical) 4 (+4), Craft (structural) 4 (+4), Diplomacy 8 (+15), Disable Device 4 (+4), Drive 4 (+10), Investigate 4 (+4), Language 1 (English; Spanish is native), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 11 (+11), Profession (priest) 8 (+11), Profession (laborer) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 4 (+7), Sleight of Hand 4 (+10)

Feats: Benefit 2 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth), Connected, Equipment, Improved Initiative, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Commlink

Powers: **Flight 7** (PF: Instant Up), **Force Field 8** (Impervious), **Speed 3**, **Telekinesis 14** (Heavy Load: 200 tons; Damaging, Perception; Precise, Alternate Powers: **Boost 8** [all physical ability scores at once; Area Burst (Progression 6), Limited: Only those engaged in physical labor; Slow fade 6], **Create Object 10** [create tools; Continuous; Innate, Precise, Subtle, Variable Descriptor], **Telekinesis 14** [Area Burst; Progression 5], **Telekinesis 10** [Heavy Load: 12 tons; Area Burst, Selective Attack; Precise], **Transform 9** [reconstruct broken objects; broad to broad; continuous])

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +17 (+24 with Telekinesis), Damage +7 (unarmed), +14 (Telekinesis), Defense +8, Knockback -11 (-3 w/o Force Field), Initiative +10

Abilities 60 + Skills 17 (68 ranks) + Feats 7+ Powers 96+ Combat 36 + Saves 9 = **225 Total**

Actual Name: Eduardo Raphael Castillo
Occupation: Former priest, now superhero

Legal Status: Mexican citizen with no criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded 2001 wave)

Goal: Support Social Justice

Power Level: Respected

Height: 5'11" (183 cm)

Weight: 215 lbs. (98 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Brown

Birthplace: El Plomo, Mexico

Current Residence: Washington DC

Group Affiliation: Columbia

Known Relatives: Monica Salinas (fiance), Laura Castillo (wife, deceased), Orfe Castillo (son, deceased).



"YOUR LABORS SHALL NOT SUCCEED, VILLAIN. AND I SHOULD KNOW."

Background: A young Catholic priest with a strong social conscience, Eduardo Castillo had always walked a fine line between his priestly duties, social justice, and the law. He came to be respected by all sides in Mexico City — except the most corrupt — and was brought in to arbitrate numerous private disputes. The underclass of Mexico City came to trust the charismatic young priest and supported his ministry. Even without powers, he came to be seen as a champion of the common man. The 2001 gestalt wave which gave him powers.

Calling himself *Ascensión*, Eduardo decided to leave the priesthood and focus on a superhero career, as he viewed the two professions as incompatible. He apprenticed under the legendary Mexican hero El Milagro, while he used his powers to help the poor and indolent improve people's lot in life. For a few years, he made people's lives better, then he fell in love, got married and was happily living in his childhood town of El Plomo — until one terrible day when the Tyranny League decided that the town was hiding some of Dr. Astra's old technology and needed to be destroyed.

Eduardo was spared the holocaust, but his family was killed. The desire for justice was overpowering. He contacted Columbia and offered his services, and the team accepted. After many immigration snags, he's finally managed to join Columbia as a provisional member (while becoming engaged to his ex-wife's best friend Monica, whom he'd like to marry next year at the Washington Cathedral). Hopefully, he can find

happiness and justice, while continuing to help people who perform manual labor to do their best.

Personality: Often called "the Shining Saint", Eduardo is a natural peacemaker who displays a wisdom that's well beyond his years. It takes a lot to make *Ascensión* your enemy. He believes in compassion, charity, and giving people the benefit of the doubt. How he'll manage to fit into the *realpolitik* world of Columbia is anyone's guess (though he's aware of Columbia's reputation and believes his diplomatic skills are equal to the challenge).

Powers/Tactics: *Ascensión* is a Laborer Gestalt. His powers not only allow him to perform heavy manual labor (via telekinesis), they allow him to provide aid to manual laborers (both by making them stronger and more durable) and summon whatever simple tool would be appropriate for the job.

In combat, *Ascensión* uses his telekinesis to slow down his opponents, or to throw them around until they no longer feel like fighting and then let them leave. He's not a powerhouse in a superfight; he's a utility player who knows his role.

Appearance: *Ascensión* is a handsome Caucasian (Latino) male in his early 30s. When his powers are active, he is surrounded by a golden glow (which is taken as a sign of holiness by some Mexican Catholics). Out of costume, he wears dark pants and dark dress shirts. He has a thick Mexican accent, which is best described as a smooth, gentle tenor.

ASCENSIÓN SCENARIO HOOKS

Incompatible?

Ascensión left the priesthood, and a local bishop is using that example to question whether superheroing is compatible with Catholicism. He's your bishop. You'd like to set his mind at ease. It would be good if you could persuade *Ascensión* to help you.

Heavy Labor

Ascensión comes to your town to help in the reconstruction of a city complex that was damaged by a supervillain attack. However, hours after using his powers to repair them, the repairs collapse? What force is undoing the efforts of the Gestalt of Labor? Or are his powers less reliable in America? It's your city, so it's your job to find out.

CARNIVAL

GESTALT OF LIGHT

POWER LEVEL 14

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+1	+6	+7	+2	+2	+5
12	23	25	14	14	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+15*	+10	+9	+9

*+7 w/o Force Field

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+10), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 4 (+6), Knowledge (popular culture) 8 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+8), Language 2 (Portuguese, Spanish), Notice 6 (+8), Sense Motive 10 (+12)

Feats: Attack Focus 4 (ranged), Attractive 2, Benefit 3 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth 2), Connected, Dodge Focus, Favored Environment 3 (airborne), Improved Initiative 2, Teamwork 2

Powers: **Blast 14** (Penetrating; Alternate Powers: **Blast 10** [Affects Insubstantial] plus **Dazzle 9** [visual; Linked to Blast], Dancing Lights Form 6 [**Insubstantial 4**, **Dazzle 2** (Aura, Continuous; Extended range 2)], **Deflect 15** [light-based attacks], **Light Control 15**, **Stun 9** [ranged] plus **Dazzle 6** [visual; Linked to Stun] , **Create Object 13** (Movable, Limited: Transport Bubble shape only; linked Immunity 9 [Life Support; Area Burst (power loss: outside of bubble)]; Tether), **Flight 7**, **Force Field 8** (Impervious), **Immunity 2** (heat, radiation), **Sensory Shield 3** (vision), **Super Senses 6** (blindsight, detect radio, radio)

Combat: Attack +11 (ranged), +7 (melee), Grapple +8, Damage +14 (blast), +1 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -11 (-3 w/o force field) , Initiative +14

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (Darkness attacks; +50% DC; unc, min, -1)

Abilities 48 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 18 + Powers 98 + Combat 28 + Saves 12 – Drawbacks 1 = **215 Total**

Actual Name: Felicia James
Occupation: Superheroine, super model.
Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994 wave)
Goal: Cultivate Media Superstardom
Power Level: Respected
Height: 5'10" (180 cm)
Weight: 160 lbs. (75 kg)
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Birthplace: Atlanta
Current Residence: Washington DC
Group Affiliations: Columbia
Known Relatives: Antonia (mother), Henry (father, estranged), Marcus (younger brother), Halle (younger sister), Walter (younger brother), Lois (younger sister)



"HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MONTH'S VANITY FAIR? I LOVED DOING THAT COVER OF THE BIRTH OF VENUS!"

Background: Raising five kids without a father is a headache for even the best mom in the best neighborhoods. Antonia James was a good mom, but the neighborhood, one of Atlanta's poorest, needed a lot of work. The James kids (or the James Gang, as they were known around their lower middle class DC neighborhood) grew up aggressive, with a serious case of smartmouth that didn't endear them to anyone, especially to their teachers. But at least they knew right from wrong, and sometimes that's all you need to avoid the worst parts of life: the drugs, the bullying, and the million ways people have found to abuse themselves.

Antonia's oldest daughter was Felicia. Even in her early teens, she was drop-dead gorgeous, and she wasn't a dumb kid either. If only she could keep her mouth shut for five seconds, she might get somewhere in life. But Felicia, for all her arguing and back-talking, did manage to hide one secret...

In 1994, when Felicia was only 13, she woke up at night and noticed that the room was lit even after the landlord had cut out the powers. Immediately she knew what she had become. A Gestalt. A star. She practiced using her powers in secret – while she'd rather be a celebrity than a superhero, she quickly realized she had certain responsibilities. The neighborhood needed protecting. The whole world needed protecting: the innocent needed shelter, the poor needed a helping hand, and those two qualities that are the bread and meat of the soul: dignity and hope.

Of course, that didn't mean she couldn't pursue her ambitions.

After a long career as a superheroine in the Atlanta area, Columbia offered her the best of both worlds. Responsibility and publicity as a member of the greatest team on Earth. Citing her inexperience and dislike of combat, she turned them down twice; but in 1998, she changed her mind and never looked back. Carnival used Columbia as a platform to become a super model, going to the one place where she was the most comfortable – the center of attention. She also used Columbia and the sense of personal responsibility it instilled to make her feel proud about herself, to improve her self-worth. As the superheroine Carnival, she is able to do a lot of good things and help people in ways she never dreamed possible.

It's also brought romance into her life. She's dated a young California congressman and a star football player, but currently, Felicia is very close

with Ray Sinclair, Columbia's chief of security, who's on the verge offering her a proposal that may change her life.

Personality: Felicia is loud and grandiose, appearing to suffer from vanity and an overblown ego. In actual fact, Felicia is insecure and displays a forceful personality in order to compensate for her inner fears.

Although Felicia seems vain and egocentric, she is probably the most responsible of the Columbians to the plight of everyday society; she lacks the abstract detachment of Liberator, or the political agenda of Starbird. She does a lot of charity work. It doesn't always show, but Felicia takes being a superheroine very seriously.

Powers/Tactics: Felicia's Gestalt bond has linked her to enlightenment and light manipulation. She exists to captivate and to light the darkness, a metaphor for hope and inspiration. If Carnival can succeed, anyone can. Felicia does not quite understand her Gestalt, why the light works as a metaphor for these ideals, but has stumbled into a position where she has few internal conflicts with it.

Felicia is an aggressive combatant who likes to get elevation and blast away at her opponents from a distance of 20 meters; however, she's sneaky enough to use her flight and her ability to transform herself into a cloud of light to surprise her opposition by getting into unlikely ambush positions. She's considered the least effective member of the team in combat, and she plays on that reputation by performing the occasional odd action, but it's usually meant to misdirect her opponents.

Appearance: Felicia is a tall, muscular African-American woman, about 24 years old, 5'10 and 155 lbs. Felicia has long, braided hair and dark brown eyes. Her costume is a red bodysuit with a multicolored force field which constantly shifts around her (Columbia's official comic book artists hate drawing it). Her voice is a sexy alto.

CARNIVAL SCENARIO HOOKS

Date

Carnival asks a PC out for a date. Wackiness ensues.

Make A Wish

A little girl in the PC's campaign city who's dying of cancer wishes to see Carnival before she dies. The PCs arrange for Carnival to visit, but when she does, the dying girl goes into a harangue about how little Carnival managed to inspire: life is just a progression of unfair events that precede death, and heroes don't matter. Carnival wants you to help her find a way to restore the girl's hope and give her a sense of peace before she dies – but how?

Oh Shoot!

A major publication declares Carnival and one of the PC's to be "America's sexiest supers" and they're called to do a photo shoot. The rest of Columbia is away on other business, but the PCs are there when – a jealous supervillain, upset with being overlooked for the "honor", attacks the photo shoot and attempts to get retribution.

EDGE

GESTALT OF DETERMINATION

POWER LEVEL 14

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+14	+4	+9	+2	+3	+5
38	18	28	14	14	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+15	+12	+8	+8

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Knowledge (pop culture) 6 (+8), Knowledge (street-wise) 8 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+8), Language 1 (Spanish), Notice 6 (+8), Sense Motive 7 (+9), Stealth 8 (+12), Survival 6 (+8)

Feats: Attack Focus 4 (melee), Attractive 2, Benefit 2 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth), Connected, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment, Fearless, Grappling Block, Improved Critical 5 (unarmed), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved trip, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Commlink.

Powers: **Absorption 6** [goes to healing; Both Types; Limited: Only after Edge has sustained either 3 Bruise or 3 Injured Conditions; Limited: missing Protection effect], **Enhanced Feat 3** [Luck 3], **Enhanced Strength +20** (Limited: Only for escaping Snares and Grapples), **Evening the Score (Enhanced Attack +4, Enhanced Defense +4, Drain Combat Traits 2** [Attack Bonus, Defense Bonus, and Toughness Save all at once (Aura, Continuous, Insidious, No Saving Throw; Isolated, Permanent; Subtle 2)]; Limited: Only versus opponents who have previously beaten Edge in single combat), **Immunity 7** (Suffocation [Sustained], Pain effects), Protection 6 (Impervious), **Mind Shield 10** (Limited: Only versus Mind Control, Limited: Only versus commands to surrender), **Super Senses 5** (detect old enemies [acute, extended range]), **Super Strength 6** (Heavy Load: 160 tons)

Combat: Attack +10 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +30, Damage +14 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -10, Initiative +8

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (Attacks from opponents who resist his attempts to intimidate them; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 72 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 26 + Powers 85 + Combat 24 + Saves 13 – Drawbacks 2 = 231 Total

Note: "Isolated" is a power modifier that applies to adjustment powers. The changes caused by that power are only in effect when dealing with the user of the adjustment power itself; against others, the target doesn't exhibit the changes wrought by the user.

Actual Name: Phillip Harrison Todd
Occupation: Superhero, Former Lifeguard
Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994 wave)
Goal: Find the Right Girl
Power Level: Respected
Height: 7'11" (183 cm)
Weight: 430 lbs. (104 kg)
Hair Color: Red
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: Fort Lauderdale, FL.
Current Residence: Washington DC
Group Affiliations: Columbia
Known Relatives: Lisa Gregson Wilkes (mother), Dennis Wilkes (stepfather), Wayne (younger brother), Courage (younger stepbrother), Max (younger stepbrother), Samuel Todd (father, deceased)



"HEY LOSER! HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO ROB THIS BANK WHEN YOU'RE GONNA BE BUSY PICKING UP YOUR TEETH!"

Background: Phillip Todd worked a lifeguard in Tampa, Florida, but was considered a disciplinary problem. There was a reason for it – he liked getting under people’s skins, the more self-important the person, the more enjoyable it was. Eventually he got under the skin of the wrong person, and found himself out of work and on the streets of Tampa.

A part-time job coaching swimming at a loyal youth club kept him from starving, while his hobby of wreck diving kept him from dying of boredom. Still, Phil felt his life was going nowhere – until the day he received superpowers. Being able to perform a military press with your ex-boss’s yacht just... rocks.

But what next? Phil remembered the one time when he’d seen America Man in action. He and a couple of other lifeguards had teamed with the Coast Guard and America Man in rescuing a boat of Cuban refugees who had been lost in a storm. America Man had acted like a dork of monumental proportions, and yet there was something about him that even a smart-mouthed 18-year-old could respect. So Phil decided that his future was that of a superhero.

After a year of active hero duty in Tampa, Phil began to attract media attention. The local scene bored him, so he applied to Columbia. To his astonishment, they accepted him onto the team. Their image consultant advised him to adopt a rebel attitude, and gave him the name “Edge”. Phil shrugged and said “sure”.

Phil has been an important member of Columbia ever since. He’s a lot less rebellious than his image suggests (although he’s had his shares of screaming matches with Liberator), and his practical jokes have put him at odds with some of his teammates. The transformation of Utopia (and the deaths of Rex and Reactor) shook him badly, as did his killing of Energy Master, and he’s considered retiring. However, he also realizes that he’s addicted to the life of a superhero, and can’t quite muster the courage to put it behind him.

Personality: Edge is a very friendly, casual guy, although he’s given to a crude wit and a penchant for glib remarks. He doesn’t back down from a confrontation, and he argues about team policy more than anyone except Starbird. Edge is extremely protective of his teammates. He knows

how deadly his powers can be, and has sworn never to take a life again (even though he usually sends more people to the hospital after a fight than the rest of the team combined.)

Edge has a reputation for not taking things very seriously. This is true, but there’s also a private side to Edge that he doesn’t share with others; he’d rather blow up in anger or charge into a losing situation than display grief or hesitation.

Edge enjoys a good party and loves to celebrate team victories – he’ll even host parties for other superhero teams after their major victories. Edge makes friends easily, and is well liked by most of the white hats in the Gestalt community, even those who dislike the rest of his team. He’s scrupulously avoided romantic entanglements since he became a superhero, primarily because his biggest recurring nightmare is the death of his loved ones. This has led to a lot of tabloid rumors circulating about his personal life, all of which are false. The truth is that he’s secretly in love with Starbird, his favorite practical joke victim, and isn’t quite sure how to pursue the relationship.

Powers/Tactics: Combining many of the qualities of a Toughness and a Strongman Gestalt with his own Determination Gestalt, Edge is one of the most formidable hand-to-hand fighters on the planet. His Gestalt really comes into play when he faces someone who beat him on his last encounter – that’s when his strength and agility reach levels that rival the best superhumans. He’s almost impossible to beat twice in a row (just beating him once is a pretty impressive accomplishment).

Edge will usually hold back for a round, gauge his opponents, and as soon as he’s sure he’s picked the right target, enter the fight with the determination of a madman. Over time, he’s forced himself to become a better team player, but still likes a good one-on-one scrap.

Appearance: Once voted People Magazine’s “Sexiest Man Alive”, Edge is 7’11” and 460 lbs., with red hair, blue eyes, and with a very muscular build. He wears a black costume with blue leggings and trim, and a Columbia symbol on his chest.

EDGE SCENARIO HOOKS

Inspired By...

One of your PC’s kids, or the child of a close friend, becomes obsessed with Edge. He dresses up in licensed Edge costumes, insists on spending a small fortune in action figures, videogames, posters, and other “Made in Taiwan” junk, and starts fights at school because “that’s what Edge does, he beats people up!”. Is the problem that Edge’s marketing’s too aggressive, or is the kid idolizing the wrong super or are you just a bad parent?

Labor Dispute

Edge, tired of the treatment he’s gotten from Columbia, offers to join your team – but he demands to be named team leader, insists on a stranglehold on team merchandising rights, and wants an outrageous salary. Are you being used as a spoiled superhero’s salary ploy? And is it really worth having Edge onboard your squad, especially when he brings a truckload of archenemies with him?

No Compromises

While busting a pornography operation, you discover a large collection of photos of Edge in sexually compromising positions (tailor the exact details to the tone of the campaign). Does Phillip Todd really have a secret life, or is it just a body double and a creative guy with a photo program and too much time on his hands?

KID MERCURY

GESTALT OF SPEED

POWER LEVEL 14

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+9	+7	+9	+3	+0	+1
28	26	28	16	10	12

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+12*	+10	+10	+4

*+9 w/o force field

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+14), Bluff 4 (+5), Craft (mechanical) 2 (+5), Disable Device 6 (+9), Investigate 2 (+4), Knowledge (life sciences) 6 (+9), Medicine 10 (+10), Notice 4 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+4)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee), Benefit 2 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth), Connected, Teamwork 2.

Equipment: Armor (protection 2, subtle), Commlink

Powers: **Enhanced Feats 16** (Dodge Focus 8, Evasion, Fast Overrun, Improved Defense 2, Improved Overrun, Improved Trip, Improved Throw, Move-by Action), **Force Field 3** (power loss: when not moving, -1 pt), **Immunity 1** (impact damage from his own slam attacks), **Super Senses 3** (direction sense, distance sense, time sense), **Super Speed 12** (Moving Feint; **Strike 10** [Affects Insubstantial, Mighty]; Alternate Powers: **Invisible** (all sight), **Environmental Control 5** [laying obstacles, Distraction 2 plus Hamper Movement 2]), **Super Strength 3** (Heavy Load: 4.8 tons)

Combat : Attack +9 (melee), +8 (ranged), Grapple +21, Damage +9 (un-armed), +19 (strike), Defense +16 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -6 (-3 flatfooted), Initiative +48

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (poisons and toxins; +100% DC; unc, maj, -3)

Abilities 60 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 91 + Combat 32 + Saves 7 – Drawbacks 3= 204 Total

Actual Name: Robert Anderson Galway

Occupation: Superhero, Doctor

Legal Status: American citizen with a DUI conviction

Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994 wave)

Goal: Discover Cure for Cancer

Power Level: Respected

Height: 5'11" (180 cm)

Weight: 170 lbs. (77 kg)

Hair Color: Blond

Eye Color: Blue

Birthplace: Norman, OK.

Current Residence: Washington DC

Group Affiliations: Columbia

Known Relatives: Will Galway (older brother), Dan Galway (father), Laura Miles Galway (mother), Robert Miles (grandfather), Layla Hughes Miles (grandmother)



"I'M OUTTA HERE!"

Background: Bob Galway was a medical student and amateur track star at the University of Oklahoma when his Gestalt powers emerged in the Second Gestalt Wave. Being an honest man, Bob immediately revealed them to the public. The university responded by banning him from the track team and the public responded by treating him like a freak. Bob left Oklahoma, and went to the big city in search of acceptance.

He found it as a costumed crimefighter in New York. He used his superspeed to patrol Central Park every evening, cleaning up criminal activity. He called himself "Kid Mercury" and got a very good reputation. Eventually, his reputation got so good that he was invited to join Columbia.

Initially, Bob was more than happy to accept the invitation. But Bob was a habitual loner; he had never been particularly good at team sports or cooperation and found himself coming into serious conflict with Liberator and Labyrinth. He proved unwilling to accept any attempt to mediate his disputes, and even Starbird and Thrill-seeker, who had initially supported him, agreed that he was being unreasonable and harmful to the group. Fortunately, Kid Mercury could see the writing on the wall; once again, he left an uncomfortable environment. He resigned from Columbia, wrote an angry autobiography, completed his medical degree and internship, and set up a private practice. His life as a super was over, and Columbia lost a significant weapon against their enemies.

Life in the private world did not prove to be beneficial for Bob, who fell into debt and got in trouble with the IRS. To make things worse, he started drinking heavily. When Liberator learned of this, he blackmailed Bob into rejoining Columbia, threatening to report him to the AMA if he refused. Bob reluctantly rejoined Columbia, but has done his best to oppose Liberator at every op-

portunity. Kid Mercury is not particularly proud to be a Columbian, and is still something of a loose cannon on the team.

Personality: Bob is a lone wolf. He doesn't take criticism well, and he is not a good fit in a team. He does have a strong sense of social responsibility to go along with his self-destructive nature. But for he's spent the last two years being angry, bitter, and a bit vengeful. He'd like nothing better than to see Liberator fall into the disgrace that he deserves.

Bob keeps to himself. He's studious and inquisitive, but not when he's depressed. He's given to long solo patrols. After a pair of failed relationships, Bob keeps to himself and avoids romance.

In a fight, Kid Mercury is the opposite of what he is outside of his costume. He is jovial, light-hearted, and wise cracking. It's as though when he's using his powers, he's a different person — a much happier, more content person. He's had a drinking problem, and has also been diagnosed as a manic-depressive; he's refused treatment of the latter problem.

Powers/Tactics: Mercury's Gestalt link is with speed; he loves to race and travel at great velocity, and his running boosts his powers. It's probably a fair statement that the use of his powers is what makes him a complete person.

In combat, Kid Mercury uses his speed to attack multiple opponents simultaneously, or (in desperation), he'll ram someone at full speed. To Liberator's annoyance, Mercury rarely listens to orders.

Appearance: Kid Mercury is 5'11" and 170 lbs. at peak fighting trim; he has a tendency to put on and lose weight suddenly (depending on his mood). He has blond hair (worn short) and blue eyes, and a pale complexion. His costume is a silver bodysuit with black trim, and goggles with a built in communications device.

KID MERCURY SCENARIO HOOKS

The Big Race

Speedsters and races go together like powerhouses and wrestling. If you want to race, this is the guy.

Expelled

After a series of ugly incidents, Kid Mercury is expelled from the Columbia. He goes on a drunken rampage through the bars of the campaign's home city. Stop him and find a way to get some help for him.

No Compromises

A PC speedster comes down with a neurological condition related to his superspeed. The only person who has experience with treating such conditions is Dr. Bob Galway, unfortunately Kid's had a major quarrel with the team and has run away to sulk in silence. Find Kid Mercury before your PC's condition becomes serious.

Cure for Cancer:

Someone Kid Mercury knows develops his research is conducted in secret, hoping to find a cure before the disease takes the person's life. He begins doing illegal experiments to try and solve the problem. Complicate this by making the cancer victim another member of Columbia, who Kid Mercury hasn't told...

LABYRINTH

GESTALT OF SECRETS

POWER LEVEL 15

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+1	+4	+6	+4	+6	+10
12	18	22	18	22	30

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+14*	+12	+9	+10

((+9 vs those with unknown secrets, +6 w/o Force Field))

Skills: luff 6 (+16), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 10 (+14), Knowledge (current events) 10 (+14), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+12), Language 2 (French, Spanish), Notice 16 (+22), Sense Motive 16 (+22)

Feats: Attack Focus 4 (melee), Benefit 2 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth), Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Stunning Strike, Sweeping Attack, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Armor (protection 2, subtle), Commlink,

Powers: **Comprehend 4** (languages 4; Limited; Only to understand secrets), **Flight 6** (Limited: Only if Labyrinth has learned a secret within last 24 hours- on top three ranks), **Force Field 6** (Limited: Not vs targets whose secrets Labyrinth doesn't know- on top three ranks), **Mind Shield 8**, **Gestalt Immortality** (Regeneration 9 [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection; Not if killed while telling a secret)]), **Regeneration 9** (Recovery +3; Injured 1 per 5 minutes, Staggered 1 per 5 minutes, Disabled 1 per hour), **Sensory Shield 2** (all senses), **Super Senses 11** (danger sense [extended 2, acute, analytical], extended hearing 5 [limited: only to overhear secret conversations], radio [limited: only to overhear secret conversations]), **Telepathy 15** (Alternate Powers: **Mind Control 15** [mental link; Limited: Only versus those whose secrets she knows – must follow use of Telepathy], **Illusion 10** [all senses, Limited: Only versus those whose secrets she knows – must follow use of Telepathy], **Mental Blast 10** [Limited: Only versus those whose secrets she knows – must follow use of Telepathy], **Mental Blast 5** plus **Dazzle 5** [all senses; Alternate Save: Will instead of both Reflex and Fortitude] [limited: Only versus those whose secrets she knows – must follow use of Telepathy])

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), +10 (mental blast), Defense +8 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -6 (-3 w/o force field), Initiative +120

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (Attacks from Curiosity or Knowledge Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2 pts), Weakness (Secrets being wrested from her; instant, maj, -4 pts)

Abilities 62 + Skills 17 (68 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 94+ Combat 20 + Saves 9 – Drawbacks 6= **206 Total**

Actual Name: Not applicable
Occupation: Superhero
Legal Status: American citizen
Gestalt Type: Pure (1989 wave)
Goal: Discover the secret of Victor Eismann.
Power Level: Respected
Height: 5'9" (176 cm)
Weight: 140 lbs. (63 kg)
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Birthplace: Georgetown, DE.
Current Residence: Washington DC
Group Affiliations: Columbia
Known Relatives: None



Background: A pure gestalt “doesn’t have much of a background. Labyrinth is the Gestalt entity of secrets: discovering secrets, revealing secrets, and keeping secrets. Keeping secrets is the most important thing to her. She joined the team to learn Liberator’s secret, and that’s the one that bound her

to Columbia. As a member of Columbia, she’s their telepath, but also an extremely important part of their security. More than once, she’s discovered a traitor trying to infiltrate her organization, and she’s always stopped them.

Labyrinth’s secret is that she is a member of the Council of the Mind, an organization of psionics led by her arch-nemesis, Influence. Labyrinth is continually trying to sway the Council to leave the human race to develop without “superior guidance”, but Influence is more influential. Influence is actively trying to have Labyrinth killed, except at meetings of the Council, which is held on neutral ground.

Labyrinth, for her part, has her own agenda for telepaths. She wants to keep them from using their powers with reckless abandon. She especially fears telepaths in the Gestalt Dimension, where all truths are recorded. She’s remained with Columbia to use the team’s resources to keep an eye on telepaths and to learn more about the Gestalt Dimension. Labyrinth can be as manipulative as Liberator, but a lot more subtle.

Labyrinth is the psionic vanguard of Earth, a protector of the mind whose emotionless facade borders on the inhuman (and thus she is feared more than anyone else in Columbia). Nonetheless, she is completely dedicated to the organization and to Liberator; as long as they don’t delve too deeply into things meant to be secret from the human race, she’ll support them completely. Many heroes use Labyrinth as a repository for their secrets; she’s the one person on Earth whose silence is assured, making her the perfect protector for delicate information.

**“WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW
WON’T HURT YOU. WHAT YOU
WOULD TELL WILL HURT YOU
MORE. THERE ARE THINGS IN
THE LABYRINTH THAT NO MAN
OR WOMAN SHOULD EVER
KNOW.”**

learn dark truths about the people around her, then keep them to herself, and make certain they do not come to light and hurt people.

Labyrinth is extremely fond of making cryptic comments. She always lets people know that she knows more than she’s telling, which makes her seem mysterious and slightly sinister at the same time. At the same time, she will not give any significant hints toward secrets that she knows. She will not even reveal secrets when someone asks her to reveal their secrets. She usually finds some way to reveal dangers to the team without violating her purpose, but they can be convoluted.

Powers/Tactics: As a pure gestalt, Labyrinth has a number of powers common to the breed. She is immortal; one can seem to kill her, but she won’t really be dead. She has very powerful telepathic powers; her cramming is based on a subconscious mental link with others that gives her access to their skills.

Labyrinth likes to keep her distance from the fight and attack telepathy, using whatever cover is available to hide behind.

Appearance: Labyrinth is a woman with long black hair, a dark, Semitic face, and dark brown eyes. She wears a red bodysuit with green leggings and gold white trim that forms complex maze patterns. Labyrinth appears to be in her late 20s; she is 5’10” tall, and weighs 140 lbs.

Personal-

ity: Like many pure Gestalts, Labyrinth is a cold, callous individual; her deeds, rather than her words, are the best indication of her good intentions. As Keeper of Secrets, Labyrinth seeks to

LABYRINTH SCENARIO HOOKS

Body Switch

Using an experimental technique, Dr. Power switches bodies with Labyrinth – who, even though she’s in Power’s body, cannot divulge a secret. Can you discover the truth about Labyrinth and restore her to her body before Dr. Power finds a way to destroy the world’s mightiest hero team from within?

I’ve Got A Secret

An old reporter friend of the PCs is about to publish a tell-all book on Columbia – and then the manuscript vanishes, and he wakes up with amnesia. Everyone thinks that Labyrinth is responsible, but she refuses to divulge any information on her whereabouts or defend herself from the allegation. Can you find the missing Columbia manuscript?

Maybe It’s A Maze

The Measurer is interested in seeing how Labyrinth measures up to her namesake, so he’s built a maze to measure her abilities. However, he needs to have some sort of baseline to measure how well Labyrinth does, so he kidnaps one of the PC’s DNPCs, sticks him or her in the center of the maze, and invites the PC to make the rescue.

STARBOARD

GESTALT OF RAGE

POWER LEVEL 14

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+12	+6	+6	+7	+0	+7
35	22	22	25	11	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+13*	+8	+8	+7

(*+10 flatfooted, +7 flatfooted and w/o armor)

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+10), Bluff 4 (+11), Intimidate 10 (+17), Investigate 6 (+6), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+8), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 2 (+3), Sense motive 4 (+5)

Feats: Attack Focus 3 (ranged), Attractive, Benefit 2 (Status – Federal Police Powers, Wealth), Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Sweeping Strike

Equipment: Armor (Protection 3, Subtle), Commlink

Powers: **Blast 15** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 10** [Knockback 10], **Blast 10** [Area Explosion], **Blast 10** [Area Line], **Blast 7** [Independent], Energy Aura 7), **Environmental Control 5** (heightened tensions; Distraction 2; Continuous; Permanent), **Flight 6**, **Immunity 2** (Suffocation)

Combat: Attack +13 (ranged), +10 (melee), Grapple +22, Damage +15 (blast), +12 (unarmed), Defense +12 (+5 flatfooted), Knockback -6 (-5 flatfooted, -3 flatfooted and w/o armor), Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Blast array, Flight, and Immunity, when psionically ordered to calm down, -3 pts), Vulnerability (Attacks from Peace or Love Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2 pts), Weakness (When psionically forced to calm down; instant, maj, -4 pts)

Abilities 69 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 20 + Powers 59 + Combat 40 + Saves 9 – Drawbacks 9 = **198 Total**

Actual Name: Melinda Case

Occupation: Superhero

Legal Status: American citizen with numerous minor convictions

Gestalt Type: Bonded (1989 wave)

Goal: Avenge Brother's Death

Power Level: Respected

Height: 5'5" (165 cm)

Weight: 121 lbs. (55kg)

Hair Color: Blond

Eye Color: Green

Birthplace: Berkeley, CA.

Current Residence: Washington DC

Group Affiliations: Columbia

Known Relatives: Dr. Derek Case, Ph.D. (father). Dr. Diana Case, Ph.D. (mother), Carson Case (brother, deceased)



Background: One of the oddest laws of Gestalt science is that simultaneous bonds don't occur very often to relatives, but with Carson and Melinda Case, it happened. They both received superhuman powers, in 1989, when they were 17 years old.

They were twins, the children of a pair of professors at Berkeley, and they grew up with Berkeley attitudes, ready to right wrongs and fight the power. Carson put his powers to immediate use as Freebird. He became a political activist, and sup-

ported causes that might be considered radical: pro-abortion, gay rights, worldwide human rights, anti-war and anti-trade compact rallies.

Melinda, who was training to become a social worker, shared those attitudes but believed in working within the system. When she received her superpowers, she went on a campaign against people who abused children, but also fought crime in the San Francisco area. She proved herself to

be a capable superheroine in a number of battles.

Her life took a turn for the worse in 1991, following the invasion of Kuwait, when her brother went to Iraq to negotiate with Saddam Hussein (and to denounce George Bush). Freebird, probably from his own choice, became a human shield, and refused to leave Iraq when the other human shields were released. When Operation: Desert Storm began, Freebird was killed in the bombing of a factory; his body was returned to the United States and his identity was confirmed (some argued that he committed suicide by deliberately blowing himself up with cluster bombs as a protest against the war).

Melinda grieved, and by her own admission, has still not recovered from her brother's actions. She developed a "pox on all your houses" prejudice against the Arab nations of the Middle East. Columbia approached her in 1992. She had a thousand reasons for not joining, but when Liberator told her that it would contribute to her brother's legacy, she couldn't argue with it, though she warned Liberator that she could be difficult.

Starbird was nothing if not honest. She constantly questioned team policy, and insulted Liberator when he acted like "an inhuman bastard conducting his own private war". Her time with Columbia has seen many trials and setbacks. Her close friend Utopia was transformed into a monster by the Blood Red King in 1995. Reactor, whom she dated for years, was killed in 1999 by the Tyranny League. Melinda is torn between the friends she's gotten in Columbia, the influence she has as a member of the world's most esteemed superhero organization, and her desire to be free of constraint when offering social criticism. She doesn't want to leave the team. She doesn't want the bad guys to win. But she's not sure how much longer she can keep it up.

The press criticizes Starbird more than any other member, and Melinda is no help in polishing her reputation. More often than not, an interview with her ends in a temper tantrum, most notoriously in 1997, when a plasma bolt came inches from Sam Donaldson's head (Melinda claims it was a warning shot - the lawsuit was settled out of court.) Nonetheless, the press enjoys interviewing her because they usually get a good quote from "Loose Cannon Lass".

Melinda's luck at love has also been a complete disaster. In addition to the Reactor tragedy, her first boyfriend, Curtis Avalon, was a Dawn Brothers agent who tried to kill Labyrinth in her sleep. Her most recent boyfriend, Aiden Aston, was an Ar'Kayadin spy trying to uncover Columbia secrets. The latter relationship contributed to Melinda's hatred of aliens; she was recently quoted as calling the Ar "cultural rapists", and "as big a threat to humanity as the Spanish were to the Aztecs."

"LET'S SEE HOW FUNNY YOU FIND THAT REMARK WHEN YOU'RE COVERED IN THIRD DEGREE BURNS!"

The Ar'Turodain were not amused, although Tar-radan wryly thanked her for the history lesson.

Starbird has quit Columbia six times, but always rejoins the team within a week. Despite her problems, her

teammates love her and support her, and Liberator considers her an essential member of the Columbia organization.

Personality: Because her powers make her something from a failed anger management class, Melinda's not a particularly fun Gestalt to spend a lot of time around, particularly at close quarters. Even at the best of times she'll lash at you, seemingly for no reason.

Melinda is extremely serious; she has an almost pure gestalt-like intensity about social issues; since she relishes argument, she loves politics. In social situations, she's a volcano, either sullen and quiet, or explosive. She's increasingly finding combat to be irritating, and she often approaches a berserker fury when forced into a physical confrontation. She's not particularly fond of violence, but you wouldn't know it from looking at the way she fights. Likewise, the idea that she'll ever take a life terrifies her, though only her closest friends knows this.

Melinda is very critical of her team and her teammates, except when someone from outside the team is criticizing them, in which case she is extraordinarily loyal. Melinda is extremely cynical about strangers, and doesn't trust people very much anymore. Her closest friend is probably Edge, although from the practical jokes he plays on her (and the way she yells at him most of the time) you'd never know it. She also leans heavily on Chris Turgeon: a romantic triangle is definitely forming between Chris, Edge and Starbird, despite the fact that her powers (and personality) tend to keep people away from her.

Powers/Tactics: Melinda and Carson both shared the same Gestalt; rage, expressed in explosive blasts of heat. Starbird is not completely ruled by her Gestalt, she's an angry person, but usually maintains some control over her powers and temper. Edge has sarcastically referred to Starbird as having the PMS Gestalt.)

Starbird is the "power forward" of Columbia; she's the brute force energy controller (in contrast to Carnival, who's "the quick one") who's also physically durable. As such, she likes to blast at close range (ranges of twenty meters or closer) and be ready to physically intervene when needed. Starbird is considered one of the most powerful energy manipulators on Earth.

Appearance: Starbird wears a blue costume with a gold trim. She has an elaborate blue mask that is meant to resemble a bird's head. Starbird has golden hair; she is 5'4" and weighs 120 lbs.

STARBIRD SCENARIO HOOKS

Don't Give Peace A Chance

Starbird, the most hyperactive and angry superhero in the world, returns from a Columbia mission alone and publicly announces that she's renounced the ways of violence and intends to devote her life to spreading the message of the virtues of peaceful coexistence and conciliation.

Obviously something's very wrong, but what?

Freebird

You get information that Starbird's brother, thought dead during the Gulf War, is alive and well. Unfortunately, he's now fighting on the side of terrorists. What will you tell Starbird?

No Contest

An eccentric billionaire has an unusual proposition for a PC with anger management issues; they have to spend the day with Starbird, followed by hidden cameras, and whichever person can keep their temper in check the longest will get \$10 million to donate to their favorite charity.

SOLO SUPERHEROES

ATHENA

GESTALT REINCARNATION OF THE GREEK GODDESS

POWER LEVEL 10

((CREATED BY WAYNE SHAW))

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+6	+4	+6	+10	+7
16	22	18	22	30	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+9/+7*/+4**	+8	+10	+14

* flatfooted, **flatfooted and w/o armor

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+12), Bluff 7 (+14), Diplomacy 7 (+14), Computer 4 (+10), Investigation 12 (+18), Language 1 (English; Greek is native), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 8 (+14), Knowledge (civics) 8 (+14), Knowledge (history) 8 (+14), Knowledge (life sciences) 8 (+14), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+14), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 (+14), Medicine 3 (+13), Notice 8 (+18), Profession (teacher) 4 (+14), Search 8 (+14), Stealth 6 (+12), Survival 6 (+16)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attractive 2, Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 3, Equipment 10, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Precise Shot, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Teamwork 2, Track

Equipment: Arsenal (large selection of guns, usually includes at least an Assault Rifle and Pistol), Armor (Protection 3, Subtle), Commlink

Powers: ESP 9 (divine far sight; hearing and sight; Alternate Powers: **Flight 3** [elation], **Mental Blast 6** [force of will; Tiring]), **Gestalt Immortality (Regeneration 9** [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection; Not if slain by rival deity)]), **Regeneration 7** (Recovery +1; Injured 1 per 5 minutes, Staggered 1 per 5 minutes, Disabled 1 per hour), **Super Senses 4** (divine awareness [acute, analytical, ranged])

Combat: Attack +12 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +15, Damage varies (weapons, up to +10), +3 (unarmed), Defense +11 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -5 (-4 flatfooted, -2 flatfooted and w/o armor), Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Slaughter Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 72+ Skills 30 (120 ranks) + Feats 32 + Powers 49 + Combat 36 + Saves 12 – Drawbacks 2 = **229 Total**

Actual Name: Athena

Occupation: Freelance superheroine

Legal Status: Greek citizen with no criminal record

Gestalt Type: Pure (1994 wave)

Power Level: Respected

Goal: Destroy the Blood Red King

Height: 5'5" (195 cm)

Weight: 130 lbs. (375 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Brown

Birthplace: Mt. Olympus, Greece

Current Residence: Burbank, California USA

Group Affiliations: Hollywood Knights (former leader, current advisor).

Known Relatives: Apollo, numerous non-mystical relations

"OH PLEASE. JUST BECAUSE SOME GODS ARE ARROGANT FOOLS IT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE ALL WALKING MYTHOLOGY TEXT-BOOKS."



Background: The Greek Goddess of Wisdom, Athena sprang from her father's noblest nature and into the mythic world. For centuries, she provided the best guidance for mortals that she could, though she had her bad days ("the Trojan War was pretty much qualifies as one very long bad day.")

As the centuries wore on and the fortunes of her patron city diminished, Athena felt herself fade from the world. She wasn't sure when she last remembered the world –but in 1994, that changed, and Athena found herself reborn, naked in the center of the Parthenon.

A Gestalt Wave had just occurred.

Of course, as far as Athena was concerned, she was a god, not a gestalt, but wasn't really interested in dickering over identity issues. After a few uncomfortable months relearning the ways of the world (and her powers, which were greatly reduced in comparison to what she could do in the old days), she began to act a god should: by offering her wisdom to the world, finding patron heroes, and battling against the demiurgic powers that threatened human existence.

Her earliest attempts to intervene in human affairs was in the Balkan conflicts of the mid and late 1990s. She didn't end the war, but her interference produced two results: a cult was founded in her honor, and she made a lot of enemies.

Neither appealed to her, but that wasn't the reason she left Europe – she was worried about the presence of chaotic beings such as the Blood Red King who reminded her of the demiurgic enemies of the ancient Greek pantheon, and came to the conclusion that her energies were best served fighting them. In 2001, when billionaire Foster Erickson gathered a team of supers in Los Angeles and christened them the Hollywood Knights, she was everyone's choice for leader.

After four tumultuous years, Athena managed to hone the Knights into a formidable fighting force. Recently, however, Athena left the team under mysterious circumstances. Some said she had provided covert aid for her brother (the supervillain Apollo) escape Columbia. Others speculated she had secretly confiscated a stolen

nuclear weapon and hid it away to be used as a weapon of last resort. Whatever the reason, none of the Knights are talking.

Athena now works as a security consultant and an advisor for heroes. She splits her time between Greece, Copenhagen (she trains with Victor Eismann, though some think she's keeping an eye on him), and Los Angeles. These days she prefers to advise heroes and let them do the dirty work

Personality: Athena cultivates a character that manages to combine a godly sense of superiority with common sense. She is courteous but bluntly honest (except when it serves her purposes to keep her mouth shut). Firmly dedicated to the battle against evil, she is capable of showing respect for capable opponents (especially those who show restraint), but psychotics make her skin crawl. Unlike her brother Apollo, she's quite accepting of the modern world and its conventions, but she does frequently make allusions to the ancient world.

Athena is also a virgin goddess, and generally reacts unfavorably to sexual advances.

Powers/Tactics: Athena's a Mythological Reincarnation Gestalt of the Greek god Athena. Her divine powers are still far weaker than many of her kind, perhaps reflecting a subconscious desire to fit into the modern world. She typically carries a big gun (a combat shotgun or high caliber rifle in normal situations, a rocket launcher when she anticipates heavy opposition) and a combat staff or spear.

Athena's combat tactics represent the choice of a smart captain – she'll lead her troops to the battle, stay toward the rear of the fight, but remain an active participant and commander.

Appearance: Athena is a very beautiful woman with pale white skin, brown hair and brown eyes. She typically wears modern military dress (usually fatigues) but with a silver owl pendant buttoned to her shoulder. Her favored weapons range from machine pistols to rocket launchers.

ATHENA SCENARIO HOOKS

The Hero's Journey

A gestalt tells you that in order to advance to the next stage in your journey as a hero, you need to accept the patronage of the Greek goddess Athena.

Athena's not particularly interested in being your patron, but the gestalt told you that if she refused, you needed to ask Athena to name three tasks for you to perform in order to win her mentorship.

Do you ask her for those tasks? What quests does Athena deem worthy of a superhero?

Owls in the Night

Owls are breaking into museums and stealing classic weapons – and the police found the weapons on property belonging to Athena. The heroine's contempt for such an obvious frame-job is palpable, but she'll need some assistance in clearing her name. Find the real thief.

KORGUN

ALIEN AMBASSADOR

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+8	+6	+8	+0	+3	+5
26	22	26	10	16	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+12/+8*	+10	+10	+10

* w/o armor

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+14), Bluff 8 (+13), Demolitions 4 (+4), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Disguise 4 (+9), Knowledge (tactics) 5 (+5), Language 1 (English), Medicine 2 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Survival 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee) 4, Attractive, Chokehold, Connected, Dodge Focus 4, Evasion, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Stunning Attack, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Ar'Turodain Multibeam Weapon (Blast 9 [Explosion; Alternate Power: Blast 12 (affects insubstantial)]); Advanced Armor (Commlink, Flight 3, Protection 4 [Impervious], Immunity 9 [life support], Sensory Shield 4 [all senses])

Powers: **Device 6** (Ar'Turodain Multibeam Weapon, easy-to-lose), **Device 7** (Advanced Armor, hard-to-lose), **Immunity 1** (age [Limited: ½ effect]), **Paralyze 12** (natural suppression field control; Normal Range; Alternate Powers: **Drain Strength 8** [Slow Fade 3], **Corrosion 8** [Penetrating on both effects; Limited: Only vs Force Constructs], **Fatigue 8** [Aura, Sustained], **Strike 8** [Alternate Save: Fortitude]), **Super Strength 2** (heavy lift: 1.5 tons)

Combat: Attack +16 (melee), +12 (ranged), Grapple +26, Damage +8 (unarmed), +12 (blast), Defense +12 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -8 (-4 w/o armor), Initiative +10

Abilities 58 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 18 + Powers 91 + Combat 40 + Saves 14 = **233 Total**

Actual Name: Korgun Dumantari

Occupation: Alien Ambassador

Legal Status: Ar'Turodain Citizen

Gestalt Type: None

Goal: Become A Respected Earth Super-hero

Power Level: Respected

Height: 5'3" (159 cm)

Weight: 110 lbs (49 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Green

Birthplace: Thirteenth Tier, City of Creches, the Planet Gilada.

Current Residence: Ar'Turodain base, Arizona

Group Affiliations: None.

Known Relatives: None.



"I LIKE THIS PLANET.
IT'S FUN!"

Background: Known in Ar'Turodain circles as both "the hero of Gilada" and "the idiot of Gilada", Makima (Major) Korgun Dumantari was born an orphan in the City of Creches, where Ar'Turodain mothers surrender unwanted pregnancies. As a boy, he demonstrated incredible physical gifts, and it became obvious to the Second Family (the Ar'Turodain term for those who raise orphans) that he was a throwback to the elite genetically engineered soldiers of centuries past -- the legendary Ar'Huriti, the Great Warrior Ar.

Korgun was also nearly uncontrollable, a cheerful brawling whirlwind of destruction on whom Family discipline just didn't work. At the age of 10, the orphanage held his manhood ceremony (five years earlier than it should), sent him off to the military academy, and breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Korgun pursued a military career. He passed the tests easily, and graduated at the top of his class. On his first tour, he established himself in battle against the Ar'Kayadin, besting two genetically engineered champions in personal combat. He followed this by a tour against the Eiko, where he withstood the Eiko mind destroyers and helped sabotage their fleet. He was awarded the Kaymite Sun for his actions in this campaign, the first awarded in centuries.

Korgun's reputation as a hero was tarnished by arrogance, ego and his lack of discretion in personal matters; he was sexually promiscuous (which is looked down upon by many Ar'Turodain), furthermore, he spoke his mind without softening his words. However, Korgun redeemed himself by leading the assault against the criminal scientist Radaa and his genetically engineered vanguard when Radaa attempted to conquer the planet Esnat; he personally defeated Radaa in single combat, and brought the greatest threat to the Ar'Turodain order to justice. For that, he was acclaimed the hero of Ar Space. He was the Ar equivalent of a rock star and the NFL's MVP wrapped into one swaggering heroic package.

However, this was soon to change when a new celebrity came to town: the human champion *Griffinitäy* (known to humans as the Titan). Korgun was responsible for rescuing Cygnus and the Titan from the depths of space, and defended them from isolationists on the Ar'Turodain council who wanted to keep them from returning to Earth. However, after an Ar'Kayadin agent sabotaged the central defense grid and released the prisoners housed in the *Das-sogirya*, the most secure prison in Ar space, Korgun decided that the Titan was guilty and vowed to hunt him down. They ended up going toe-to-toe on a live interstellar channel, and Titan manhandled him. It was the first time the Major had ever lost a fair fight, and he lost badly. He did not take the loss very well. Worse, when the Titan was vindicated, the Ar press went wild over the handsome, humble Ar'Terran. And the newcomer didn't even think highly enough of him to rub it in his face!

After the Titan persuaded the Ar'Turodain to

establish first contact, Korgun decided he needed to keep an eye on him. He pulled every string he had to be named ambassador to Earth and be put in charge of first contact with this new race of humans; despite his lack of a diplomatic nature, Korgun's reputation was still such that the council could not refuse him. So far, Ar'Turodain diplomats have been able to cover his numerous social faux pas, although they often veer into overprotectiveness; perhaps they are disturbed by the realization that Korgun has a lot more in common with the Ar'Terrans than he does with them..

Personality: Vain. Arrogant. Heroic. Ego-maniac. Show-Off. Randy. All of these words are appropriate to Korgun.

In combat, he is a fierce enemy and an implacable friend; he will gladly give his life for his men or his friends, and he takes no quarter. In social situations he is vain, arrogant, and egocentric; he is easily bored, and therefore, he enjoys situations that can be considered inappropriate for a diplomat.

Korgun enjoys a fight. He is still somewhat stung by the fact that the Titan beat him, and has yet to figure out, despite overwhelming evidence, that it was not a fluke. His strongest wish was to be able to face the Ar'Kayadin champion, the Invincible Ar'aax, in single combat, but politics always got in the way of that confrontation, and now (ironically) his old rival the Spartan has done what he could not do.

Powers/Tactics: Korgun is a throwback to genetic engineering that was done centuries ago. He lacks the legendary ferocity of the Ar'Huriti, but makes up for it in cunning and skill. He is strong, fast, and knows how to hit someone hard.

Korgun is a good tactician who knows how to when to use his support troops conservatively, and when to attack. Korgun and his units are masters at hit and run attacks; they often irritate their opponents enough that they leave cover and get hit in the open. His sole weakness is that he loves personal combat and sometimes can't hold himself back.

Campaign Use: Korgun is an NPC to pull out when players get tired of gestalt matters and want to do a little space opera. Korgun's a military commander in the mold of a General Custer or a Mark Anthony; a capable general whose charisma and ego generates press that makes him appear better than he actually is (and sets him up for a *big* fall).

If Korgun hunts you, either you're a rogue Ar'Turodain or have connections to them.

Appearance: Korgun is a very handsome, well-built Ar male, with long dark hair and a beard and mustache (most Ar'Turodain are bald, so Korgun is a throwback in more ways than one). He's 6'1", 220 lbs, and in his mid-50s (approximately late 20s for humans). He wears the typical brown and green uniform of an Ar'Turodain planetary marine, with a lot of decorations, and is fairly ostentatious when he wants to intimidate people.

KORGUN SCENARIO HOOKS

Let's You and Us Fight!

Korgun invites your team to the Arizona desert to hold some wargames: (capture the flag) against Korgun and a squad of Ar'Turodain troops. However he's insisting on a humiliating punishment for the losers (kissing the victors' feet and surrendering one's apparel as a trophy is apparently standard wagers for these exercises). Do you compete?

Sabotage

Korgun invites you to take a trip on his personal cruiser; unfortunately, as he pulls close to the sun, someone sabotages it! With engines out and life support failing, find a way to save the ship.

Testing

One of the PCs bears a physical resemblance to the notorious Ar criminal, the scientist Radaa. Korgun demands that the PCs surrender him for examination. Do you grant Korgun's request?

LAMENT

GESTALT OF GRIEF

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+1	+3	+4	+0	+3	+5
12	16	18	10	16	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+8/+4*	+5	+5	+7

* vs attacks not affected by her Protection power

Skills: Diplomacy 4 (+4), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 4 (+4), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+4), Medicine 2 (+5), Perform (acting) 2 (+2)

Powers: **Mental Attack 10** ("feel my pain;" Alternate Powers: **Illusion 10** [Limited: One Illusion Only – Being a mother in a hospital bed told that her child has died and staggering into another room to see the child's body], **Mind Control 10** [Limited: One Command Only – Feel overwhelming pity for Lament; Mental Link]), **Protection 4** (Limited: sympathy-induced "pulling punches," not against those without emotions or who have defenses that prevent her mental powers from working on them), **Telepathy 6** (Burst Area, Continuous; Limited: Emotions only; Permanent)

Combat: Attack +4, Grapple +5, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -2, Initiative +3

Abilities 22 + Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Powers 56 + Combat 16 + Saves 7 – Draw-backs 2 = **103 Total**

Actual Name: Estelle Wylie Ford
Occupation: Housewife
Legal Status: American citizen with several misdemeanors and a suspended sentence on a felony conviction.
Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001 wave)
Power Level: Experienced
Goal: Raise A Family
Height: 5'3" (159 cm)
Weight: 110 lbs (49 kg)
Hair Color: Red
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: Long Beach, CA.
Current Residence: Des Moines, Indiana
Group Affiliations: Former associate of the Firestarters.
Known Relatives: Ted Ford (husband)

"DON'T MIND THE TEARS,
I'M ALRIGHT. WOULD YOU
LIKE SOME COFFEE?"



Background: Estelle Wylie's life was never a particularly easy one. No, her family wasn't poor and she never had to struggle for the basic necessities. But as the proverb says: "man cannot live by bread alone" and Estelle was rarely given access to the emotions that suckle a child's emotional growth - love, the sustenance of the soul. She wasn't abused, but she was deprived, living in empty rooms while her parents worked or ignored her, she was passed over for games and not included in cliques, and forced to the bottom of the all-important social order by the caste systems of childhood and adolescence.

Somehow, she survived. She was not a pretty girl - she could sympathize with Janice Ian - and that had worked against her, but began to blossom in adulthood to the point where she could have social relationships. She was also smart and a hard worker, qualities that got her a job working in sales and public relations at a clothing firm based in Los Angeles.

At 26, she had a relationship with Steven Crenshaw, a private detective. Steven was good looking and rich, and they had fun together. But Steven was no gentleman, and the relationship started talking some abusive turns. Estelle was caught between her need to escape loneliness and her need to control her life. In the end, she left Steven. It was the most difficult decision of her life.

And then she discovered she was pregnant.

Estelle decided to look on the baby as a blessing. This child would be her escape from loneliness. But her son died shortly after birth - the cause of death was a mystery. Estelle started crying.

And she never stopped.

The emotion never healed. She never stopped feeling the pain of her son's death. Estelle's life collapsed. Her few friends vanished. Her job vanished. She turned to crime to support herself, and even toyed with becoming a supervillain, working with the Firestarters on a robbery. But the violence of the supervillain world repulsed her, and Estelle managed to pull herself out of the abyss with the help of Ted Ford, a Methodist minister. They married and moved to Indiana, where Estelle now assists her husband with her ministry.

And now she's pregnant again.

Personality: Lament fits the "reformed villain" or the "person fighting against the curse of her powers" niches. She doesn't involve herself in the "costumed world", and most supers (heroes and villains) are put off by the tears and

the sniffles, even though she's actually a very strong person, having endured an experience that would have broken most people and left them quivering in an asylum.

Estelle's a recovering supervillain, and views her past criminal actions as an addiction, a source of personal shame she'd rather not discuss. She still experiences the pain and grief that's part of her Gestalt, but she tries to bury it behind comfort and distraction. There are a few things she knows about some Gestalts (particularly the Firestarters) that she keeps to herself.

Estelle is very self-centered and given to breakdowns under stress. She doesn't make friends very easily. She's fortunate to have a loving husband and she knows it. She's not sure what she'd do without Ted. She tends to distance herself from people, but she holds onto close friends very tightly. She views her Gestalt as a curse and a handicap, and has little patience for those who express pity for her, even though she craves sympathy and wallows in self-pity. She's a fervent Christian and likes helping people, though she's not very rabid or evangelical about it.

Powers/Tactics: Lament is the Gestalt of Grief. The memory of her child's death is imbedded in her mind, and she can project the pain of that event into others, producing a variety of telepathic effects. Her memory is very intense; even people used to experiencing telepathic attacks find Lament's memories extremely disturbing (even trained minds have difficulty handling her raw grief).

Lament is not an experienced combatant and has no tactical training; if forced to fight, she lashes out in desperation.

Campaign Use: Lament is the "reformed villain" or the "person fighting against the curse of her powers". She doesn't involve herself in the "costumed world", and most supers (heroes and villains) are put off by the tears and the sniffles, even though she's actually a very strong person, having endured an experience that would have broken most people and left them quivering in an asylum.

Appearance: Estelle is in her late 20s, 5'3" and weighs 110 lbs. She has short red hair, green eyes, and is always weeping; even when she's composed, it looks like she's about to break into tears. She has no "costume"; typically she wears a sweater (which she changes frequently) and worn T-shirts (except in hot weather).

LAMENT SCENARIO HOOKS

But It's Your Motif!

A new criminal gang has been joined by a mysterious figure who can wrack people with grief, a perfect way to eliminate minor obstacles when they commit robberies. The big question is whether Lament's gone back to a criminal career or not.

Remorse Cold

A Sociopath Gestalt has been captured but cannot be broken, and it's vital that they reveal certain important information to the PCs. Lament's brought in as a specialist to try to break him - but what happens if he breaks her instead?

Cult

Lament is becoming the object of an odd religious cult, as the grief she's inducing is seen as a form of stigmata. But is someone manipulating this "cult of grief" to a more sinister purpose?

SOULKEEPER

GESTALT OF HOPE

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+4	+5	+4	+4	+4
16	18	20	18	18	18

Tough
+8

Fort
+6

Reflex
+6

Will
+8

Skills: Craft (structural) 4 (+8), Diplomacy 8 (+12), Medicine 8 (+12), Survival 8 (+12)

Feats: Defensive Roll 3, Luck 4

Powers: **Drain 10** (taste life if something horrible happened to you; all traits; Normal Range; Dynamic, Slow Fade 2; Alternate Powers [all Dynamic]: **Healing 10 [Total]** **Luck Control 3** [control fate; Area Burst, Selective Attack; Subtle 2], **Mental Attack 10** ["feel the pain your worst deeds have caused"], **Mind Control 12** [Limited: One Command Only – Don't hurt other living creatures; Mental Link], **Transform 6** [living being to creature preserved in stasis in her mind; Continuous], **Telepathy 12**, **Flight 4**, **Immunity 2** (Probability Tunnel effects), **Super Senses 9** (danger sense, detect probability variations [acute, analytical, ranged], precognition)

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +9, Damage +3 (unarmed), +10 (Mental Blast), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -2, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Cruelty Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 48 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 71 + Combat 24 + Saves 7 – Drawbacks 2= 162 Total

Actual Name: Nancy Wanjiru

Occupation: Activist

Legal Status: Kenyan citizen with a criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994 wave)

Goal: End War in Africa

Power Level: Respected

Height: 5'5" (164 cm)

Weight: 115 lbs (53 kg)

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Brown

Birthplace: Nairobi, Kenya.

Current Residence: Kuumahali, Republic of Uganda

Group Affiliations: Leader of Utopia 2100

Known Relatives: None



"IN ALL THINGS, LET US ACT JUSTLY, EMBRACE COMPASSION, AND WALK HUMBLy WITH GOD."

Background: Nancy Wanjiru was the daughter of a prominent Kenyan politician who became a radical idealist in university. When she bonded with her Gestalt – an archetype that’s probably best described as “the Gestalt of the Hopeful Future”, she became something of a legend in Central Africa: as healer, prophet, and teacher, many considered her to be a Living Saint. Perhaps this fed Nancy’s ego, for she accepted the nickname of “Soulkeeper” and became a strident leader of a movement of “Africa’s most peace-loving gestalts”. She wants to change Africa and the world by harmonizing the world’s Gestalts and using them to bring enlightenment and prosperity to all peoples.

Nancy has become the most outspoken leader of the international Gestalt movement, a peerless activist who seems to be able to juggle thirty tasks at once, from organizing international conferences, to recruiting superheroes into her Utopia 2100 organization, to building the city of the future, Kuumahali, in Uganda.

She’s an idealist who wants to bring love and compassion to the world. Naturally, she’s highly respected – but she’s also made as many enemies as the Blood Red King.

Personality: Those who meet Nancy are struck by her energy, boundless compassion, and drive to “do right”. Soulkeeper is the ultimate activist/do-gooder. Unfortunately, she has little time for anything else; she is consumed with her causes to the point of ignoring everything but the immediate crisis and the urgent need to delegate her responsibilities to the proper people. Some have said that she may call herself the keeper of the planet’s soul, but it’s come at the cost of her own soul. Unfortunately her Gestalt really doesn’t allow her to ignore suffering, and she pays a definite price for it. People see her as a machine, and

she has few if any genuine friends.

Nancy has no limits to her belief that all problems are solvable and her faith in her own ability to fix them. Her unshakable confidence and self-assuredness is a match for her energy. It’s a blessing, but her unwillingness to question her actions can lead her to make some arrogant, foolish decisions.

Powers/Tactics: Soulkeeper embodies the forces of life, hope, and optimism. Her powers are manifested by the manipulation of fate, by memory and possibility, by past torments and future uncertainty. Nancy is not a natural combatant and prefers diplomatic solutions to combat, but she’s only human, and when push comes to shove, she will use force to defend herself or others.

Her most unusual ability is her Transform power. She can store people’s bodies and souls in her mind, and release them when needed. She uses this power to transport the dying to medical help (or refugees through dangerous territories); she views this power as a sacred trust from God and *never* abuses it.

Campaign Use: Soulkeeper is best suited to the role of “occasional guest star” for a globe-trotting team. She’s a bit of an irritant, but also sincere and can provoke some interesting discussion, even if she does tend to use her beliefs as a club.

Appearance: Nancy is an attractive African woman in her early 30s. She typically wears normal clothing, though for public appearances in the States and Europe she wears a multicolored spandex suit with a motif that appears “African” to the uneducated (though it’s actually closer to the traditional dress of West Africa than her native Kenya).

SOULKEEPER SCENARIO HOOKS

Not In My Backyard

Soulkeeper wants to build a second, smaller Kuumahali in a development on the outskirts of your PC’s campaign city. Everyone from the Chamber of Commerce to the local police are up in arms about this development, fearing it’ll attract more supervillains, crime, and anti-Gestalt violence to the city. Meanwhile, Soulkeeper wants your support. What do you do?

Public Disappearance

Soulkeeper gives a speech at a social function to raise awareness of war crimes in Eastern Africa, and suddenly there’s an explosion at the podium. Initially it looks like she was blown to bits, but there’s no trace of her DNA at the scene, but a large amount of cattle meat was spread over the area of the explosion. Someone teleported her, someone who wanted the world to think she had died but wasn’t quite clever enough to pull it off. Who did it? And where is she?

TECHNARCH

GESTALT OF TECHNOLOGY

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+2	+4	+4	+3	+5
16	14	18	18	16	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+8	+11	+6	+12

Skills: Bluff 6 (+11), Computer 16 (+20), Craft (electronic) 16 (+20), Craft (mechanical) 16 (+20), Diplomacy 4 (+9), Knowledge (physical sciences) 12 (+16), Knowledge (technology) 16 (+20), Language 8 (Cantonese Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Spanish), Notice 4 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+9)

Feats: Benefit 5 (wealth 5), Connected, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 6 (Dragon HQ/Vehicle), Inventor, Minions (CounterCrime Droids, MR 11, PL 8, fanatical), Speed of Thought

Powers: **Boost 10** (all traits; Limited: Machines and technology only; Alternate Powers: **ESP 10** [all senses; medium: appropriate sensor devices], **Mind Control 12** [Insidious; Limited: Only to control users of technological devices; mental link, subtle 2], **Transform 6** [repair/rebuild any damaged technology; Perception Range]), **Datalink 10** (Machine Control), **Protection 4**, **Quickness 10** (Mental Only), **Super Senses 7** (detect technological object [acute, analytical, ranged], distance sense, radio, time sense)

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +8, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +5 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -2, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Anti-Technology Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2))

Abilities 52 + Skills 26 (104 ranks) + Feats 37 + Powers 70 + Combat 20 + Saves 20— Drawbacks 2= **223 Total**

Actual Name: Vic Allen
Occupation: Genius
Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1996 wave)
Goal: Build Giant Robot Enforcer
Power Level: World-Beater
Height: 6'1" (185 cm)
Weight: 160 lbs (73 kg)
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: San Jose, CA.
Current Residence: The Dragon, currently flying over San Francisco, CA.
Group Affiliations: Unueco
Known Relatives: None



"Morality is mathematics applied to people. A million lives sacrificed to save one life... not moral. One life sacrificed to save a million people... moral. A truth as comforting as it is simple."

Background: Vic Allen grew up in Silicon Valley and absorbed the high-tech ambiance of the place. He was a capable computer programmer even at the age of six, but it was kitbashing and rocketry that really appealed to him.

Science was one thing, but driving was another. As a hard-charging 17 year old, in 1996, he drove his car over an embankment and into a ravine, and he was trapped – without a cellphone. Suddenly, it occurred to him that if used his cigarette lighter as a power source, and did some adjustments to various computer components, he could build himself a transmitter. He built one powerful enough to override every radio signal on the chosen frequency for fifty miles.

He'd become a Gestalt.

There was no question that he was going to become a superhero – Vic liked attention – the question was what would he call himself? He decided on the name Technarch, Prince of Technology, and he flew around the city of San Francisco with his two robot sidekicks, Lester and Bangs, dispensing justice.

As Vic's press grew, so did his ambition. There was a lot that science could do for the world and more than a few Gestalts with a scientific bent – if they could be gathered together and put toward a common purpose, they could make it a better world.

Unfortunately, most of the scientific geniuses Technarch encountered either wanted to make a profit, considered Technarch to be a snot-nosed punk, or thought he was trying to steal their work. These initial rejections crushed Vic, but he was determined to see his dream through to a reality by two very different methods.

Method One. Gain credibility as a superhero and hope to impress them with your reputation.

Method Two: When your reputation fails to impress them, learn their darkest secrets and blackmail them into joining your program.

Vic doesn't believe in allowing any obstacle to stand between him and his dreams.

So far, it's been slow going, but Vic has pooled his resources with enough scientific Gestalts that he thinks he's starting to make a difference. Of course, he's also made secret deals with Hannibal Poole to safeguard his scientific talent, and with the Tyranny League to limit their wrath to battlesuit and drone research and with Powerjack (just to keep an eye on his biochemical research), but he doesn't like or trust any of them.

Over a few short years, Technarch's organization grew to monumental proportions. He marketed the world's most successful selection of robot toys, the Robot Pals, and became a billionaire. Lester and Bangs evolved into the CounterCrimeDroids, twenty of which have been leased out to cities in the Bay Area to back-up the police force (when called) and serve as additional security in high crime areas. And his throne became The Dragon, a fifty meter long flying mechanical that flies over San Francisco looking for crime and serves as his base of operations. He's

helped a lot of people, and he has an extremely positive reputation. But the world isn't becoming a techno-utopia fast enough for him. The arrival of aliens has only made things more frustrating for him – so much technology to explore, just beyond his reach. If only he could get his hands on some...

Personality: Friendly, helpful, but oh-so-superior; Technarch hides his true nature behind a mask of concern that's not entirely false. Technarch loves public acclaim, especially from children. He's far more personable than other known Machine Gestalts, and on the surface appears to be a normal (if overly proud) individual.

Technarch has good relations with most heroes (and a lot of villains), though he sometimes displays jealousy of technological supers who've rejected his ideas of partnership. Oddly enough, though he's fairly close to Powerjack, Technarch has an extremely high opinion of the Titan and will go to great lengths to help him in times of need.

Powers/Tactics: As a machine empath, Technarch can manipulate, boost, or repair machines. His abilities over non-mechanical objects is limited, though he's physically much stronger, more dexterous and tougher than a normal human, it's his mind that's the real threat.

In combat, Technarch prefers to sit back and let his robots do his fighting for them while he uses his powers to augment them.

Campaign Use: Technarch is the "ends justifies the means" superhero whose amoral ways eventually produce a major conflict with the PCs. He really does have the people's best interests at heart, but his methods are not ones that show it. Far more than Columbia, Technarch fits the niche of the "friendly hero who's really a villain". PCs could go through an entire campaign without thinking he's anything other than a great guy – or he could become their arch-nemesis.

Technarch's a World-Beater, but you'd never know it from his ability in a fight. His power level is high so he can have the ability to control machines over a wide area, not so he can be an effective person in a fight. As a mastermind, he should rely on his robot minions for combat; to adjust Technarch in a fight, adjust the capabilities of his robots.

Technarch hunts down scientific trinkets he wants when their inventors aren't willing to share them with him. He'll often use mercenaries (including mercenary villains like the Psionic Seven) to do his dirty work, and keep his hands as clean as possible.

Appearance: Technarch's a man in his mid-20s, 6'1" and about 160 lbs. with flowing dark brown hair. He dresses in a manner best described as Bohemian, with a gold face mask and gloves that are covered in circuitry. His baritone voice is slightly distorted.

TECHNARCH SCENARIO HOOKS

A Dirty Job

Technarch believes that the Ar'Kayadin have concocted a mind control drug and wants the heroes to help him sneak aboard the alien ship to find samples. There is (of course) no such drug – Technarch merely wants to sneak aboard the ship and grab samples of technology, and let the PCs take the rap if things go wrong.

CCD-018 is Missing

One of Technarch's CounterCrimeDroids was fitted with a prototype A.I., and upon becoming self-aware, decided to rebel against its master. Technarch wants to retrieve it before it can do damage (or its A.I. falls into the wrong hands). But should CCD-018 be allowed to remain free?

Two Dragons For The Price Of One

A second mechanical dragon has appeared over San Francisco and it's started attacking buildings. Technarch's dragon is somewhere south of San Jose and won't be back in time to stop it before it causes massive destruction. Who's responsible? Vengeful ex-partner? Evil twin from another dimension? Mass hallucination? Rival machine empath who's out to frame him?

COUNTERCRIMEDROIDS POWER LEVEL 10

"CRIMINAL ACT IDENTIFIED! STOP CRIMINAL OR BE STOPPED!"

Str 25 (+7) Dex 16 (+3) Con -- Int 16 (+3) Wis -- Cha 20 (+5)

Tgh *Fort* *Ref* *Will*
+8 -- +6 --

Skills: Notice 8 (+8)

Feats: Benefit (Perfect Pitch), Dodge Focus 3, Eidetic Memory, Team-work

Powers: **Flight 3**, **Immunity 40** (FORT effects, mental effects), **Protection 8** (4 Impervious), **Snare 10** (Transparent), **Stun 10** (Normal Range; Linked to Snare), **Super Senses 7** (detect intruders into guarded areas [acute, analytical, ranged], distance sense, radio, time sense), **Super Strength 1**

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +13, Damage +7 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Machine Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 17 + Skills 2 (8 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 127 + Combat 20 + Saves 3 – Drawbacks 2 = **175 Total**

THE DRAGON SKY BARGE VEHICLE/HQ

Str 85, Speed 2 (ground), TGH +14, SZ Colossal

Features: Alarm, Communications, Computer, Defense Systems, Fire Prevention System, Living Space, Navigation System, Power 2 (Blast 10 [Cone Area; Alternate Power: Blast 10 (Area Explosion)], Flight 4), Security System 2

Cost: 6 Equipment points

Description: This giant (50 m. long) mechanical dragon uses a combination of rockets and gravitics (the latter supplied by "The Genius Dr. Berkov") to patrol the skies over San Francisco. The communications system and main weapon is located on the undercarriage above and below the head respectively. Technarch's control center (and sleeping quarters) is in the belly of the beast.



THE TITAN

GESTALT (CHAMPION OF HUMANITY)

POWER LEVEL 18

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+20	+6	+20	+4	+3	+8
50	23	50	18	16	26

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+20	+20	+6	+11

Skills: Bluff 4 (+12), Diplomacy 4 (+12), Craft (electronic) 6 (+8), Craft (mechanical) 6 (+8), Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+8), Medicine 2 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Pilot 6 (+12), Sense motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Specialization (unarmed) 2, Attractive 1, Benefit (NASA security clearance), Connected, Favored Environment 4 (airborne), Improved Block, Improved Grab, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative

Powers: Flight 10, Immovable 3, Immunity 9 (life support), Impervious on Toughness 12, Regeneration 12 (Disabled 1 per 20 minutes, Injured 1 per minute, Staggered 1 per minute; Ability Damage 1 per 20 minutes), Sensory Shield 4 (all senses), Space Travel 6, Super Senses 10 (accurate hearing, extended hearing, extended vision, radio, ultra hearing), Super Strength 18 (heavy load: 6,700,000 tons)

Combat: Attack +12 (unarmed), +8 (other), Grapple +40, Damage +20 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -16, Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts fighting on their home soil; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 123+ Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 114 + Combat 32 + Saves 10 – Drawbacks 2= **302 Total**

Actual Name: Trevor Griffin
Occupation: NASA Delivery System and troubleshooter, alien goodwill ambassador, occasional superhero.
Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994 wave)
Goal: He's torn between Find The Right Girl and Explore Outer Space
Power Level: World-Beater
Height: 6'5" (195 cm)
Weight: 825 lbs. (375 kg)
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: Aliceville, Kansas, USA
Current Residence: Burbank California USA
Group Affiliations: NASA, Unueco
Known Relatives: Frank Griffin (father), Kate Montgomery Griffin (mother)

"SO YOU WANT TO FIGHT, HUH? I GOTTA WARN YOU, WE NASA BOYS ARE PRETTY TOUGH."



TITAN SCENARIO HOOKS

Hour Without Power

Because of the machinations of an enemy (the Leviathans would be a good candidate), Trevor's powers have been greatly diminished (or are completely gone) for twenty-four hours. Unfortunately, Trevor's got an important speech he needs to make, and he refuses to back down. The PCs act as his bodyguards for that period of time – unfortunately at the twelve hour mark, word leaks into the supervillain community that the Titan is vulnerable and a lot of major players in the supervillain community decide that it's time to eliminate him.

A Head Of The Game

The head from the Headless Man (a now deceased villain) decides to decapitate Trevor's head and attach himself to the Titan's body. Because of Trevor's regeneration and life support powers, his head actually survives the decapitation, but he wants his body back. Meanwhile the formerly Headless Man, wearing the body of the world's mightiest superhero in addition to his own powers, goes on a homicidal rampage the likes of which the world has never seen.

Who Are You?

Trevor received amnesia as a result of a battle with a campaign villain and he's fallen in with a bad crowd – one of the campaign's minor league "loser" supervillains has convinced Trevor that he's his partner, put Trevor in a new costume, and the world's greatest hero is now the world's most unstoppable criminal.

Background: Trevor Griffin, a Kansas farm-boy, grew up wanting to be an astronaut. He could remember watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon when he was barely two years old, his eyes as wide as saucers. He followed the space program with great wonder for years, and then with great disappointment as it faded from public consciousness and esteem. He was determined to become an astronaut and restore the prestige of that profession.

When the 1980s devastated many of Kansas's small farms, Trevor's parents moved to Los Angeles in the hopes of improving their lot. Though he was barely in his teens, Trevor spent much of his spare time at Burbank's international airport, where he befriended many of the local pilots. By the age of 14, they'd taught him how to fly a propeller craft; by 16 Trevor could fly a jet. Trevor was also a big, strong kid, though he shunned high school athletics; after graduation he got a day job in construction, and spent his nights studying physics and navigation. He never was much of a social animal and despite his good looks, he was the shyest person in his class.

Trevor was restless, but couldn't afford to move anywhere. However, he was smart enough to get his Bachelor's Degree in Physics by the age of twenty-two. "The horse with brains", as his classmates called him, applied for the Air Force Academy, hoping to become an officer and get involved with NASA.

Unfortunately, the Academy turned him down; his marks were good (especially for someone who had taken most of his education at night) but not good enough. Trevor was crushed, but decided to continue his education; they took scientists into space, and that's what he wanted to do. He had never forgotten the sight of Neil and Buzz walking on the moon. He did a little writing, mostly in science.

In 1994, while working as a freelance science writer, Trevor experienced a series of mysterious blackouts. Occasionally he broke things by accident; when he got angry, a simple slam of his fist could smash a table into pieces. But he had always been strong, so he ignored the possibility that he had superpowers. Sometimes even intelligent people deny the obvious.

One day, while he was covering a routine launch, there was a fire on the shuttle pad. Instincts – and the memory of Apollo One – took over. Trevor burst through a window, flew down to the capsule, ripped off the door, and rescued the bewildered (if grateful) astronauts. Unfortunately the press caught word of this incident and a new superhero was born (the initial headlines referred to him as "Astro-Man" and "Captain NASA"). Trevor claimed that as far as superheroes went, he was pretty Spartan. "But if I'm needed, I'll do my civic duty from time to time," he added.

Thus Trevor began a career as a public figure. A superhero. And he'd never even touched comic books when he was a kid.

However, like it or not, he was a superhero. He fought the Tyranny League. He rejected an offer

to join Columbia. Powerjack framed him for murder and Cygnus nearly killed him three times. And Trevor discovered that he could survive in the vacuum of space, and fly around in Earth orbit. Now that was a gift, one which made up for all the pains he had suffered in the fights.

NASA hired Trevor as a delivery system for rockets and a satellite repairman. The press saw this as a step down for the young hero, who (some members of the media said) had a social responsibility to put on a pair of tights and join the fight against evil. Trevor didn't care. This was his boyhood dream come true, and he loved every second of it.

People debated what Trevor should be called; everyone else had a superhero nom de guerre. Trevor didn't want one, but although he tried to brush it off, the subject wouldn't die. In a conversation with NASA, it was suggested that he call himself "Lift-off", but after a few embarrassing hours of debate, NASA gave him the codename Titan V, after the delivery system (and in recognition of Trevor's god-like strength). Eventually it was shortened to "Titan" or "The Titan".

Trevor would have been content to stay out of the superhero arena, but Cygnus refused to give up on his contract. One day, Cygnus lured him up to a trap he had managed to set in Earth orbit, a trap that would have sent them both hurtling into the sun. In desperation, Trevor accidentally created a warp that hurled the combatants hundreds of parsecs from earth, where they encountered the Ar'Turodain. Despite some initial conflict, Trevor was exhilarated to make contact with friendly aliens, and he encouraged them to make formal first contact with the Earth. The Ar'Turodain, after long debate, finally agreed. And for the first time in history, visitors from the stars showed themselves openly to the world. In 1999, the aliens landed.

At present, Titan is working to help Earth and the aliens get used to each other, and still works for NASA (though he doesn't consider himself an astronaut and has refused to accept astronaut wings). Trevor is trusted by the Ar'Turodain, at least as much as they're willing to trust anyone of their long-lost backwater brothers, and he serves as an emissary to Earth's alien cultures. It's also a good way to avoid being drafted into that crimefighting gig.

Trevor is torn between two women at the moment: Dr. Beatrice Rosen, a physicist and NASA flight engineer who works with Trevor on his NASA missions, and Dr. Vera Smith, a psychiatrist who's helped him adjust to his powers and encouraged him to become a public servant. Like many prominent supers, he's very reluctant to date in public.

Of course, trouble always seems to come to Trevor: Powerjack, the Byzantine, Silverfist, the Prodigal, Berserker (and the rest of the Tyranny League) have all taken runs at him at one time or another, and Dr. Power treats him in a condescending, overly familiar manner, like some sort of pet. Trevor's learned to live with the madness, but not happily.

Personality: The Titan attempts to combine his love of space with a heroic persona. He honestly believes that Earth has a great need for a champion, someone who will be responsible only to their conscience, as a good example for the world. His only allegiance is to NASA, with whom he remains in a professional relationship because he believes in the importance of the space program. Humanity loses, in his view, when it refuses to look ahead – or skyward.

At the same time, Titan has a dislike of many of the traditions of the superpowered world. He thinks wearing skintights is too effeminate, and has no interest in joining a superhero team. He tries to avoid other heroes, unless they need his help to survive. Titan hates politics and distances himself from any situation as soon as he feels that it's become political; the only exception is his support for an Earth/Ar'Turodain alliance, which he feels is too important to abandon.

Though he won't admit it, Titan gets a guilty pleasure from using his powers in combat. Despite his complaints about "not wanting to be turned into a fricking combat machine" he's learned to enjoy a hand-to-hand scrap against a tough opponent. He's competed several times at Copenhagen, and without apologies.

Trevor comes across as a straight arrow, humorless even by the standards of the breed. However those who know him well come to appreciate a wry, self-deprecating sense of humor. Trevor is rarely an active crimefighter; he'd rather fly and enjoy the sight of the earth from high orbit than get involved in a brawl. Over the years, Trevor's established friendships with Kinestar and the Hollywood Knights, but his relations with Columbia are chilly.

Powers/Tactics: The Titan has the most powerful Gestalt bond known to man, a Paragon of Humanity, exemplar of everything humanity should be (without losing touch with his human nature). Titan has a link with the Gestalt of human desire for discovery, as he most enjoys expanding human knowledge of outer space. Titan is not aware of the precise nature of this aspect of his Gestalt, but he follows his instincts. (Having Trevor be "off planet" is also a good way to keep the Titan from stepping on the hero's shticks, particularly if a powerhouse PC is looking to be number one in the Strongman niche).

Over the years, Trevor's learned a number of basic combat moves. He still tends to hover or stand in place and punch, but he's learned the value (especially when facing multiple opponents) of grabbing one opponent and using him as a projectile weapon, and throwing an opponent to the ground to set him up for a finishing blow.

Appearance: Titan is a big man with a broad, muscular build. He typically wears a blue NASA jacket over a T-shirt and worn blue jeans (sometimes, when the occasion calls for him to really adopt a superhero role, such as an Ar'Turodain reception or the last Presidential Inauguration, he'll wear a blue NASA jacket over a white neck-to-toe bodystocking). His voice is a pleasant bass that booms when he's angry

INSPIRED BY...

It should be pretty obvious which comic book character is the inspiration for the Titan. The similarities are intentional... but there are also intended to be strong differences in theme and treatment.

The Titan's a reluctant hero. Whereas his Nietzschean inspiration has no problem going out in costume and beating up the bad guys, Trevor hates this. He's a natural athlete and a born fighter, but he's got a laconic Gary Cooper reluctance toward the idea of living a violent life; he hates the fact that fighting gives him a genuine rush. He only gets involved with supervillains when it's obvious he's the only one who has a fighting chance to stop them. (Which is, of course, a good way to have him exist in the campaign world but not overshadow the PCs).

Trevor, by intent, is the inverse of his inspiration – he's the Kansas farmboy who's destined to go out among the stars, the kid from humble beginnings who goes places and tries to do things humbly, not the immigrant who makes a big splash. Perhaps this reflects the author's Canadian roots; and is a metaphor for the "brain drain" (or in this case, "brawn drain") of Canadian talent to the States, as opposed to the immigrant metaphor of his inspiration. Who knows? Me, I just write the stuff.

Trevor would love to spend the rest of life in space, gawking like a cosmic tourist at all the things seen by the Hubble. He was hooked bad when he was a kid by the Apollo program and he's used every ounce of fame and acclaim he's earned throughout his entire career to fight for the development of space.

There's a bit of a fascist streak in the inspired character, in that the "Big S" often seems obsessed with order and peace. Some of the best "Big S" stories involve him trying to find a short cut to bring about world peace or disarmament. Trevor, on the other hand, is less concerned with making the world more orderly, and much more interested in drawing out people's curiosity about the wonder of the universe; he believes that people best solve their problems when they become aware of the bigness of things, that it forces them to keep a healthy sense of perspective. When people are aware that all humans are a brotherhood of a single species, they don't want to blow themselves up so they can take the maximum number of women and children with them.

Trevor is an idealistic liberal in the 1960s mode, and he's (quietly) proud to be one.

In the Hollywood Knights campaign, Trevor's role was more that of a big brother to the team (and the rest of the world's heroes), stodgy but likeable, than "the world's mightiest mortal". One of the subplots of the campaign led to the Titan's big fight against the Invincible Ar'aax, the Ar'Kayadin champion who was a physical match for him. Trevor won the fight, which allowed him to bring the Ar'Kayadin fleet in on Earth's side against the Eiko; if running in canon continuity, that's where he's likely to go to. (It's also a good way to ensure his appearances in the campaign are rare but meaningful).

SUPERVILLAINS

On Gestalt-Earth, there's usually a firm line drawn between those who want to help society and those who want to plunder or victimize it. There's less of a sense of community between villains than there is between heroes, but it's harder to get support from each other, and the big guns – the Blood Red King, Dr. Power, the Tyranny League, the Psionic Seven, Hannibal Poole – hate each other as much as they hate the heroes. There are many tales of established villains taking some young punk under their wing, abusing them (sometimes in the worst imaginable ways) and then leaving them out to dry.

THE SUPERVILLAIN "COMMUNITY"

"Do not shun the word 'supervillain,' my friends. It is a mark of fear and distinction, an honorable title! Do not think of its juvenile origins, embrace the word, spit it in your enemy's faces, use it to strangle a world that loathes you! Tell them that you do not care whether or not you fit their definition of evil!"

— Imperator

Within the villain community, there's a general distinction made between villains who just want to use their powers to make some quick cash and those who do so because they enjoy killing people. Killers often care for no one but themselves, while robbers usually look out for each other. There's a very loose network, headed by the Psionic Seven, to provide support for young supervillains who don't go around killing people. On the other hand, if a gestalt supervillain has no compunctions about killing, but isn't a completely over-the-bend psychotic, the Tyranny League may decide to contact them and determine if they're worthy of mentoring (they'll advise them on how to target someone, how to fence stolen goods and avoid detection, hide bodies, etc.; they may also arrange for legal help when they get captured). Truly capable villains will be watched very closely. Others will be abandoned when it becomes "inconvenient".

Then there are a few villains, such as the Blood Red King, who are so monstrous that even the killers don't want to have anything to do with them. On the other hand, the so-called "League of Hell", a loosely allied worldwide league of villains with an occult motif, is rumored to exist (with either the Blood Red King the Night Huntsman, or Chernobog as its commander)

Organized crime has cashed in big from supervillains who need their services to launder money and provide cover identities and medical service, which has led to villains such as Hannibal Poole and Weaponsmith taking over large segments of organized crime. Despite the adage "crime doesn't pay", a few smart criminals have discovered that crime on Gestalt-Earth can be very profitable, even if most villains don't think about the service fees when they rip the bank vault door from its hinges.

Note: As with heroes, this is only a small sample of the villains of Gestalt-Earth. More villains will be detailed in the next book in the Gestalt series, *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*.

THE DEREGULATORS

Membership: Freedom Smith (leader), Adrenaline, Calamity, The Juror, Resistor (lieutenant), and The Terror. Freedom Smith is willing to admit any Gestalt into the team who has military training and a hatred for the government of the United States. The Deregulators are a team of Good Ol' Boys and not receptive to female members; Clairvoyant is an exception that proves the rule.

Background: The Deregulators have a very odd genesis. The team would never have come together if it weren't for one of history's most tragic superheroes, the Rifleman of Alabama.

The Rifleman was a product of the First Gestalt Wave, a native of Mobile Alabama, and a fervent regional defender Gestalt. He wore the flag of the Union and the Confederacy on his costumes, interwoven. That was a little controversial, but he didn't care.

There wasn't much for a superhero to do in Mobile. In his spare time, the Rifleman ran a gun store, and did some hunting. Then came the Gulf War, and the Rifleman volunteered for service.

The army was enthusiastic about having a hero of the Rifleman's caliber on their side, and they did their best to get him into the field as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the Rifleman didn't see much action; the Marines and the tank brigades stole the show. When the War ended, the Rifleman tried to quit and go back to Mobile. But the army wouldn't let him out. He had signed for two years. The army needed Gestalts.

The Rifleman could have jumped ship, or he could have done any number of things to get a dishonorable discharge, but he was an honorable man. He decided to go through the system. The Rifleman began proceedings to get his discharge. He could wait – or so he thought,

In May 1992, that changed. He had a sudden premonition that a major disaster was about to occur in Mobile. The Rifleman, like any local defender Gestalt, couldn't let this happen. He commandeered a helicopter, and managed to get back in time to intercept an attack by the Devastators in the downtown core.

The Rifleman fought like a demon. He persuaded the villains to run away (no mean feat), but was very badly wounded. He was resting on a street corner, examining his wounds, when the MPs showed up, demanding that he come back with him.

"Nah." The Rifleman said. "This is where my home is. This is where my duty is. You got to keep the back yard clean before you go out and clean up the rest of the world. I'm staying."

One of the MPs moved up to the Rifleman, trying to persuade him to surrender peacefully. The Rifleman was in a contrary mood; the superhero grabbed the young soldier and threw him hard against a building. There was a loud cracking sound as the MP's skull hit the stone. When they heard it, one of the MPs broke, and fired an automatic weapon into the Rifleman. Perhaps it was a lucky shot; perhaps the Rifleman was already dying. It didn't matter. On that day, soldiers in the employ of the United States army killed the protector of Mobile.

The man who had been thrown by the Rifleman into the building was Mason Smith. He suffered a nasty concussion, but it didn't matter. He had admired the Rifleman, and

he could see the horror on the faces of the people around him. Mason realized he didn't want to be a soldier anymore. At least not in this army.

The Rifleman's death stuck in Mason's head. The fact that one had to deal with one's back yard first. The fact that the United States army had screwed over an admirable man and then murdered him. Mason had already become disenchanted with the United States government. He had to do something about it.

Mason joined a militia group, and made a few contacts. He decided to train hard. He thought about moving to Mobile and actually becoming the new Rifleman, superpowers or not. And perhaps if you want something bad enough, you get it. In 1996, Mason received superpowers. He was faster, stronger, and a really good shot.

Over the next few years, Mason learned about two other people in some of the militia groups who had received powers: Bruce Scarpachi (*Resistor*), and Cyrus Gallagher (*the Juror*). Mason decided to call himself *Freedom Smith*. In 1999, the Alabaman decided to call his militia buddies and see if they could work together.

The other men had no desire to move to Mobile or become superheroes. They did talk for hours. "You know," Gallagher said, "the best thing we could do would be to bring down the government. Take every judge and lawyer in the country and hang them from every lamppost in Washington. Let the people fend for themselves. It'll be a stronger country in the long run."

Bruce shrugged and said he'd go along with that. Mason agreed that the country was full of corruption, and that excessive regulation that was strangling the freewheeling spirit of traditional America. The red tape (and the bureaucracy that created it) needed to be cut. So the Deregulators were born.

The Deregulators' first target was a government office building in Birmingham, which they burned to the ground. A janitor was killed in the attack, and Mason was stricken with pangs of conscience. The other Deregulators grabbed him, took him on a hunting trip, and managed to persuade him that casualties were inevitable in a war – it was the way the government worked when they were soldiers, and it was the way they had to work. Mason agreed, and put his conscience on hold from that point on.

The team also expanded. The first recruit was Alan Leibowicz, an escaped mental patient who believed the government was out to get him. The Deregulators were a natural outlet for his paranoia, and psionics are a valued asset in a supervillain team. He became *The Terror*.

The next member, Jerry Connor, was a militia man from Wyoming who found out the Deregulators' secrets, figured it'd be a good gig, and joined as the flyer *Whitehawk*. However, Connor was a raging bigot, which disgusted both Freedom Smith (who had good memories of serving with blacks in the Army) and Resistor (who didn't like what he had to say about Italians). Connor went to the Feds and offered to sell out the Deregulators in exchange for immunity from prosecution. Unfortunately for him, the Deregulators got to him before he could make a deal. Connor's body has never been found.

The two final members of the team, Cole Redmond (Adrenaline) and Claire Rivers (Calamity), joined in 2004. He was a truck driver and a Gestalt who picked up Bruce Scarpa-

chi as a hitchhiker, and over the course of a few days, not only managed to pry out the secrets of the Deregulators but got an invitation to join the team. Cole's like that. Claire is the widow of an old army buddy of Freedom Smith who got into trouble with the law.

Since 1999, the Deregulators have made a career out of anti-government terrorism. Unlike the Tyranny League, the Deregulators don't want to control the United States; they just want to destroy it. This has put them at odds with a number of superheroes, particularly Columbia (who usually have bigger fish to fry) and the ATF. Columbia captured them several years ago, and though they escaped, they've had to rely on floating secret identities and disguises to survive (accordingly, the GM should alter their secret IDs).

Tactics: The Deregulators are not a stupid superhero team. They prefer cheap victories to a hard fought win, sneakiness and deception to a straight fight. While all members are combat trained and capable combatants, they prefer to win victories without a battle.

Their combat tactics reflect their military training. Half of the Jurors spread over the battlefield to serve as sentries, while the other Jurors serve to engage opponents at hand-to-hand range; they prefer martial throws to put the enemy on the ground and make it easier for their snipers to hit them. Adrenaline is the group's close support weapon, while Freedom Smith, Resistor, and Terror target ranged opponents.

The Deregulators' major weakness is that they've been beaten often enough that they're a little gun-shy, and retreat from a fight a little sooner than they should. When the Deregulators succeed in an operation, people don't realize that they're around, but these stealth missions also split up the team for non-combat duties that work to their disadvantage when they get caught.

Campaign Use: As a five member team whose members hover near PL 10 range, the Deregulators is meant to provide good opposition for beginning characters.

The member of the Deregulators who's their biggest wild card is the Juror. If you need to weaken the team, remove him. In the Gestalt campaign, they had another member named White Lightning, a Moonshiner Gestalt (created by Steve Perrin) whose speed powers depended on him drinking alcohol; it wouldn't be hard to recreate him as using the Speedster archetype if you buy part of his Superspeed as a Boost that depends on the consumption of alcohol.

The Deregulators definitely hunt people they don't like, and it's pretty simple to determine whether you'd be a good Hunted for them: do you work for the federal government of the United States? If so, the answer's yes. If not, then probably not.

Group Relations: The Deregulators are a very tight knit group, as close as brothers. Freedom Smith is very respected as the leader. Terror and the Juror occasionally get on people's nerves, but not badly enough to cause a lot of friction with the other members.

Reputation: The Deregulators have a reputation for being one of the weaker combat teams on Gestalt-Earth, one that's easily beaten. It's a reputation that's undeserved; the Deregulators (when properly prepared) are a good match for most superheroes.

FREEDOM SMITH

GESTALT OF MARKSMEN

POWER LEVEL 11

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+8	+4	+7	+2	+1	+4
26	18	24	14	12	18

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+11/+7*	+8	+8	+5

*w/o body armor

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Disable Device 4 (+6), Knowledge (history) 6 (+8), Knowledge (pop culture) 6 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+8), Notice 6 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Stealth 6 (+10), Survival 4 (+5)

Feats: Chokehold, Equipment 7, Dodge Focus 3, Improved Block, Improved Critical 3 (rifles), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Big Damn Gun (Blast 8; Accurate; Penetrating), Big Damn Knife (Strike 3, Mighty), Body Armor and Helmet (Commlink, Protection 4, Sensory Shield 2 [all senses], Super Senses 1 [Lowlight Vision])

Powers: **Healing 5** (Reaction, Total; Self-Only, Limited: Only when making successful rifle shot in combat), **Super Senses 6** (extended vision 3, detect weapon characteristics [acute, analytical]), **Super Strength 2**

Combat: Attack +12, Grapple +22, Damage +8 (ranged), +8 (melee), Defense +11 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +8

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Patriot Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 52 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 21 + Powers 30 + Combat 40 + Saves 9– Drawbacks 2= **164 Total**

Actual Name: Mason Smith
Occupation: Former soldier, now criminal
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1996 wave)
Goal: Destroy the IRS.
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 6'5" (196 cm)
Weight: 200 lbs. (91 kg)
Hair Color: Black
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: Walker Springs, AL., USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Deregulators
Known Relatives: Ezra Smith (father), Lillian Smith (mother), Mack Smith (brother)



Background: Mason Smith grew up in rural Alabama, the son of a pair of teachers. He was a good athlete and a good student, tall and attractive, a real lady's man. Mason looked forward to a great future.

Mason figured that politics would be his game. He was an idealist; he figured he could change the world. He was class president in high school. Everyone thought he did an outstanding job (especially Mason). It whetted his appetite for politics, and Smith decided to study political science. He got a job as a congressional page.

It was one of the biggest mistakes of his life. Mason found the political games played among the pages to be distasteful, and those played by the actual Washington politicians to be worse. He saw pork barrel politics in action. He heard rumors about people that the press can't report. He overheard sweet-

heart deals, and listened to hypocritical old men insult the electorate behind its back. Washington murdered his idealism like a pillow being forced over a man's face. When Smith left Washington, he left as an utterly disillusioned young man.

Mason wondered when and where America had gone wrong. One day, Mason's Uncle Chris got into a discussion with him about it. Chris had served in Vietnam and had a lot of ties to militia groups, and was more than happy to share their literature with his nephew. This was the final thing that pushed him over the edge: Mason was now convinced that the United States government had been a fraud from its very inception, a self-aggrandizing monolith that stole power from the States and the local communities and gave nothing in return.

Mason was now old enough for college; he decided to

join the army instead. He served in the Gulf War, and eventually came to work as an MP. His peers respected him, at least until the Rifleman incident. Until the day he was called upon to haul a badly wounded AWOL army superhero back to jail, and when the Rifleman resisted, he died.

Mason's record was spotless, but that didn't matter. He had tried to settle things peacefully, and it didn't matter. The media was in a feeding frenzy, and the only way to avoid a big scandal was to punish the MPs involved, even though Mason wasn't guilty of an infraction. Mason was given the lightest sentence of all the involved parties, but he was still punished.

The injustice was obvious, but initially it didn't matter to Smith, who felt very guilty about the incident. It took months for the young Alabaman to get mad and realize the army was to blame. They had failed to understand the Rifleman's purpose, and the whole incident would have been avoided if just one person in the chain of command had an ounce of compassion or competence. They were just like the rest of the government: stupid, power-hungry thugs.

Mason received a discharge, and went into business selling shoes in Mobile. He thought about his marksmanship skills, about putting on a costume and taking the Rifleman's place. He got engaged to a bank teller, then broke it off after three months. He kept in touch with his old army buddies and joined the reserves, and then the militia. He noticed an increasing resentment toward the government among his friends.

Then he got superpowers.

Mason knew enough about Gestalts to know that when one person gets superpowers, a lot of people get powers. Over the next few years, he canvassed his militia friends, and gradually uncovered a group of like-minded people who'd bonded with Gestalts. He became close friends with Bruce Scarpachi. They had a long debate about how best to use their powers.

And they decided to bring down the government of the United States and bring power to the people. And thus the Deregulators were born. They bombed offices and courthouses. They finally took their fight all the way to the Supreme Court – to burn it down. But Columbia stopped them and put them in prison, revealing their true identities. The Deregulators escaped before they were placed on trial, but their private lives had been ruined. As a gesture of contempt, Mason called himself Freedom Smith, and took Liberator's costume as his own.

Since escaping, the Deregulators have crossed swords with the ATF (losing twice), continued their campaign of terror, and have been making alliances. Mason doesn't want to become a big shot in the supervillain world – the Tyranny League is not the

"AMERICA IS A BULLY WHO WAS CONCEIVED IN DECEIT, NURSED ON GREED AND BLOOD, AND WHOSE ADOLESCENT APPETITES GORGED ON POLITICAL AND CORPORATE CORRUPTION. HOW CAN ANY CRIME I COMMIT EVEN APPROACH THAT LEVEL OF EVIL?"

sort of people he hangs around with by choice — but all wars require sacrifice. Sometimes seems to Smith that this one has cost him his soul.

Personality: Mason's a tough guy with a soft heart. He's really not an experienced leader, he lacks solid confidence in his own ability and that of his team. He's always pushing himself to do better, but a lot of doubts get in the way.

Freedom Smith prides himself on his code of honor; his word is his bond. He admires an honorable opponent, and expects people to treat him with respect, the way a soldier should be treated. He gets very angry when this respect isn't shown, and when someone betrays him, he takes it very personally. His hatred for the American Avenger of the ATF (who once broke his word to his team) is extremely intense.

Freedom Smith is first and foremost a fanatic. He needs to be, because that's the only thing holding his conscience in check. He gives long speeches about the evils of a large national government, and the virtues of community. Some days it sounds like he's trying to convince himself.

Powers/Tactics: Freedom Smith is a marksman Gestalt. He has the instinctive ability to fire any small arm weapon with extreme accuracy, and he has a specially made cannon, which fires 7.62-mm armor piercing rounds. Freedom Smith's instinctual marksman ability allows him to hit more effectively than a normal gunman armed with the same weapon.

Freedom Smith prefers to attack a target at a distance, and then close if he can't properly direct the fight. He is a little timid about the possibility of being recaptured, though Columbia's the only team that's spooked him to date.

Campaign Use: Freedom Smith is a classic "could have been one of us" character. If he hadn't been so bitter, had a little more strength of character, or a better choice of friends, he might be a superhero.

While Freedom Smith is a Marksman Gestalt and is tactically best used as a sniper, his need to argue politics often supersedes the desire to take down an opponent quickly.

Appearance: Mason Smith is a 35-year-old Caucasian male, 6'5", 200 lbs., with a slim but athletic build. He has jet-black hair (though he sometimes dyes it to maintain a disguise) and blue eyes (also disguised with colored contacts). His voice is baritone, and he has a slow, cautious manner; Mason walks slow and looks very carefully as he moves, as if Columbia could spring out of nowhere at any moment. His costume is a replica of Liberator's, but with black stars on a red background.

FREEDOM SMITH SCENARIO HOOKS

I AM my brother's keeper, you bastard!

Freedom Smith's kid brother Mack has fallen in with a bad crowd, and is now in juvenile lockup, and social services are threatening to take him away from his parents. Unfortunately, it's not always a smart move to deal drugs to the supervillain's brother, or to lock him away, or to take him away from his family. Expect a bloodbath.

Read My Lips

Upset by damage caused by frequent supervillain attacks, a campaign city raises taxes and places a levy to cover damage to infrastructure. Freedom Smith sees this as just an excuse by the city to grab more funds, so he vows to cause one major piece of vandalism in the city every day until the tax is repealed.

You Tax Me...

Forced to pay a burdensome back tax bill an old army buddy of Freedom Smith has lost his house, his marriage has broken up, and he's about to be thrown on the streets. Freedom Smith, blaming the IRS, decides to track down and kill the agent who audited him. Stop him.

ADRENALINE

GESTALT OF THRILLSEEKERS

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+11	+3	+8	+0	+0	+2
32	16	26	11	11	14

Tough
+12

Fort
+10

Reflex
+8

Will
+5

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+5), Climb 4 (+15), Demolitions 4 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Drive 6 (+9), Knowledge (popular culture) 5 (+5), Language 1 (trucker jargon and codes), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 4 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+4)

Feats: All-out Attack, Power Attack

Powers: **Boost Super Strength 10** (adrenal rush 1; Alternate power: **Boost Super Speed 10** [adrenal rush 2], **Healing 3** [Total]), **Immunity 1** (depressants), **Protection 4**, **Speed 2**, **Super Strength 4**, **Swim 2**

Combat: Attack +8, Grapple +23 (+28 at Boost max), Damage +11, Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Other Thrillseeker Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2), Weakness (Taking stimulants other than his own powers; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 50 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 29 + Combat 32 + Saves 12– Drawbacks 4= **130 Total**

Actual Name: Cole Redmond
Occupation: Former trucker, now criminal
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001 wave)
Goal: Discover Ultimate Thrill.
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 6'0" (184 cm)
Weight: 202 lbs. (92 kg)
Hair Color: Dirty Blond
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: Albuquerque NM., USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Deregulators
Known Relatives: Alvin Redmond (father), Pat Redmond (mother), Sherry Redmond (older sister), Dale Redmond (younger brother), Rose Redmond (younger sister)



"DANGEROUS? OF COURSE IT'S DANGEROUS. THE SAFE WAY SUCKS!"

Background: Cole Redmond was known throughout his Albuquerque neighborhood as a wild kid. There's no other way to describe it. He did two things well: talk, and perform crazy stunts. He'd get lots of firecrackers from the local Indian reservation, make a bomb, and attempt to jump a motorbike over the bomb at the precise moment it detonated. He rode white water rapids. He picked fights with the biggest, nastiest kids at school. He didn't care if he got hurt, or if the other kid got hurt. This guy was a Darwin award winner waiting to happen.

The funny thing was that Cole never really got hurt, at least not too bad. He was never the intellectual type, and eventually took a job as a trucker. He liked to see the country. For fun, he was a white water rafting guide on the Colorado in summer. He'd play it easy with the tourists and then go wild on some of the nastier rivers on his own.

There was a lot of political frustration out there, especially in the southwest, and Cole tended to absorb a lot of extreme views. He never really thought about doing something about them. In 1994, he became a Gestalt, a Thrillseeker. He still never thought about doing anything with the powers, aside from having a good time, until he met Bruce Scarpachi.

Bruce was a hitchhiker, a fugitive from justice that Cole picked up on the way to Loredó. They spent several days together. At first, Bruce got so annoyed at Cole's non-stop blathering that he almost slit his throat, but then Cole revealed that he was a Gestalt, and suddenly Bruce wasn't interested in killing him anymore. He questioned Cole and came to the conclusion that he wasn't going to betray him, and once he accepted that, it wasn't too hard for Cole to talk his way into joining the team.

Freedom Smith was actually glad to have a strongman on his side, and Cole proved to be a bit of a kick in the pants for the team, coming

soon after its defeat against Columbia. After Cole demonstrated his powers, Freedom Smith named him Adrenaline, and he's been a blue chip performer for the team ever since.

Personality: Cole's about as a "typical" a good ol' boy as it gets. He's loud, wild, and opinionated (even if he often knows very little about the subject he's talking about) and he never shuts up. You usually have to prod him to shut up or get his attention, although he'll sulk if you slam him too hard.

Cole's barely out of adolescence physically, and he's still a teenager socially. He likes the company of other men, and tries hard to be everybody's best pal. He enjoys running in a pack, since it's easier to show off that way. He's attracted to women, but only physically; although a Thrillseeker, the idea of a long-term relationship scares the hell out of him.

Powers: Adrenaline is a Thrillseeker Gestalt who achieves superhuman levels of ability through the production of chemicals. He can swamp his system with these chemicals, or touch someone and order their bodies to produce them (his Aid touch).

Adrenaline is unfortunate enough to serve as the Deregulators' close combat operative. His job is to get in as close to the opposition as possible and take them out while the snipers pick them off at range. As a result, Adrenaline tends to spend a lot of time unconscious during fights, but he doesn't mind – it's a challenge.

Appearance: Adrenaline is a Caucasian male, a strapping six-footer who weighs about two hundred pounds (although he appears to bulk out when he's using the Strength Aid). He has gold-brown hair (worn short, except for a small ponytail), blue eyes, and an athletic build. His costume is a red bodystocking with dark green and gold trim.

ADRENALINE SCENARIO HOOKS

Freefall

If there's a PC Thrillseeker Gestalt, Adrenaline challenges them to a private competition; they'll have a competition to do the craziest stunt possible; if Adrenaline loses, he'll surrender to the authorities, but if the player loses, he'll have to agree to publicly throw a fight against him. Adrenaline plans to sneak into the Low Orbit Launcher, launch himself into space and freefall at terminal velocity from low orbit onto a random place on the Earth's surface. Can the PC top that?

Let's See How You Like This

Adrenaline's not a sadist, but he's mean when riled. If someone goes out of his way to get on his bad side in a fight, he'll kidnap a loved one or a known associate, tie them to a raft, and send them hurtling into the rapids of the Colorado River, inviting the PC to save them before it's too late.

CALAMITY

GESTALT OF UNCOVERING SECRETS

POWER LEVEL 9

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+3	+6	+0	+1	+3
16	16	23	10	12	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+9	+8	+8	+9

Skills: Climb 6 (+9), Computer 4 (+4), Diplomacy 6 (+9), Disable Device 4 (+4), Disguise 6 (+9), Language 4 (Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Spanish), Notice 6 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Survival 2 (+3)

Feats: Attack Specialization (unarmed), Equipment 1 (Commlink)

Powers: **Mental Blast 10** (torture touch; Touch Range; Alternate Powers: **Telepathy 10** [Touch Range], **ESP 5** [Hearing and Vision]), **Morph 6** (humanoids), **Protection 3** (Linked to Morph), **Super Senses 1** (danger sense)

Combat: Attack +8 (unarmed), +6 (other), Grapple +9, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -5, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from other Spy Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 33 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 38 + Combat 28 + Saves 15– Drawbacks 2 = **125 Total**

Actual Name: Claire Rivers

Occupation: Former US intelligence officer, now criminal activist.

Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded (2000 wave)

Goal: Kill Everyone Responsible For Her Husband's Death

Power Level: Experienced

Height: 5'5" (186 cm)

Weight: 130 lbs. (59 kg)

Hair Color: Brown

Eye Color: Green

Birthplace: Austin TX. USA

Current Residence: Mobile

Group Affiliations: The Deregulators

Known Relatives: Hector Carlos Rivers (husband, deceased)

"IF YOU THINK THE WRATH OF A WOMAN SCORNE IS SOMETHING TO BEHOLD, WAIT TIL I'M FINISHED AROUND HERE!"



Background: Born to an army family and the granddaughter of a WWII codetalker. Claire Palamino grew up in a military family and was expected to go into a career in US military intelligence, and dutiful daughter that she was, she followed the family tradition. As an army intelligence translator, she faithfully served her country. While the Gulf War raged, she was stationed in Kuwait, where she fell in love with Staff Sergeant Hector Rivers, a career marine.

They were married within two weeks of meeting, and never stopped loving each other. Unfortunately, the romance was interrupted by the very war that they'd come to Kuwait to fight. Rivers was employed in Operation Desert Eagle, the invasion of Baghdad at the end of the war. In this invasion, Hector was critically wounded. He was transferred to a military hospital in the United States, where he languished for years in poor health before dying of pneumonia in 1994.

Claire stayed by his side as best she could. She'd always hoped that he'd get better. Hopes were replaced by extreme bitterness, which drove her to become an outspoken activist for veteran's rights. Of course, she lost her job. She also went on the FBI's watched list. And for some reason, every year her taxes were audited. To make matters worse, her family, disapproving of her "unpatriotic" behavior, effectively disowned her.

Claire used her connections to gather information to expose corruption and incompetence in the Veteran's Affairs department. Unfortunately, the press was more interested in other scandals, and Claire's career as a whistle-blower quickly proved to be a failure. The years passed, and Claire was dismissed by the media and the authorities as a harmless crank.

Then, after the gestalt wave of 2000, she wasn't harmless anymore. She was a superhuman whose obsession to find the truth had bonded her with a Spy Gestalt. She spent three years trying to gather information that was so explosive that no one could ignore, only to be captured by a Secret Service superhero when she was on the verge of making her big discovery.

Mason Smith had served alongside Hec-

tor Rivers in the Iraq War, and when he learned that Claire had been captured, he viewed it as his duty to a dead comrade to rescue her. Freed from jail, Claire decided that Mason and his team might help her, so she joined the Deregulators. As the team is mostly a boy's club, Calamity (as she's now called) functions more as a reserve member than a full member of the squad, specializing in bailing them out of trouble and giving them sisterly lectures. It's tedious, tiring work, but she likes it, and she feels like a part of their family.

Personality: Claire is a sharp-tongued, opinionated woman, as one might expect from her background in social activism. Like most of the other Deregulators, she's an extremely loyal friend and a nasty enemy when crossed; she has no patience for other points of view, and no stomach for corruption or ineptitude, and not much of a sense of humor.

Claire's disposition is tempered by an even-handed streak. She doesn't hesitate to criticize Deregulator missions that put large numbers of innocent bystanders at risk and heroes who appeal to her humanity (instead of using brute force first and asking questions later) may eventually tap into a wellspring of decency.

Powers/Tactics: Claire's powers make her the perfect infiltrator. Her shapechanging ability allows her to duplicate any human form, while her other abilities give her an edge in information gathering.

Despite her military training, Calamity prefers to avoid a direct fight. If she has no other choice, she'll change into the form of someone her victim trusts, get close, and employ her "torture touch".

Appearance: Claire is an athletic woman in her early 30s, 5'6" and 130 lbs. She wears a blue top that looks like spandex with leather trim (with a small inverted American flag sewn on the chest). She also wears blue jeans, cowboy boots, and a cowboy hat with a porcelain buffalo on its brim that's worn over a blue Zorro style bandana mask

CALAMITY SCENARIO HOOKS

Alive?

Claire hears a rumor that her husband is alive, having been captured and rehabilitated by the army. The person who's supposed to be Hector Rivers is a friend of one of the PC's. But what is the secret of their uncanny resemblance?

Child of Hate

Claire was pregnant with Hector's child at the time of his death, and grief triggered a nervous breakdown. When she gave birth, the child was taken away from her and put up for adoption. Who's got the kid, and to what lengths will Claire go to get him back?

Don't Mine If I Do...

Pursuing the Deregulators into a mineshaft base, a PC and Calamity are trapped in a cave-in. You have to help each other escape, but can you trust her? Or (dare you hope) get her to see the error of her criminal ways

THE JUROR

GESTALT OF MOD JUSTICE

POWER LEVEL 9

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+2	+5	+0	-1	+1
16	14	20	10	8	12

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+11*	+8	+8	+6

(*+5 w/o Body Armor and Flatfooted)

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+4), Computer 2 (+2), Climb 4 (+7), Demolitions 4 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Disguise 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+3), Perform (acting) 2 (+3), Profession (soldier) 2 (+3), Sense Motive 4 (+3), Survival 4 (+3)

Feats: Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 6, Improved Aim, Tough 2

Equipment: Assault Rifle (Blast 5; Autofire), Grenades (Blast 5; Area Explosion; Range Limited by Strength), Body Armor (Protection 4), Radio

Powers: **Duplicate 6** (Heroic, Horde, Survival; Absorption Healing, Progression 4, Sacrifice)

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +11, Damage+3 (unarmed), +5 (weapons), Defense + 7 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback, Initiative

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Justice Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 20 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 36 + Combat 26 + Saves 16 – Drawbacks 2= **114 Total**

Actual Name: Cyrus Gallagher
Occupation: Former US infantryman, former lawyer.
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1996 wave)
Goal: Kill Members of His Law Class
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 6'1" (186 cm)
Weight: 202 lbs. (92 kg)
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: Tulsa OK, USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Deregulators
Known Relatives: Dick Gallagher (brother, deceased), Lance Gallagher (brother, deceased), Will Gallagher *father), Lainie Gallagher (mother).

"WE FIND YOU IN CONTEMPT!"



Background: Cyrus Gallagher was the third of three boys from Tulsa and he tended to be the butt of jokes and at the bottom of the pile when it came to horseplay. Even his parents treated him like an afterthought and it made him a little bitter.

Both of his brothers went on to become lawyers, and where his brothers went, Cyrus naturally followed. He was doing rather poorly in his studies and was about to flunk out

when he decided to join the army. It would give him a chance to make some money and come back to his education when he was less burned out. Dad had been in Vietnam; maybe an army career might even earn his respect.

The army was a nightmare for Cyrus, who was used to cities and civilized comforts. He was big and tough enough to survive boot camp, but surviving in the foreign hellholes where he was posted was something else. He liked the sense

of power he got when he was holding a gun, but that was about it.

Cyrus was wounded by a Scud attack and spent most of the war in a Greek military hospital. He made more friends there than he did in his unit. Some of the friends had political views that he agreed with; others had views that he considered extreme. But as time passed, the extremists began sounding saner. He was tired of living up to the ideals of the establishment.

After the war, Cyrus left the service and ended up sick from what later became known as Gulf War syndrome. He spent nearly three months in bed, barely able to function. About the only thing he could do was to get angry when the government denied there was a problem.

Eventually Cyrus got a little better, well enough to get a job as a sales clerk in an Oklahoma City department store. It was menial labor, and he had to endure the smugness of his brothers' talking about their practices at the annual family Christmas gathering. Everyone felt sorry for him, or so they told him. Everyone had written him off, had made their judgment of him. Finally, at the 1995 Christmas party, he had had enough. He told the lawyer brothers that they were too busy getting rich to do anything useful, like suing the government over their conspiracy of silence, he declared that he was no longer a member of the family, and then stormed out of the house.

In 1996, Cyrus began to get very heavily into the reserves, and he also started planning his brothers' murder. He had become convinced that his brothers had to die, and he hoped to recruit a few reservist pals to help. No one was receptive. This made him angrier and more determined. He wished out loud that he could be in two places at once.

And suddenly he was.

Cyrus realized that he had acquired a Gestalt during the last Gestalt Wave. He could split himself into twelve men. He was also a lot stronger and faster than before, near human maximum. This gave him the manpower he needed. He kept one of his duplicates in a highly public place, establishing an alibi, while the other eleven Jurors kidnapped and tortured his brothers. "You may represent the law, but we are the Jury." One of the Cyruses told his brothers before the execution. It felt good. The idiots had no idea he hated them so much.

Now that he had dealt with his biggest problem, Cyrus wondered what he would do next with his life. Although the Juror no longer suffered from Gulf War syndrome, he still hated the government which lied and betrayed him.

When Freedom Smith searched for other militiamen who had been altered in the Gestalt Wave, Cyrus answered the call. It was Cyrus who was the strongest voice calling for the creation of the Deregulators. Two could do the job better than one – or was it thirteen better than twelve?

Issues of identity aside, Cyrus joined the Deregulators. It didn't go as well as he'd hoped – his secret ID was quickly exposed, and the authorities put two and two together about his brothers' murders – but still he perseveres. Now, he is the one standing in judgment of the world. Yeah, it's a corny motif, but the Juror likes it.

Personality: The Juror is an insecure neurotic. He is agoraphobic, unable to cope with wide open spaces. He's a chronic complainer. However, he's actively fighting his faults, and his teammates give him some support.

As one might gather, the Juror is very judgmental, very quick to take offense, and very slow to forget a slight or a wrong. He's a little more forgiving of his teammates, but not always. Sometimes even he has trouble getting along with his own counterparts; Juror members have had at least one brawl with each other (which was stopped by the other Deregulators – although it took them about five minutes to stop laughing).

To his teammates, Cyrus is just another regular guy, a bit of a twit, but someone they can live with. As the Juror, Cyrus likes to get into his role, put on a pretentious display, and act like an inhuman entity of justice. Sometimes he can pull it off, though it frequently comes across as over the top.

Powers/Tactics: No one's quite sure what the Juror's Gestalt is. He claims it is the Gestalt of Judgment. Whatever it is, the Juror is a capable Gestalt who can become a large team of agents at will.

The Juror can duplicate any object he's holding, although discarded objects vanish when he recombines (this works as a money-making scheme, although he hesitates to pull this one on villains. Cheating the Psionic Seven is not a good idea.)

There is no "prime" Juror; all copies of the Juror believe themselves to be the original (which leads to some strange intrapersonal conflicts).

In tactical situations, the Juror divides himself into three groups. Four Jurors work as lookouts and don't engage in combat unless ordered to do so. Four Jurors serve as hand-to-hand combatants, serving to bait and tie up the enemy. Four Jurors remain as snipers and free agents/troubleshooters. For the most part, however, the Juror is the team's disguise and infiltration specialist, and doesn't always play a combat role.

Appearance: Cyrus is an average looking man, in his mid-30s, about 6'1" and 170 lbs. with a slim build; he looks like a non-athletic man who keeps himself in shape. He has brown hair and green eyes. He's usually disguised; his supervillain costume is a green shirt with a number written on it (he's learned how to number the shirts differently when he separates).

THE JUROR SCENARIO HOOKS

Kill All The Lawyers

What better place for the Juror to strike than... at a gathering of lawyers held by the American Bar Association? Too paranoid to trust even the other Deregulators with his plan, he decides to plan the operation by himself; meanwhile, the other Deregs assume (from a misleading note he's left behind) that someone is pursuing him, and mount a rescue operation.

SOS

While on a solo operation delivering arms to a militia training camp in the Midwest, the Juror discovers that the militia base is not an American operation but a Blood of Islam terrorist training camp! Damm Al-Islam takes him hostage to torture and ransom for assured supplies of weapons. The Juror – who may be a scumbag, but he's an American scumbag – manages to send one of his duplicate to find a radio, and makes contact with his base just as the PCs are breaking into it (the Deregulators, wise to the raid, have abandoned it). The PCs need to decide whether it's worth their trouble to rescue their enemy.

States' Evidence

One of the Jurors say he's tired of being forced to integrate himself with a pack of lunatics – he's sane, even if the others aren't, and he wants to be a free and independent being. Can he be trusted, and even if he can, how the heck can you keep a member of a combined being separate, and is it even moral to do so?

RESISTOR

GESTALT OF MURDER

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+7	+5	+6	+0	+0	+7
25	20	23	10	11	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+12/+9*	+10	+10	+8

*Flatfooted

Skills: Bluff 8 (+15), Diplomacy 4 (+11), Drive 7 (+12), Intimidate 8 (+15), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+8), Language 1 (Italian), Notice 12 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+8), Stealth 8 (+13)

Feats: Connected, Chokehold, Defensive Roll 3, Improved Aim, Improved Critical 4 (blades), Improved Critical 4 (guns), Improved Critical 4 (unarmed), Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Precise Shot, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Assault Rifle (Blast 5; Autofire), Grenades (Blast 5; Area Explosion; Range Limited by Strength), Body Armor (Protection 4), Radio

Powers: **Blast 9** (weapon of opportunity; Limited: Requires a physical object of opportunity, Limited: Range limited by strength in comparison to object's weight), **Boost Attack Effects 10** (eye for the perfect kill; Requires Notice check, Self-Only; Slow Fade), **Leap 2**, **Protection 3**, **Regeneration 8** (Injured per 5 minutes, Disabled per 5 minutes, Staggered per 5 minutes), **Speed 1**, **Super Strength 1**, **Transform 5** (cleans forensic evidence from an area)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +18, Damage +7 (unarmed), +9 (blast), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +9

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Justice Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 53 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 24 + Powers 37 + Combat 36 + Saves 17– Drawbacks 2= **181 Total**

"LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, CHUMP. I KILL YOU NOW, I SPARE YOU A LONG, PAINFUL DEATH FROM CANCER A FEW YEARS DOWN THE ROAD. IT ALL EVENS UP IN THE END!"

Background: Of all the boys in this generation of the Scarpachi crime family, Bruce was the biggest and most independent. He was the fourth of five sons, and the best athlete of the lot: pride of his Atlantic City high school: captain of the football team, state wrestling champion, anchor of a state championship relay team, and Mr. Teen New Jersey.

Actual Name: Bruce Scarpachi
Occupation: Former Soldier, Now Criminal
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994)
Goal: Kill His Ex-Wife.
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 6'1" (185 cm)
Weight: 255 lbs. (116 kg)
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: Atlantic City, NJ. USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Deregulators
Known Relatives: Caesar Scarpachi Sr. (father, deceased), Maria Scarpachi (mother), Caesar Scarpachi Jr. (older brother), Carlo Scarpachi (older brother), Anna Scarpachi (younger sister), "Fat Paul" Scarpachi (younger brother), Michael Scarpachi (younger brother), Tamara (wife), Vincenzo (son).



But obedience was more important to Caesar Scarpachi Sr. than trophies or medals. Bruce was not particularly compliant. He liked to run with his friends, and didn't care that two of them were a cop's kids, who weren't acceptable to his family. However, Bruce wasn't interested in being a saint. He raised more hell than his other brothers combined and had quite a

few run-ins with the law.

Out of high school, Bruce was given a small role in one of the family businesses and forced to marry to Tamara Mosca, the daughter of an allied family. They had one child, Vincenzo, together, although Bruce knew that he wasn't the father. As he didn't particularly want to be saddled with a marriage so early in life, he didn't care.

During his final high school days, Bruce got into drugs (mostly anabolic steroids), and although he managed to hide this habit from his parents, he was finally caught dealing and thrown in jail. This was more than just a disgrace to his family – the deal had occurred in areas where the Scarpachis had ceded to the Bartalone family, and the Bartalones wanted a pound of flesh. Caesar managed to get Bruce off the hook legally, but demanded that he apologize to the Families. Instead, Bruce went into a tirade about the underworld, saying that the old Sicilian brotherhoods were a bad movie cliché, and everyone knew it except them. He vented twenty years of frustration, and in the end, the embarrassed Caesar Scarpachi disowned him, warning that he'd die if he ever showed his face in Atlantic City again.

But Bruce was glad to be an outcast. He abandoned his family (including his wife and son), joined the Army and rose to the rank of Sergeant. He trained in technical courses and excelled at them, but preferred combat. No one in his unit messed with him. Bruce missed the Gulf War, but was involved in an incident involving the deaths of several Liberian civilians, and although no charges were laid, he ended up receiving a dishonorable discharge.

Bruce moved to Oklahoma, and set up shop as a computer technician. He also joined a militia. He liked the army. He liked hurting people. Hell, the moment when he killed those Liberians was the most unbelievable high he ever experienced.

In 1994, Bruce's Gestalt emerged. His aim got very good, and he became faster and stronger than a normal human. He also felt the urge to take a human life. He got in touch with an old family friend, and began contracting himself out as a hit man.

Eventually, a better offer came along – Mason Smith was looking for like-minded Gestalts. Bruce considered him to be too much of a Boy Scout, and he whined way too much when he was drunk. However Bruce saw potential in the rangy Alabaman, and when Cyrus Gallagher sold Mason on the idea of fighting the government, Bruce thought it'd be fun. He didn't know what to call himself and didn't really care, so Mason coined the name Resistor. Bruce winced, but as long as no one called him "Transistor", he could live with it. Bruce became the team's lieutenant.

The Deregulators had bad luck in their initial outings and found themselves captured after a battle with Columbia. Bruce didn't really care – prison was just as homey as hiding out in a dead end apartment – although he was surprised when his family sent a hotshot lawyer to represent him. (He later learned that his mother did it behind his father's back.) Freedom Smith hired the Psionic Seven to

bust them from jail, and where Freedom Smith went, the Resistor was not far behind.

Bruce's dad didn't live long enough to object to his mother's actions. A vigilante superhero, rising from the dead, killed Caesar and vowed to do the same to every member of the Scarpachi family.

With his father dead, Bruce was now dragged back into family politics. The Scarpachi Empire was divided between Caesar Jr., and Carlo, his two older brothers, however his sister Anna (the smartest person in the family) is doing her best to get a piece. A Gestalt brother is a valuable resource, and Bruce soon found himself being courted by the same people who ostracized him six months before, and he's being relentlessly hunted by an enemy (one of the few) that he didn't make. He's in for a rough time,

Personality: Bruce plays things cool. He feigns disinterest even when he's very interested in something, he does his absolute best not to show it.

Bruce hates emotional attachments. He hates people (especially his wife) who demand affection or loyalty from him. About the most he's willing to give is show mild respect for his teammates, and even then, Freedom Smith's the only guy he counts as a friend; the two of them lean on each other heavily for emotional support, though both men are far too stoic to admit their dependence.

The one thing that Bruce really likes to do is kill. He's not a homicidal maniac who kills everyone in his path, nor does he kill people that the Deregulators need alive (he'll generally spare the hostages lives) but he does get a rush out of successfully using his powers, and if he gets a chance to kill someone during the course of a fight, he'll take a shot to finish them, and if he's ordered to dispatch someone, he'll do it casually and gladly.

Powers/Tactics: Resistor is a Murder Gestalt. He can find a person's weak spot and use anything sharp to exploit it. In a fight Resistor will sit back at a distance and try to find an opponent's weak spot. When it looks like he's mortally wounding someone, it's hard for him to resist the impulse to get up close and gloat. He likes to choke out particularly brawny opponents, but only if he's weakened them first.

Campaign Use: If you're using the Deregulators as the archenemies of a typical hero team, Resistor is the natural archenemy of a vigilante – and a good vehicle to introduce mob storylines.

Appearance: A steroid monkey from his teenage years, Bruce continues to abuse those drugs today. He's 6'1", 255 lbs., with a build that most professional body builders would envy. His dark brown hair is worn straight and slicked back. He has olive green eyes, a dark, Mediterranean complexion, and is quite hirsute. He wears expensive clothing and lots of jewelry in his normal identity, while his costume is a black muscle shirt and loose fitting red karate pants and a red half-mask. He wears a sash with many needles hidden in pockets. He has a low, rumbling bass voice.

RESISTOR SCENARIO HOOKS

And In This Corner...

Hannibal Poole offers to throw his weight behind Bruce and his sister Anna in their battle for control of the Scarpachi family empire – and all it will cost him is a few future "favors". However, although Bruce likes his sister, he doesn't want anything to do with the family. Unfortunately for him, Poole never accepts "no" for answer, so he plans to arrange a Dawn Brothers attack against the Deregulators and pin it on Carlo Scarpachi. The Dawn Brothers decide to do the job in the middle of a fight between the Deregulators and the PCs.

As Bruce might say:
"Man, somebody's trying to give me a headache!"

Buddy

An old drug dealer buddy of Bruce's resurfaces and asks him to wipe out a street gang that's taken over his turf.

THE TERROR

GESTALT OF PARANOIA

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
-1	+3	+5	+2	+3	+4
8	16	20	14	16	18

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+7/+5*	+6	+6	+11

*Flatfooted

Skills: Bluff 6 (+10), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 6 (+8), Intimidate 6 (+10), Sense Motive 6 (+9)

Feats: Attack Specialization 2 (tentacles), Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 1 (Commlink), Fascinate (Intimidate), Fearsome Presence 4

Powers: **Additional Limbs 3** (psychic tentacles; Projection, Sustained), **Elongation 3** (Limited: Additional Limbs only), **Telepathy 12** (Limited: Only to learn what target fears and mistrusts, Touch Range; Alternate Powers: **Illusion 12** [all senses; Limited: Only to show people the target trusts working against the target, Phantasms, Touch Range], **Mind Control 12** [Limited: Only to make people mistrust and turn on their allies, Touch Range], **Suffocate 6** [tentacle chokehold]), **Super Senses 1** (Mental Awareness)

Combat: Attack +7, Grapple +6, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +5 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback, Initiative

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Courage Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 36 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 24+ Combat 20 + Saves 12 – Drawbacks 2 = **106 Total**

Actual Name: Alan Leibowicz

Occupation: Former Soldier, Now Criminal

Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001)

Goal: Destroy IRS Records and Institutions

Power Level: Experienced

Height: 5'10" (178 cm)

Weight: 170 lbs. (77 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Brown

Birthplace: Queen's NY. USA

Current Residence: Mobile

Group Affiliations: The Deregulators

Known Relatives: Esther Leibowicz (mother)

"WHAT MADE YOU HIDE UNDER YOUR BED AS A CHILD? OR (EVEN BETTER), WHAT KEEPS YOU AWAKE AT NIGHT NOW?"



Background: Alan Leibowicz grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Queens. He lived a pretty normal life until he was ten, when his dad was found guilty of tax evasion. The IRS confiscated everything, evicted them from their home, and threw his dad in jail for six years.

Alan was rather bitter about it.

Alan was a smart student, perhaps too smart for his own good. He never got the grades he wanted, expected, or deserved, and spent high school watching handsome preppies get every break he deserved. He had no friends, and he knew he was lying when he told himself he didn't want any.

Then high school ended. Alan went to college, where he studied psychology. He had a natural talent for understanding people, especially dysfunctional people. He was not a particularly good student, however, and graduated near the bottom of his class.

Alan tried to be a good psychologist, and he achieved some success toward that goal. Unfortunately, he wasn't a good businessman, and when the IRS audited him, Alan snapped. He injured three people with gunfire and he was lucky the cops didn't shoot him dead on the spot. He was clearly unfit to stand trial, so he was transferred to a mental institution while the psychiatrists argued with the district attorney over his fate.

Alan spent eight months in a mental institution without showing signs of improvement – and then the Gestalt Wave hit. Instinctively, he knew what he had become.

Someone who could finally have some fun. He began to make the inmates afraid, determined to discover if people feared him enough to hurt him or to kill him. When that became boring, he turned people against each other – an easy thing to do in an asylum. Eventually, the asylum burned to the ground - after the staff brought guns into the sanitarium and massacred the patients, and then each other.

As I said before, fun.

Alan Leibowicz was believed to have perished in the fire, and he was in no mood to correct them. But he knew that he was only one step ahead of the authorities: alive or dead, the government was out to get him. They were all out to get him. The only safe place for him would be to find a group of people who hated the government as much as he did. It took some doing, but Alan managed to avoid capture, contact the Deregulators, and offered his services to them.

"The Terror" was born. So far, he's managed to get along with most of the team, except for the Juror (whom he's sure is out to get him).

Personality: The Terror is the Gestalt of Paranoia. He trusts no one, although he tries not to show any distrust for the other Deregulators. He really hates the government, and the greatest joy he gets is making the government and their lackeys afraid.

The Terror is usually quiet and analytical, keeping his paranoia hidden in a soft shell. He doesn't like to talk or argue, but listens carefully to people in order to detect signs of possible betrayal. In combat he likes to affect a "bogeyman" persona that's as phony as the Juror's "judgment day" riff. He tries to come off as grand and sinister but it usually only works from a distance.

Powers/Tactics: When the Terror activates his powers, black psychic tendrils grow out of his shoulders. He needs to touch people with these tentacles, (which have the side effect of strangling his enemies, if he chooses to grab them instead of psychically attacking them). The Terror's powers involve instigating (or tapping into) feelings of paranoia. If he manages to use telepathy to get into someone's subconscious, he will usually follow it up with illusions (if only because that attack gives him the most fun).

In a fight, The Terror likes to hide and keep his distance from the opposition. He targets the opponents with the best mobility, as they're the ones who are most likely to get near him, or the ones with the most accurate ranged attacks. The Terror is more brittle than most Gestalts, so he prefers to stay out of combat.

Campaign Use: Every campaign needs a minor league psionic that the players can beat up to get past their fear of psionics. In Gestalt, The Terror serves that function.

Government bureaucrats are the Terror's choice for people he loves to torment. He sometimes follows them home from work just to play with their minds in subtle ways and make their lives miserable.

Appearance: The Terror is a 33-year-old Caucasian male with dark brown hair and brown eyes, 5'10", 170 lbs. with a reasonably athletic build. Out of costume, he wears polo shirts and slacks. His costume is a black bodysuit with a red cape and skull half-mask. His voice is very soft and (except when he's growling his commands) often difficult to hear. Black tentacles grow out of his shoulders when his powers are activated.

THE TERROR SCENARIO HOOKS

I See Dead Persons

Alan, in a bout of guilt and paranoia over his team's involvement in Whitehawk's murder, suffers a mental breakdown. He wanders the campaign city, without any concerns that he's going to be exposed. He begins to think everyone is Whitehawk, and begins to use his powers indiscriminately on people, causing chaos. The PCs hear about the Terror's predicament - and the other Deregulators are hot on their heels.

Mail Call

The Terror learns that by coating objects with his sweat, he can trigger it so that whoever touches the object will experience his fear powers. He decides to send a mass mailing to city hall, as a prelude to a Deregulators' attack.

The Twenty-Five Thousand

In order to torment people, the Terror and the Deregulators invade an IRS records center and randomly select twenty-five thousand American citizens and increase their income taxes one hundredfold. They hope to cause enough damage to increase public anger without looking too suspicious.

THE FIRESTARTERS

Membership: Dissenter (leader), Apparition, Crimson Commander, Flayer, Gordion, and Wormwood. Dissenter is willing to let anyone who will follow him join his team, and is currently looking for a good psionic to join as their seventh member.

The Firestarters are cold blooded killers. They will insist that any new members hold their “lower class” society victims in complete contempt, or enjoy casually killing innocent people.

Background: When Professor Lincoln Walsh left his position at the University of Southern California, he felt complete contempt for society, particularly for the “vulgar masses” whom he blamed for the cutbacks that led to the loss of his job. He vowed that the streets would run red with their blood. He vowed that the immigrants would return to their homelands, dead or alive.

Professor Walsh had the power to at least attempt his goal; he had gestalt powers that gave him chemical control abilities. But after spending several lackluster years as a second rate supervillain, he decided he would stand a better chance if he hired recruits. He began to scour the nation for appropriate followers.

Wormwood was the first... thing... he found. Despite his distaste for the malformed creature, he found it malleable to his methods and means. Wormwood was annoyingly eager to please, and Professor Walsh decided to make use of the thing rather than destroy it. He could always put it out of its misery later.

Wormwood's trail led it to another of the Blood Red King's creations, the Apparition. The Apparition was much less agreeable than Wormwood, but the Professor bent her to his will in the end. Something about destroying that foolish Pastor Brown. Promises are easy to make, and perhaps one of these days, he'll keep it. By this time, Professor Walsh called himself Torus, and his team the Firestarters.

Crimson Commander was a supervillain who had been the leader of the Death Colors, a Los Angeles based supervillain group that had been broken up by Streethawk in 2001. Crimson Commander thought of the Firestarters as a temporary gig between reforming the Colors, and decided that joining it couldn't hurt him.

Gordion was the next member of the team to be recruited. He was a psychotic killer who could manipulate force fields and turn them into sharp edged killing objects. Giving Gordion more opportunities to kill people was ideal. Gordion eagerly joined.

The last member of the team to join was Flayer. She had apprenticed in New York as a partner of the Scarlet Knight, but their paths had separated. Despite suspicions that her loyalty was to the Tyranny League rather than anyone who employed her, Walsh brought her into the fold.

The Firestarters initial campaign was waged in Los Angeles, but Dissenter (Walsh now decided that “Torus” wasn't grand enough of a name) wanted to bring his war against poverty to national attention by taking it to the nation's capital. They began by taking a toxin, mixing it with a virus, and setting up a clinic that gave free

inoculations to the nation's homeless. They would poison thousands of people and free D.C. from the burden of the underclass. And any who opposed them would be destroyed. Unfortunately for them, they were exposed and defeated by Columbia. Since then, the team has returned to its Los Angeles base, where it has run afoul of the Hollywood Knights on several occasions.

The Firestarters have been reduced lately to mercenary work, and even that's beginning to dry up, given the rise of more successful mercenary units (especially the Psionic Seven). However, the Firestarters are determined not to be dismissed or derided, and Dissenter wants to rebuild his team's reputation in the worst way. His immediate plan, which is meant as a confidence builder, is to target novice superhero groups and eliminate them before they can become a problem. Whether he can keep the team together in the meantime is a whole different story; he's managed to keep a bit of unity by using his transmutation powers to create gold or silver, and then fencing the created metals for cash. It's a scheme which (while profitable) is fairly easy to trace, and may come back to bite the Firestarters in the near future.

Tactics: Due to the number of loose cannons in the group, the Firestarters' teamwork is pretty weak. This is intentional; the Firestarters are meant as opponents for a starting group of heroes who have not quite figured out how to work together. The Firestarters should walk the fine line between “cannon fodder” and “serious threat if the heroes get too cocky. They shouldn't be an A-List opponent—but the players shouldn't laugh when they show up for a fight.

In combat, the Firestarters fight like individuals, with little or no coordination. The only two members who show particular coordination are Flayer and Gordion, as Gordion likes to team up against targets that Flayer has put in a choke hold, or sit next to Dissenter and reflect incoming attacks. That's about as good as it gets.

Group Relations: Group relations among the Firestarters are poor. The Apparition and Wormwood are too freakish for the other group members, and remain only because they receive a little bit of pity from Dissenter. The Crimson Commander is in the group because it allows him to continue to build his career as a supervillain, and Gordion is in the group because it provides him with opportunities to kill people. Nobody likes each other, everybody knows it, and fights have broken out between the individual members on frequent occasions (most notably between Crimson Commander and Gordion). But when it comes to a mission, they try to keep the friction to a minimum.

Reputation When it comes to supervillainy, the Firestarters are considered to have both feet firmly in the losers column; their attacks are neither well-planned nor successful. However, the lethality of the group keep them from becoming the butt of superhero jokes, and those who underestimate them have regretted it.

DISSENTER

GESTALT OF CHEMISTRY

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+1	+6	+6	+6	+1	+2
12	23	23	23	12	14

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+12/+6*	+9	+8	+5

*w/o Force Field

Skills: Bluff 4 (+6), Computers 8 (+14), Craft (chemical) 8 (+14), Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 (+14), Notice 4 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+5)

Feats: Attack Specialization 2 (chemical powers), Benefit 2 (Wealth 2), Equipment 1 (Commlink), Improved Initiative, Inventor

Powers: **Disintegrate 8** (Continuous; Alternate Powers: **Dazzle 6** plus linked Stun 6 [Normal Range], **Drain 10** [all Physical Traits at once; Normal Range], **Transform 5** [any chemical to any other chemical; Continuous], **Trip 9** [Line Area, Knockback, Opposed by Dexterity; Touch Range]), **Force Field 6** (Impervious), **Immunity 10** (chemical effects), **Leap 4**, **Regeneration 8** (Injured per 5 minutes, Disabled per 5 minutes, Staggered per 5 minutes), **Super Senses 4** (detect chemical compound structure [acute, analytical, ranged])

Combat: Attack +10 (chemical powers), +6 (other), Grapple +7, Damage +8 (Disintegrate), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -9, Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (Alkaline attacks; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 47+ Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 82 + Combat 24 + Saves 9 – Drawbacks 2 = **176 Total**

Actual Name: Lincoln Walsh
Occupation: Former Chemistry Professor, Supervillain
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1996 wave)
Power Level: Experienced
Goal: Destroy Urban Blight
Height: 5'10" (178 cm)
Weight: 160 lbs (77 kg)
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: Pasadena, CA.
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Firestarters
Known Relatives: None.



"IT IS TIME TO PUT THE VULGAR MASSES IN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE, THE GRAVE. LISTEN CAREFULLY, FOR THIS SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY INSTRUCTIVE."

DISSENTER SCENARIO HOOKS

Charity Ends At Home

Dissenter decides to use his powers to create a fortune in platinum and give it away to the poor, knowing that not only will it hurt the economy, that the poor who attempt to cash in on such a rare and valuable substance are more likely to get into trouble with suspicious exchange people and the law than to get rich. Foil the scheme.

Christmas Slime Is Here

Dissenter, who doesn't believe in the "proletariat bourgeois religious festival of Commercial-mas" has made a survey to determine who are the most popular Santa Clauses in the city. He plans to infect as many of them as possible with a biological agent, hoping they'll spread a plague to as many children as possible.

Net Loss

Viewing the Internet as the most vile form of human entertainment, Dissenter plans to reprogram the root servers of the Internet so it can only access one hundred web sites, all chosen by Dissenter for their celebration of Dissenter's haughty values and his conception of human esthetics. Can you stop him? Should you

Background: But I had tenure!

It took a lot of effort for the University of Southern California to fire Lincoln Walsh, but they felt the effort was worth it. Instead of accepting their wishes, Walsh had fought the university tooth and nail. Just because he made a few remarks that might be racially motivated; to him, firebombing the ghettos wasn't meant as a criticism of African-Americans, but rather the social conditions in which a lot of African-Americans lived. Damn their political correctness! He didn't care who lived there. People were always taking his remarks out of context. He fended off similar complaints for years, why was this one any different?

Lincoln hired himself to private industry, but found that his doctorate didn't mean much, not nearly as much as his grating personality. His consulting firm never did get off the ground, and went under within eighteen months.

Unemployment. Bankruptcy. Divorce. Life had hit rock bottom for Lincoln. But one day in 1996, a Gestalt Wave hit, and Walsh received superhuman abilities. He could create chemicals, and trigger chemical reactions to perform amazing feats.

Walsh put on a costume and called himself Torus, and tried to become a superhero. It was a natural reaction to getting his powers. But after two patrols where Torus found himself the source of ridicule by drunkards and punk teenagers in the park which he was trying to protect, Torus decided that they weren't worth protecting. The general rabble, especially the parasitic poor who leeches from society without giving anything back to it, they didn't need protecting. They needed to be culled. Torus had a new mission, a mission of destruction. If no one else was willing to remove the parasitic infection from the body of society, he would.

In late 2000, Walsh began to put his team together. By early 2002, the Firestarters was formed, and had begun its first missions. To commemorate his new mission, Walsh renamed himself Dissenter. He had always been on the other side of accepted opinion, and that's where he felt most comfortable.

Dissenter has had many pitfalls and barriers to success in his mission, but he was used to being persecuted. In the end, he knew, the struggle would be worth it. In the end, he will have done a great service to society.

Personality: Dissenter is as arrogant and self-righteous as supervillains get. He views every other piece of the world as being inferior to his academic wonderland; anyone who has ever disagreed with him is his mortal enemy. Dissenter exists to destroy utterly destroy his enemies. He enjoys beating them, humiliating them, and in the end, killing them. And, in true academic style, he has to lecture them while he's doing it.

Dissenter is the intellectual taken to extremes. He's a good villain to throw at players who hate snobs and posing intellectuals, though he should be more than just a straw man. His hatred of modern society, particularly his contempt for the poor and children, should be enough to make him a priority target. Dissenter uses his crusade to focus on people he hates or who annoy him. It's almost inevitable that he'll blame his failures on his teammates, especially Crimson Commander. For now, he's putting that confrontation aside to focus on his latest pet project, people who are excessively annoying on Internet newsgroups.

Powers/Tactics: Dissenter is a Chemistry Gestalt; his body is a chemical refinery whose abilities he's only beginning to tap. He can emit chemicals that burn, blind, or affect people's coordination. His control over his neurochemistry allows him to repair damage as a reflex action.

Dissenter is a poor tactical commander who often stays too far behind his teammates to be effective at giving orders, and his orders tend to be too long and convoluted to be useful, as he likes to get every detail correct. He is not particularly bold and prefers to attack at a distance. He likes to use his running powers to get some distance between he and his foes, and then blast away.

Campaign Use: Dissenter is the intellectual taken to extremes. He's a good villain to throw at players who hate snobs and posing intellectuals, though he should be more than just a straw man. His hatred of modern society, particularly his contempt for the poor and children, should be enough to make him a priority target.

Appearance: Dissenter is in his late 30s, with graying hair, and an average build; he has the sort of chiseled face that manages to be more handsome the older he gets. Dissenter wears a black and yellow bodysuit, with a radiation warning symbol on his chest. He is 5'10", 170 lbs., with blue eyes.

APPARITION

GESTALT OF GHOSTS

POWER LEVEL 9

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+3	+4	+0	+3	+4
16	16	18	10	16	18

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+6	+6	+6	+6

Skills: Bluff 4 (+8), Notice 2 (+5), Sense Motive 2 (+5), Stealth 4 (+7)

Powers: **Enhanced Feat 5** (Fearsome Presence 5), **Environmental Control 5** (fear field; Distraction 2), **Flight 3** (Linked to Insubstantial), **Immunity 80** (all energy and physical damage; Limited: ½ strength; Power Loss vs attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Insubstantial 4**, **Mental Blast 9** (Sense-dependent [sight]; Alternate Power: **Emotion Control 9** [Fear]), **Protection 2**

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +8, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -3, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks with Silver; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 34+ Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Powers 119+ Combat 22 + Saves 8 – Drawbacks 2= **184 Total**

Actual Name: Julie Ann Howell
Occupation: Former Arts Student, now Supervillain
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Chain (1998)
Goal: Find Love and Acceptance
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 5'1" (154 cm)
Weight: 90 lbs (41 kg)
Hair Color: Red
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: St. Louis MO.
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Firestarters
Known Relatives: Terry Howell (father), Cynthia Howell (mother), Leslie Ann (sister)

"IS THE PART WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO GO BOO?"



APPARITION SCENARIO HOOKS

Boo!

A dying girl wants to meet with a “real ghost” and ask if there’s life after death. Apparition certainly qualifies, but will she cooperate? And will Dissenter attempt to pervert the situation to fit his agenda?

Live No More Forever

A Mad Scientist Gestalt comes to the conclusion that Apparition’s altered DNA holds the secret of immortality: humanity can live forever as ghosts! He kidnaps Apparition and builds a “ghost gun”, a weapon that can transform flesh into ectoplasm. Can you team up with Apparition to stop him?

Tribe

Across America, dozens of people find themselves temporarily transformed into ghosts for hours at a time. The victims have one connection - all of them are blood relatives of Julie Ann Howell.

Background: Julie Ann Howell sat in a bar in St. Louis, with her boyfriend. He was watching football with more interest than she could understand, but men were like that. People who are in love and not too familiar with each other often replace understanding with toleration.

Then a trickle of blood entered the bar. The glasses and mugs cracked and exploded, and people everywhere were bleeding and moaning in agony. Out of the pools of blood, a being formed. The Blood Red King.

Julie Ann and her boyfriend caught his attention. A bloody smile grew on the King’s face. He handed her boyfriend a knife, and said in a deep, commanding voice.

“Now we behold love’s folly,” the fiend spoke. “Unless you spill her life’s blood onto the floor and wet your fingertips in the dying of your shared passion, I shall give birth to a new monstrosity this day.”

The boyfriend charged the King, the King’s own knife in his hand. That was a mistake. Cuts appeared on the young man’s body, and he fell to his knees, bleeding to death in seconds. The King’s smile grew narrow; this was not joy, merely satisfaction. He turned to Julie Ann.

“My promises are always kept, my bargains sealed in blood,” the King replied.

Julie Ann began to scream for help. Perhaps a superhero would hear her. None did. The Blood Red King asked her what creature she wished to become.

“Do you think I care what you’ll do to me? I don’t even care if I live!” she cried.

“As you wish. That which you wish to discard shall become the source of your pain.” The King said, surrounding himself with a dark, malefic laugh. “And the ache of a soul bereft of both love and life shall persecute the world in ways that will please me. Let the bargain be fulfilled.”

At that moment, Julie Ann died.

They buried her three days later, side by side with her boyfriend. But as the coffin was placed in the ground, and the first spade of dirt was thrown upon it, a figure rose out of the ground, flying through the casket. It was Julie Ann. Or the ghostly image of her. She implored her friends and family to help her, but the sight of a ghost caused everyone to panic. Julie Ann realized what she had become. An outcast.

She wandered the town, trying to persuade people to help her, but all she did was inspire fear. The next day, the Blood Red King’s nemesis, Pastor Brown, came to town. He confronted her, and tried to destroy her. It was unnatural, he said, for ghosts to walk the earth, and it was his duty to help her soul find its natural rest. Julie Ann didn’t consider herself to be needing any rest, natural or otherwise. She fled Pastor Brown before he could destroy her.

Julie Ann fled to California, where she desperately tried to rescue her life. She found one man who could stand the sight of her, an Aikido teacher. She fell in love, and she learned a lot about self-defense, even

if the oriental discipline seemed to be beyond her.

But it was not to last. The King returned, and watched their love with hate in his heart. He made a subtle gesture, and suddenly Julie Ann’s fear aura flared with immeasurable power. Her teacher screamed and began to run away from Julie Ann, but did not get far – he died of heart failure after six steps.

Julie Ann was completely despondent. She attempted to find comfort among other humans, but met with nothing but rejection. And Pastor Brown continued to hunt her.

Finally, after close to a year, she encountered the would-be master villain, Dissenter. Julie Ann had lost hope that she’d ever be accepted by anyone again; the would-be master villain played on that fear, convincing her that she was nothing but a monster, and only his Firestarters would be willing to make a place for her. Julie accepted his evaluation without hesitation, and Apparition became the newest member of the Firestarters.

Personality: Julie Ann has been altered by the Blood Red King in more ways than one. Once she was a smart, aggressive young woman, a woman of confidence and ability. But that was before years of revulsion corroded her self-esteem and led her into the company of monsters. As the Apparition, that aggression has been twisted to hatred. She lives to see people die, as she can not do. She is jealous of those she kills: both in their normalcy, and in their ability to go to the grave in peace.

Somewhere, the remnants of a conscience tell her what she’s doing is very wrong. That only serves to increase her pain, and only by ignoring it does she maintain any semblance of sanity.

Powers/Tactics: The Apparition’s Gestalt is based on traditional ghostly abilities. She cannot, however, affect the normal world without becoming tangible, perhaps because the Blood Red King wanted her to be vulnerable.

The Apparition tends to become insubstantial until she’s closed with a target, and then becomes corporeal and attacks. She’s not the bravest combatant, and will flee a fight if it looks like she’ll be seriously hurt.

Campaign Use: Apparition is meant to be “the sympathetic one” of the Firestarters, the member who has most of her human qualities still intact and is the most capable and worthy of redemption. A cruel GM can pull off the trick of making her seem extremely sympathetic, and then have her misanthropic qualities come into play as she does something horrible.

Appearance: Julie Ann is not an unattractive woman. She wears a white dress and covers her head with a silver hat. She is 5’2 and 95 lbs, with red hair and green eyes. Her form is always somewhat intangible, but it is far more noticeable when she’s fully non-corporeal.

CRIMSON COMMANDER

POWER LEVEL 11

GESTALT OF THE FIERY TEMPER

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+13	+3	+8	+0	-1	+1
36	16	26	10	8	12

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+12	+10	+6	+5

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Knowledge (streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 3 (+2), Sense Motive 4 (+3)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged), Favored Environment (airborne)

Powers: **Blast 8** (Explosion, Penetrating; Alternate Powers: **Boost Fire Effects 5** [Area Burst], **Dazzle 6** [make everyone "see red," vision and hearing; Burst Area, Selective Attack], **Ignite 10**), **Flight 3**, **Immunity 13** (fire effects, radiation, suffocation [sustained]), **Protection 4**, **Super Senses 1** (Infrared Vision), **Super Strength 6**

Combat: Attack +8 (melee), +9 (ranged), Grapple +27, Damage +13 (unarmed), +8 (blast), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Peace or Friendship Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 48 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 2+ Powers 71 + Combat 32 + Saves 11– Drawbacks 2= **167 Total**

Actual Name: Fred Mandel

Occupation: Former Gang Leader, Super-villain

Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001 wave)

Goal: Become Leader of "ultimate villain team".

Power Level: Experienced

Height: 6'0" (183 cm)

Weight: 218 lbs (99 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Brown

Birthplace: Los Angeles CA.

Current Residence: Mobile

Group Affiliations: The Firestarters

Known Relatives: None.

"YOU MESS WITH THE COMMANDER, AND YOU'RE GONNA END UP EXTRA CRISPY."



CRIMSON COMMANDER SCENARIO HOOKS

Burn Baby Burn

Someone torches an apartment complex in south-central Los Angeles – unfortunately, it was Crimson Commander's childhood home, and he still has a surprising amount of sentiment attached to it. The Commander goes on an arson spree in response – he'll stop only when the city brings the original arsonist to trial, at which time the Commander intends to kill him. The original arsonist is a nine-year-old boy, but that won't matter in the least to the Commander.

Calm And Collected

The limitation on Crimson Commander's powers is not fully understood, but there are reports that he was unable to burn a transient who was caught in the middle of one of his fire blasts. The authorities, who've always had problems trouble containing the Commander, would like to find out why.

Day of Fire

A Gestalt phenomenon called the Day of Fire takes place, which makes it difficult to quench fire. Crimson Commander discovers that it's boosted his primary Blast to Blast 13 and added several progressions of Area to the attack. He decides to unleash vast destruction until someone pays him to do otherwise.

Background: Fred Mandel grew up in Watts. He ran with street gangs at an early age, and when his gestalt powers became active in 1994, decided to take over. Fred's Blood gang was a particularly nasty one; he recruited several supervillains into it, and called it the Death Colors. It was Crimson Commander, Blast, Tough, and Slam Dancer, and it was a wild ride.

Fred didn't know when to quit; he accumulated enemies like most people accumulate pennies. The mayor wanted to crack down on street crime, and the Death Colors were some of the primary targets. Gradually, the police and the vigilante Streethawk wore down the gang and the Hollywood Knights finished the job.

Fred languished in prison for a few weeks and then burned his way through the special cell he'd constructed. No one wanted a piece of him. People told him he was a superhero magnet. He burned a few of his ex-boys, but that wasn't getting him anywhere either. He needed some time to catch his breath. He needed a change.

That's when Dissenter caught up with him. Dissenter said he needed an experienced hand as a lieutenant in the most powerful new supervillain team in America, a team that would make the Tyranny League look like pikers, the Firestarters. Fred admired someone who could talk a good game. He figured it'd be a temporary gig, he'd make a few connections, get some dough, and then break free and do his own thing.

Unfortunately, neither the Crimson Commander nor the Firestarters have lived up to their potential. Fred's really tired of Dissenter's "professor of fascism" routine, and if there isn't some success soon, he's going to burn. But taking out Dissenter won't be worth spit until he regains his good name. Fred's determined to regain the 'spect he's lost since the Death Colors went under, and he'll do it by making some poor superhero sap into human charcoal.

Personality: Crimson Commander is a sociopath, a bully who only cares about himself. He is openly contemptuous of others, including his teammates; to say that he and Gordion don't get along well is a serious understatement. Crimson Commander hates superheroes, who have always spoiled his fun, and his experience with the American legal system hasn't filled him with much appreciation for lawyers either.

The Commander is a thoroughly unpleasant piece of work with no qualms about hurting people, and willing to do a lot of dirty things if it

raises his profile. As befitting someone with his powers, Crimson Commander is a very emotional person, filled with seething hatred that flares into anger at the slightest provocation. He is not "out of control" (that's Flayer or Gordion), and tries to channel his passions when he thinks they will do him the most good. Unfortunately, one of the ways he channels his energy is giving orders in inappropriate situations and arguing with other people's orders. This does put him in conflict with other egotistical types, especially Gordion and Dissenter.

Powers/Tactics: The Crimson Commander is the Gestalt of Destruction. He doesn't seem to draw extra power from moments of destruction, as one might expect from someone with that Gestalt, but he certainly knows how to break things.

When Crimson Commander uses his powers, small flames start running down his costume, but they don't envelop him; they're mostly for show.

The Crimson Commander is an extremely confident combatant, perhaps more confident than he has any right to be. His tactics are simple: immolate people at a distance, close to melee range, then start punching. Crimson Commander is a grandstander who doesn't respond well when asked to be a team player. He's very ambitious, and everything he does is working toward the eventual goal of becoming one of the nastiest supervillains in the world.

For the purposes of determining who's affected by his powers, a "calm" individual is a Meditation Gestalt or someone who spends a round trying to remain calm (a Concentration Check DC 13 is required).

Campaign Use: The Crimson Commander fills the role of "master villain in training": He dreams of heading a new Los Angeles-style villain group ("my West Coast Tyranny League, but with style") that will unite the gangs of Los Angeles under his banner, sweep away the local heroes, and seize control of the west coast drug trade. (His ambitions make his decision to stay with the Firestarters seem even more bizarre.)

Appearance: Fred is an impressive strapping six foot light-skinned African-American, weighing close to 220 pounds, mostly muscle. He wears a red (asbestos) costume with black trim, and small asbestos martial art gloves. He has dark brown hair and brown eyes. He appears to be in his early twenties.

FLAYER

GESTALT OF SADISM

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+7	+4	+5	+0	+0	+3
25	18	20	10	10	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+1/+5*	+7	+9	+6

* w/o armor and flatfooted

Skills: Bluff 4 (+7), Handle Animal 6 (+9), Intimidate 8 (+11), Medicine 2 (+2), Profession (taxidermist) 6 (+6), Sense Motive 8 (+8), Sleight of Hand 6 (+10), Stealth 8 (+12)

Feats: Attack Focus 2 (melee), Attack Specialization 2 (knives), Attack Specialization (whips), Attractive, Chokehold, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 3, Equipment 2, Improved Critical 10 (whips), Improved Defense 2, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Move-by Attack, Quick Draw, Stunning Attack, Throwing Attack 3

Equipment: leather armor (Protection 3), bullwhip (Strike 2; extended reach 2, mighty), throwing knives (strike 1; throwable)

Powers: **Deflect 10** (any; Limited: requires whip of some kind), **Healing 5** (sadistic charge; Reaction, Total; Self-Only, Limited: Only when successfully inflicting a wound), **Speed 1**, **Super Strength 1**

Combat: Attack +10 (whips), +10 (throwing knives), +8 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +16 (+18 w/ whip), Damage +9 (whip), +4 (knives), +7 (unarmed), Defense +9 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Determination Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 39 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 35 + Powers 43 + Combat 24 + Saves 13– Drawbacks 2 **164 = Total**

Actual Name: Mandy Cummings
Occupation: Supervillain
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1996 wave)
Goal: Show the World That Anyone Can Be Broken
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 5'11" (169 cm)
Weight: 160 lbs (75 kg)
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Birthplace: Duluth MN. USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Firestarters
Known Relatives: None.



"LOUDER! LOUDER!
 LOUDER! SING ME A
 LULLABY, DADDY!"

FLAYER SCENARIO HOOKS

Forget The Firestarters

You intercept reports that show that Flayer has been dropping messages off to individuals who've been linked to the Tyranny League. Is Flayer's allegiance really to someone greater than the Tyranny League? Discover the truth.

What A Coincidence, I'm A Killer Too... But That Won't Save You

Mandy's been tracking down, killing (and skinning) every FBI agent involved in the raid that killed her father. Only one is left, and you suspect that Flayer's coming after him soon. Protect him.

Unfortunately, the agent has a few dark secrets and really doesn't want to fall under close scrutiny.

Background: Mandy Cummings moved from city to city all her life. Her father forced her to do it; his little angel, he called her, and said that one day she'd understand. She never had any real friends, because she didn't have time to make friends.

She was 12 when she discovered why her father was always on the move. That's when she found the first body, in the garage, waiting to be buried. She'd seen blood before, but her father had always just smiled and said that he had been out hunting. Now she knew what he was hunting.

When she was 14, the FBI came to the house, guns drawn. They shot her father like the mad dog he was. They put Mandy in an orphanage, gave her a great pair of foster parents. But the damage had already been done.

Mandy liked to skin things. She'd catch rabbits, skin them, and cook them. Her foster parents admired her resourcefulness. She made animal pelts from squirrels and raccoons. Looked just like Davie Crockett.

At 17, she killed them and made them into pelts, too. Now she finally understood how her father felt. He must have been the king of the world, she thought.

She managed to escape the authorities. After two years on the run, she ended up in Kentucky, living with a religious cult in a godforsaken backwoods area. She had no religious beliefs, but she managed to get close enough to the cult leader that she didn't have to attend his five hour sermons.

While she was with the cult, the 1996 Gestalt Wave occurred, and Mandy received superhuman powers. She was faster and stronger than a normal person, and full of hate. She served as a "deacon" for the cult, punishing those who deserved it. That's how she learned to use a whip. That's how she learned where people's weak spots were.

The cult eventually died a horrible death, but Mandy survived. Mandy left for St. Louis. This was now the age of the costumed action figure -- live. Mandy chose the image of the woman of whips, the Flayer. An image that would disturb this quiet society, and allow her to punish it as it deserved. An image that could not be shot like an animal on a doorstep, or firebombed. The Flayer would kill as she pleased, and take their skins as she pleased.

The Flayer lives.

The Flayer had several battles with Archa, St. Louis's premiere superheroine. She didn't win them, but her vicious streak impressed a few members of the Tyranny League, most notably

Scarlet Knight. It was as close as those people are capable of love. Imperator, slightly annoyed by Scarlet Knight's distracted behavior, sent Flayer "to the minor leagues", to infiltrate the fledgling Firestarters supervillain team. Imperator figured they'd make a useful tool.

Flayer wasn't particularly happy with the assignment, but she did owe the League. Dissenter was happy to include Flayer, who certainly fit the profile for the group (murderous, sadistic, etc.)

Flayer is chafing in the Firestarters. She doesn't respect her teammates, although she's the one member of the team that no one is willing to mess with. She's one of the few people in the group with any sense of teamwork, which only Gordion and Apparition have the brains to realize and exploit. Lately, she's been encouraging conflict between Crimson Commander and Dissenter; hopefully, the two will eliminate each other, and she'll take over, dump Wormwood, and recruit a few new members and turn the Firestarters into a real team.

Personality: Flayer is a psychotic, a woman who exists to hurt people. She only sees human beings, as well as all animals, as objects that she can abuse. She has no redeeming qualities, unless you consider torture and murder to be redeeming.

Powers/Tactics: Flayer's gestalt powers deal with pain, suffering, and humiliation; one might almost view her as an ideal companion for the Blood Red King.

Flayer's tactics are to fight defensively; she'll look for a target's weak spot, then fight as defensively as possible. If Gordion is nearby, she'll try to wrap her whip around an opponent's throat so they'll drop their guard while Gordion sticks an axe in their chest. If Flayer is disarmed, she'll try to recover her whip, using her knives to fight any opponent who stands between her and her weapon of choice.

Campaign Use: Flayer is meant to be an utterly unsympathetic villainess, a monster or a mad dog who needs to be permanently caged. She has no particular personal ambition that goes beyond hurting people and enjoying watching them suffer. She's meant more as a tactical adversary than someone who can be the study of deep role-playing.

Appearance: Flayer is a tall, muscular Caucasian female who wears a black leather bodysuit, including an unflattering leather mask. She has long black hair and green eyes, and has many serpent tattoos on her body.

GORDION

GESTALT OF HORROR MOVIE KILLERS

POWER LEVEL 9

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+6	+7	+0	+1	+4
16	22	24	10	12	18

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+11	+9	+9	+8

Skills: Acrobatics 3 (+9), Bluff 4 (+8), Disguise 6 (+10), Intimidate 6 (+10), Language 1 (Spanish), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (make-up artist) 6 (+7), Sense Motive 4 (+5)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee), Attack Specialization (axes), Improved Initiative 2

Powers: **Elongation 2** (Limited: Only for axes), **Force Field 4**, **Strike 9** (force axes; Penetrating; Alternate Powers: Deflect 6 [any]), **Sensory Shield 2** (sight), **Teleport 4** (Power Loss: when being observed, -1 pt)

Combat: Attack +9 (axes), +7 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +10, Damage +9 (axes), +3 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -6, Initiative +14

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2), Vulnerability (attacks from Bodyguard Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2), Vulnerability (attacks from Movie Hero Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 42 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 33+ Combat 24 + Saves 12 – Drawbacks 6 = **118 Total**

Actual Name: Shay Clemens

Occupation: Former Make-up Artist, Now Supervillain

Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001 wave)

Goal: Create "Real Life Horror Movies"

Power Level: Experienced

Height: 6'0" (183 cm)

Weight: 200 lbs (91 kg)

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Brown

Birthplace: Tucson, AZ.

Current Residence: Mobile

Group Affiliations: The Firestarters

Known Relatives: None.

"NICE LOOKING BLOOD YOU GOT THERE. LET'S SEE SOME MORE..."



GORDION SCENARIO HOOKS

American Sickos

Gordion may be the only member of the Firestarters with his own fan club, as a number of fringe horror movie affectionatos at a horror movie convention have invited him to be a guest of honor at an "underground" film festival. But Gordion may have more on his mind than simple adoration.

Diplomatic Immunity

An infamous despot likes the idea of hiring an executioner supervillain to dispatch political prisoners, and he's attempting to smuggle Gordion from the United States to a foreign country. Intercept Gordion before he finds sanctuary in a foreign country.

Gordion Knot

Gordion, annoyed by one of his enemies, offers to meet him in single combat on an old Hollywood soundstage. It's a trap of course, but the Firestarters are not involved; instead, Gordion's turned to Weaponsmith to build a special effects extravaganza, complete with holograms and robot duplicates, designed to bewilder and confuse the player characters and soften them up for the killing blow.

Background: The fascination with darkness, with images of horror and violence, does not, as some psychologists have speculated, lead people into violence. However, occasionally, someone stumbles into the Abyss without even looking.

Shay Clemens didn't stumble into it. He did a swan dive and performed backflips on the way down.

Shay always loved horror movies, the bloodier, the better. He wondered often whether real life violence worked that way, whether real agony and injury looked the way it did in the horror movies. He wondered if people would act the same in real life as they did in a horror movie.

The logical step for someone like Shay was to get closer to the object of his fascination. In the beginning, it was movie violence. Until 2002, he worked as a special effects man in Hollywood; the more violent and brutal the film was, the better he liked it. He was not really in the A-list of the Hollywood make-up crew, so he tended to work on Grade-D direct to video releases.

Many of his colleagues had higher ambitions, but not Shay. Shay didn't care about the budget, as long as he got to gross people out.

But there were still questions about violence that Shay wanted answered. He wanted to know how it felt to commit real acts of violence, and one night, when he was drunk and one of his co-workers was drunk and obnoxious, he decided to try it. He broke a beer bottle, and slashed some arteries, and watched his friend die. It felt good.

Shay was arrested, charged, and convicted of second degree murder. He served two years of a fifteen year sentence, two hard years. He became a much colder man, and was frequently involved in acts of violence. It was obvious he wasn't going to get time off for good behavior.

Then one day in 2001, there was a Gestalt Wave, and Shay found himself empowered to live his fantasies. He could cover himself in a force field encasing, and shape that force field to be extremely sharp. Shay started killing people and never looked back. His first victim was his cellmate. Then he cut through the bars and began killing guards. Then he made his way to the cell block of the people he didn't like and killed them. He reflected bullets back at the guards who shot him. And he eventually made his way out of the yard. No one was ready for him, no one was prepared for the carnage.

If he could have gotten close enough to watch them as they died, it would have been the most glorious day of his life.

The manhunt after Shay was intense. Shay knew if they caught him, they'd kill him, so he moved to Arizona and went underground. But he was still consumed by killing. He killed a retired family in Scottsdale, then moved back to L.A. He learned to cloak his activities by targeting people who were more likely to be ignored by the press

and police; transients and illegal immigrants.

It was during one of his killing sprees of Los Angeles' homeless that he came to Dissenter's attention. Clemens was appallingly low-brow in his tastes for Dissenter, and his methods were crude, but he was eliminating the chaff from Los Angeles, something which Dissenter enthusiastically approved of. The villain suggested a partnership, which essentially led to Clemens becoming a subordinate in his Firestarters. Dissenter initially called Clemens "Halbard", but later renamed him Gordion, after the Gordion knot, a name which stuck with the press. Clemens didn't care. As long as he got to smear his face in the blood of others as he watched them spasm and die, they could call him any name they chose...

Personality: Shay is a thinking man's psychotic. He doesn't believe in going on random killing spree; instead he studies his target carefully and then goes on his killing spree when he's most likely to get away with it. Gordion is cool, even casual, in what he does, and gets annoyed when people around him get emotional.

Powers/Tactics: Gordion is a Murder Gestalt, but whatever passion drives him is linked with bloodletting, for he's happiest when he's watching his victims bleed to death. Unlike some gestalts he doesn't gain a power boost when his Gestalt is triggered (i.e. when he has shed blood), but that ability may develop over the course of time.

Gordion is very casual and laid back, even when it comes to killing. He dislikes people who get excessively intense or excited; Gordion and Crimson Commander don't always get along. However, despite his antisocial habits, Gordion is an exceptionally strong team player. He often stands next to one of the other Firestarters (usually Dissenter) and reflects any attacks targeted at them. However, he's rather disgusted at the lack of professionalism he sees from most of the other people on his team and he's becoming a less reliable team player in a fight.

Campaign Use: Gordion is another psychopath on a team that's on sociopathic overload. His horror movie motif makes him a good villain for a solo encounter (particular in haunted houses or other settings appropriate to slasher movies); Gordion enjoys stalking and killing people when he's in the right mood.

Appearance: Gordion is very tall, 6'4" and about 200 pounds; he has a lean but sharply defined muscular build. He has long black hair and wears a T-shirt and jeans; his force field forms a translucent armor over his clothing. He is almost always smeared in blood (when he's on the prowl, he uses blood as mock (happy) clown face makeup around his eyes and mouth) and mock Goth makeup when he's partying. His voice is a creepy soft baritone.

WORMWOOD

(CHAIN GESTALT)

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
-1	+4	+3	-2	+2	+5
8	18	16	6	14	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+6	+8	+6	+9

Feats: Attack Focus 3 (melee)

Powers: **Enhanced Feat 9** (Dodge Focus 9; Power Loss against those unaffected by overwhelming stench [no sense of smell, self-contained breathing, etc.], -1 pt), **Immunity 1** (own powers), **Nauseate 8** (revulsion; Perception Range; Alternate Powers: **Drain Constitution 10** [decay; Perception Range; Slow Fade 2], **Drain Constitution 8** and Linked **Drain Dexterity 8** [Corpse-like deterioration; Burst Area on Both], **Environmental Control 4** [stench; Distraction 2]), **Protection 3** (crusted skin and iron-hard scabs), **Speed 2**, **Super Senses 1** (track [scent])

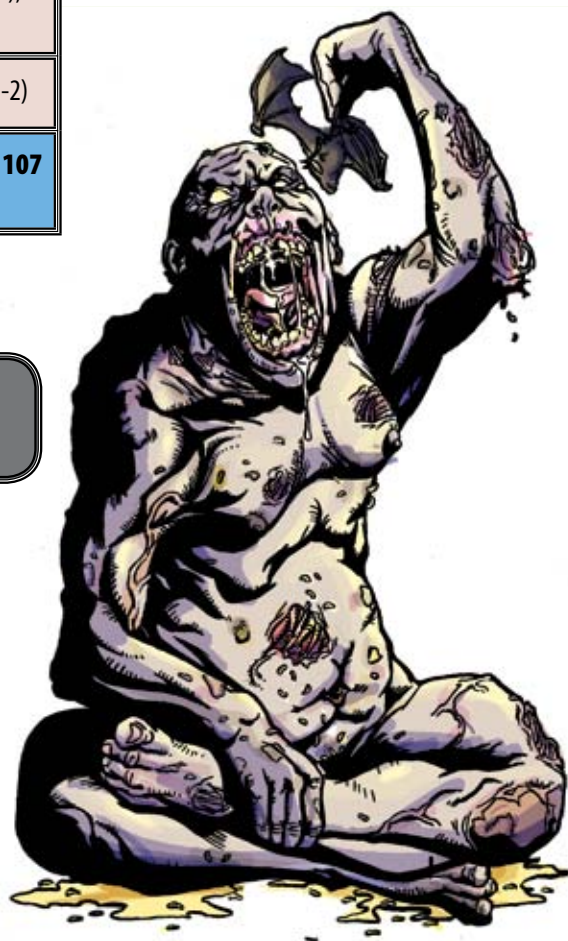
Combat: Attack +8 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +7, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +14 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -3, Initiative +4

Drawbacks Vulnerability (attacks from Water Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 22 + Feats 3+ Powers 50 + Combat 20 + Saves 14– Drawbacks 2 = **107 Total**

"HMMMSSSSPBBB... RRAARRB-BLLSS... IIIIEERSBLLLL..."

Actual Name: Godfrey Stoddard
Occupation: Former Fine Arts Teacher, Former Museum Curator, Now Supervillain
Legal Status: American citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Chain (2002)
Goal: Create New Works of Art
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 6'0" (183 cm)
Weight: 200 lbs (91 kg)
Hair Color: Not Applicable
Eye Color: Red
Birthplace: San Francisco, CA.
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: The Firestarters
Known Relatives: Paulus Stoddard (brother), Beth Stoddard (sister), Carol Lynn Stoddard (niece),



WORMWOOD

SCENARIO HOOKS

Shattered

Someone tells Wormwood that he'll be restored if someone restores the Gestalt Mirror he broke when he received his powers. Unfortunately, the shards of the mirror were taken by the Blood Red King, and hidden by his cultists in a place of horror. The Firestarters have no interest in restoring Wormwood to his former life. Do you?

She Walks In Beauty

Wormwood invades a beauty pageant in the hopes of finding Mrs. Wormwood. One of the contestants manages to overcome her physical revulsion and feels sorry for the creature – which may be the worst thing she could possibly do.

Sideshow

An unscrupulous sideshow entertainer has captured Wormwood and put him on display, while activists belonging to LAM (Love All Monsters) are raising hell and protesting the carnival. What do you do? And, for that matter, what are the Firestarters doing?

Background: Life is a continuous stream of events, and for each event we pay a price. Death is the final price of life, but there are some prices that we pay that are even heavier than death.

Godfrey Stoddard paid one such price. He was a museum administrator, one of the most respected people in the San Francisco Art community. He collected prized works from around the world; not the sort of mundane scrawls so beloved by the public, but Dada and avant-garde works from the depth of the imagination; they weren't glorified photographs, they were true expressions of the human soul, and while the artists were virtually unknown, Godfrey had a good track record at finding who would be the most respected in the next generation of artists and displaying their works at an early stage in their careers.

There was one piece Godfrey particularly loved; it was a warped mirror; when you looked into it, your reflection took on twisted and monstrous forms. The artist who had created it was a gestalt, and gave his creations powers that they shouldn't have. Every time he looked into it, he saw a different monstrous form. Each time he looked into it, his fascination grew deeper. He put out a call for other Gestalt works of art, saying that he would pay any price for unique artistic experiences.

That was his downfall. One day, the ultimate Gestalt nihilist, the Blood Red King, entered his museum. He told Godfrey that he intended to show him an ultimate work of gestalt art. Godfrey knew exactly what he meant, and begged him not to do it. The King began to casually destroy all of the works in the museum.

When the King got to the mirror, Godfrey's pleading suddenly increased to the point where he got the King's attention again. The King agreed not to destroy the mirror; he would destroy him instead. Believing that he had a duty to Art that transcended life, Godfrey agreed. The Blood Red King transformed him into one of the most hideous beings ever to crawl on the planet -- the twisted, death-like thing known as Wormwood. Then the King finished destroying everything in the museum except the mirror and left, leaving behind a trail of blood.

Wormwood got off its feet, whimpering, its intellect barely functioning. It hobbled over through the sward of destruction to look into the mirror. Instead of seeing a monster in the reflection, it saw himself as it had been. Instinctively, it knew what this meant, and shattered the mirror, and the last vestiges of his sanity were smashed with it. Then Wormwood ran into the night. The King, overlooking the museum, beheld this scene

and laughed.

Wormwood was soon discovered by Dissenter, who decided that it would be a useful member of the Firestarters, despite his repulsive appearance and smell. Wormwood quickly bonded to Dissenter -- like some sort of pet.

Personality: Wormwood is a fawning, pathetic, nearly mindless creature that has lost nearly all of its humanity; even its cunning seems more animalistic than human. It has a good memory for past wrongs, and a vicious streak against former opponents. It is eager to please both Dissenter and Apparition. It doesn't really like the other Firestarters, and occasionally will arrange it so its area effect attack "accidentally" gets Gordion or Crimson Commander or Flayer. Wormwood does have a sneaky streak.

Wormwood is intended to be a tragic, if disgusting character. His origin, like Apparition's, is a setup to demonstrate just how nasty the Blood Red King can be -- if you intend to make the BRK a major villain of the campaign, the Firestarters provide an opportunity for foreshadowing.

Powers/Tactics: Wormwood is a chain gestalt of a particularly disgusting and destructive nature. Its touch can cause the molecular bond of inorganic material to decay, or create cellular instability in organic material. Wormwood's horrible smell makes him an extremely unpopular target with hand-to-hand combatants. At the GM's option, any penalties suffered by being in close proximity to Wormwood should be ignored by undead opponents, or anyone who's spent a lot of time around corpses.

Wormwood has a little bit of tactical sense. If there are a large number of targets; it'll use its area effect attack; if there is a single target, it'll use its drain attack and try to get to close range. Wormwood will duck for cover against ranged attackers.

Campaign Use: Wormwood is intended to be a tragic, if disgusting character. His origin, like Apparition's, is a setup to demonstrate just how nasty the Blood Red King can be -- if you intend to make the BRK a major villain of the campaign, the Firestarters provide an opportunity for foreshadowing.

Appearance: Wormwood is a shrunken, hunchbacked thing that looks like a cross between a living human, a rotting monster, and a maggot ridden corpse. It is about 5'4" tall, and weighs about 110 lbs; the skin color varies in different disgusting shades. Wormwood is completely hairless. It speaks in an unintelligible drooling rasp, and is surrounded by an extremely strong corpse-like smell.

SOLO VILLAINS

THE ANTI-AMERICAN POWER LEVEL 12 GESTALT ENEMY OF AMERICA

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+9	+6	+8	+3	+3	+7
28	22	26	16	16	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+14	+11	+8	+8

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+12), Bluff 6 (+13), Craft (electronics) 6 (+9), Diplomacy 6 (+13), Disguise 6 (+13), Knowledge (history) 8 (+11), Knowledge (streetwise) 6 (+9), Notice 6 (+9), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Sleight of Hand 6 (+12), Stealth 6 (+12)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Focus 4 (melee), Dodge Focus 2, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Stunning Attack, Teamwork 2

Powers: **Blast 9** ("The Amerikiller" mental rifle construct; Autofire 2, Penetrating; Accurate 3) **Gestalt Immortality** (Regeneration 9 [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection; Not if America conquers the world)]), **Leap 3**, **Mental Transform 10** (patriot to anti-patriot; Burst Area; Alternate Powers: **Ignite 10** [flag burner; Limited: Only affects U.S. flags and those wearing symbols of U.S. patriotism], **Mind Control 12** [compel treason; One command only – "go out and betray your country; Mental Link; Power loss when used on anyone other than American citizens, -1 pt], **Mind Control 12** [compel apathy; Burst Area; Sense-Dependent (hearing), Touch Range], **Teleport 8** [Limited: Only to a spot within 6 feet of an unpatriotic American]), **Mind Shield 8** (Limited: Only against commands from Mind Control that would benefit America), **Protection 6** (Impervious), **Speed 1**, **Super Senses 10** (detect Americans who hate their country [acute, accurate, analytical, extended 5, radius]), **Super Strength 3**

Combat: Attack +12 (blast), +10 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +22, Damage +9 (blast), +9 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -10, Initiative +10

Abilities 72 + Skills 17 (68 ranks) + Feats 17 + Powers 136 + Combat 24+ Saves 10 = **276 Total**

Actual Name: Not Applicable
Occupation: Supervillain
Legal Status: American
Gestalt Type: Pure (1989 wave)
Goal: Destroy American Symbols
Power Level: World-Beater
Height: 6'3" (191 cm)
Weight: 233 lbs. (106 kg)
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: Philadelphia, PA.
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: None
Known Relatives: None



Jason
Reyes
06.

Background: He was almost Public Enemy Number One, just for saying things that the people didn't like. Simple stupid things. The Anti-American was not born from America's better instincts, but rather, out of a knee-jerk reaction to its politics, peoples, and symbols. Of course, the first person he gravitated towards was America Man. The battles between the two of them were the stuff of legend: or perhaps more appropriately,

a cartoon where the cat and mouse were played by a couple of big guys in spandex. There was both comedy and poetry to their violence.

As the years passed, America Man slowly gravitated toward a less cornball demeanor than his first appearances. However, people didn't notice a similar transformation taking place in the anti-American at the same time. He became less

ANTI-AMERICAN SCENARIO HOOKS

Never Stop Thinking Of Ways To Hurt This Country...

A thinktank is holding a local seminar entitled: "How to destroy America". While it's billed as a "brainstorm to identify and prevent the upcoming apocalypse", what it really is a brainstorming session to come up with the Anti-American's next master plan. Stop it before the geniuses come up with a fool-proof plan that fits the Anti-American's modus operandi.

Revenge is a Dish Best Served Petty

In order to lure America Man out of hiding, the Anti-American is brainwashing college athletes that physically resemble America Man, forcing them to put on an America Man costume, and then humiliating these "America Men" in highly public fights. Perhaps a superhero should don the costume and give him a surprise.

Peaceful Resistance:

The Anti-American moves to Arabia and stirs up peaceful opposition to America. Local sheiks and troops, reacting to his propaganda, shut down key oil facilities. It's all peaceful — but peace is less important than preventing gas lines. Stop him.

interested in harming symbols and more interested in seeing people suffer. He wanted people to get angry, but they snickered at him behind his back and called him names: "dork", "moron", "loser", "lameass" — you know the names.

One day, while he was performing a bank robbery and waited impatiently for a superhero to show up and try to stop him, he went into a screed about how the heroes didn't care anymore. That's when the hostages started laughing at him. One of them even had the nerve to call his robberies "a disguised attempt to seduce superheroes, just to cover up his sexual inadequacies. The Anti-American got so angry that a gun suddenly appeared in his hand and before he knew it, he had shot every last hostage dead.

No one was laughing now.

The Anti-American went on a killing spree, gunning down patriotic assemblies and other gatherings of worthy citizens. He murdered the young son of Gary "The Physique" Corbin, although that was an accident. The killing spree brought Columbia, America Man, and the Titan together for the first and only time in their careers. The Anti-American stole a nuke and was about to detonate it on Washington, when the unbeatable alliance came crashing through. The Anti-American was beaten to a pulp by Rex and the Titan, and America Man took his "Amerikiller" rifle away from gun out of his hands and held it against his temple.

"You've become a mad dog, AA," America Man asked. "What happened?"

"You didn't come," the Anti-American answered.

"I can't be everywhere," America Man replied.

"You used to be there all the time."

"I guess we're not in synch anymore," America Man said. "And nothing makes me happier. I've grown up, AA, But you've gotten smaller." He threw the rifle to Liberator. "Have a nice life, fella."

The Anti-American vowed he'd kill America Man next time they met. He even did the one thing that most supervillains vow they'd never do: team with the Blood Red King. He was the King's secret partner in the events of Red August, luring Golden Gladiator to the King to be transformed into his cat's-paw. He was supposed to be a distraction for America Man, to bring him to a deathtrap at the top of the Empire State Building while the King's plan was entering the endgame. But America Man didn't show. After the patriot paladin stopped Red August, the King went to the Empire State building and pushed the Anti-American to the ground out of sheer spite.

The villain didn't die, but he went into a coma for ten years. Simultaneously, America Man walked into the sunset and hasn't been seen since. Some speculated that the two events were linked. And when the Anti-American recently awoke, some speculated that was linked to America Man, too.

However, the Anti-American awoke as a

**"SO GOD BLESSES AMERICA?
THEN WHY DOES HE KEEP ME
AROUND, YOU JINGO SPITTING,
BUFFOON??"**

changed man. He still hated the United States with every fiber of his being, but one question gnawed at him that he hadn't considered before: why? Why should he hate the United States, why should he pour invective

on its history and character, while excusing his own actions?

Now that he's out of his coma, the Anti-American has gone back to a career as a criminal. It's the only life he knows, it's what he's wired for. However, he's just going through the motions. Inside, he's not the same man that he once was, and undoubtedly those changes will play a big difference in the days to come.

Personality: The Anti-American combines the worst of all varieties of anti-American sentiment: knee-jerk hostility, self-righteous screeds, and acts of random violence. He has contempt for all corners of American thought. No one takes his views seriously. His goal is to destroy America's most cherished institutions and discredit America's most celebrated heroes, to demoralize the nation and ultimately watch it fall apart. However, he's recently begun to question both his goals and his methods. He's also come to realize those grandiose gestures against American symbols has only served to galvanize the people's resistance. Where he goes from here is anyone's guess.

Powers/Tactics: The Anti-American's powers are a reaction to American patriotism, particularly patriotism of the most knee-jerk sort. His powers involve making people feel bad about their country and burning symbols. As he matures, new powers emerge (the "Amerikiller" rifle being one example of such a power).

One thing that is already becoming apparent is that he's getting a lot sneakier. He always had a certain number of stealth skills, but he rarely used them. Now he infiltrates buildings when he once would have just kicked down the front door,

One thing he's still fond of is an unfair fight. Getting into a fight with him is an invitation for low blows and eye gouges. As Rex once said: "I was never more glad to be wearing a cup than I was against this guy."

Campaign Use: The Anti-American is an oddity that's sometimes very hard to play: the supervillain who's seen as so cheesy you can't take him seriously — but who's learned from his past and is making a paradigm shift to a more disturbing style. (Not that he still won't pause to burn a flag or two, however for the role of "cheesy master villain", use Armageddo.)

Appearance: Despite the ugliness of his cause, the Anti-American is quite tall and handsome, a 6'3" tall Caucasian male with a chiseled face, magnificent physique, and wavy brown hair. His costume is a black and white version of a patriotic American costume, overlaid with a vicious-looking eagle on his chest.

ARMAGEDDO

GESTALT OF SILVER AGE SUPERVILLAINS!

POWER LEVEL 13+

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+7	+10	+0	-1	+9
30	25	30	10	8	28

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+16	+13	+11	+12

Skills: Bluff 8 (+17), Diplomacy 8 (+17), Knowledge (history) 4 (+4)

Powers: **Absorption 6** ("My Power Incarnate is more Incarnate than yours, Cretin!" goes to healing himself; Both Types, Energy Storage), **Drain Physical Traits 9** (all at once; "Megalon Radiation Burst;" Area Burst, Normal Range; Alternate Powers: **Blast 13** ["Nefarion Radiation Blast;" Penetrating; Affects Insubstantial], **Blast 13** ["Mega-Isotopium Carnage Blast!" Area Explosion]), **Enhanced Feat 8** ("No One Can Drawbacks: Vulnerability (lead-based attacks; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2) Comprehend My Incredible Intellect, Fool!" Luck 8), **Flight 7** ("Witness the Marvel of Armageddo in Flight!"), **Insubstantial 4** ("I can become Raw Radiation, Stuff of the Universe!"), **Sensory Shield 5** (all), **Super Senses 6** (UV vision, x-ray vision, radio), **Super Strength 4**, **Variable Power 10** ("Who Am I This Week?" Limited: Only changes between appearances, when he changes identities/motifs)

Combat: Attack +13, Grapple +27, Damage +13 (blast), +10 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback+11, Initiative +7

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (lead-based attacks; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 71 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Powers 219 + Combat 40 + Saves 20 – Drawbacks 2= **353 Total**

Note: Armageddo's Variable Power may, at the GM's discretion, be used to emulate new traits or enhance existing traits in such a way as to bump his PL above his standard PL 13.

Actual Name: Not Applicable

Occupation: Supervillain

Legal Status: American

Gestalt Type: Pure (1989 wave)

Goal: Destroy American Symbols

Power Level: World-Beater

Height: 6'3" (191 cm)

Weight: 233 lbs. (106 kg)

Hair Color: Dark Brown

Eye Color: Green

Birthplace: Philadelphia. PA.

Current Residence: Mobile

Group Affiliations: None

Known Relatives: None



Background: Someone was bound to draw this silliest and cheesiest of all Gestalts. But why'd it have to be Carl?

Carl Houstead was an ordinary history student. He earned his Bachelor's degree at the University of Wisconsin, but when he was working on his Master's, he burned himself out. Every effort he made to continue his studies drove him deeper and deeper into a nervous breakdown.

In the end, Carl had to be committed to a mental institution for treatment. He still refused to quit, forcing himself to read history books, planning his master's thesis - "great villains in history, and why we dishonor them". He became obsessed with understanding them. When gestalts emerged, he began reading comic books, looking for a link between mythical villains and the dastards of real life.

During his treatment, there was a gestalt wave, and Carl

finally understood. He knew that villains were the result of two factors: fear, and power. Mankind needed to label their fears, and needed vessels into which to place their respect for people whose desire for power was unquenchable.

"YOU INSOLENT WORMS, YOU PATHETIC CRETINS, HOW DARE YOU DEFEY THE OVERLORD OF THIS PALTRY PLANET, THE AWESOME ARMAGEDDO! FEEL MY POWER AND WEEP, FOOLS! AND TAKE ONE MORE STEP, AND I'LL DROP THESE PUPPIES INTO THIS VAT OF POWERFUL PUPPY-KILLING SULFURIC ACID. BWA-HA-HA-HA!"

ARMAGEDDO SCENARIO HOOKS

Armageddo Asylum

Armageddo has been locked up in an asylum, but unfortunately he's switched into the persona of Mr. Insidion, and he's decided to mutate (i.e. turn into chain gestalts) the other patients into supervillains. He calls it the perfect therapy; what better way for a person with "issues" to work out their problems by helping him take over the world!

My Newest Master Plan, Number 34

Armageddo heads to dairy country, to give a low dosage of radiation to many of the nation's milk cows and render their milk unusable unless "they" (he's not sure who, probably the government) pay him ten billion dollars. Unfortunately, this plan, though silly, has the potential to cause serious damage. Stop him.

Hey! Quit That!

Just prior to Deregulator attacks on government targets, Armageddo appears in the guise of the Atomic Anti-Patriot and softens them up. Clearly the Deregs have somehow tricked Armageddo into doing their dirty work, and it's making them a much more effective unit. Break up this alliance.

Armed with that revelation, Carl was transformed. He had power. He was the Armageddon villain, Armageddo, and he would do what the great villains of human history: Nero, Genghis Khan, Attila, and Ken Starr failed to do. He would be the last villain humanity ever needed, because he would be the one who would obtain that unobtainable dream of supervillainy – world conquest.

Houstead designed a costume and thus a villain was born. Armageddo began to commit some ridiculous "nefarious deeds", in the belief that if he did enough of them, he would rule the world. Naturally, Armageddo has not come close to his goal (or even in succeeding at any of his plots). His master plans have included kidnapping President Clinton's cat Socks (to protest "the ban on supervillains in the military"); holding Congress as hostages in an attempt to pass "The Americans With Moral Disabilities Act"; kidnapping the cast of successful shows to protest the cancellation of some of the worst FOX and UPN sitcoms ("How can we lower the common denominator without the help of bad TV! Work with me!"), kidnapping O.J. Simpson and putting him on trial (so the O.J. Simpson case would no longer interrupt his favorite programs) and christening the "guilty" Simpson as the supervillain Black Slasher, and robbing the Smithsonian of its treasures and laying them on the doorstep of his idol, William Shatner.

He has only proven a major threat on one occasion: during the so-called "Armageddo Armageddon". Adopting the mad scientist persona of "the Bachelor", the maniacal villain managed to unlock the Ar'Huriti gene that was dormant in a group of rogue Ar'Turodain soldiers, giving Armageddo a small army of super-soldiers with which to plot world conquest! However, as the Hollywood Knights, the ATF, Major Korgun and Columbia battled his invincible army, Saga! discovered that Armageddo was really using a time travel machine to send an ancient Ar'Huriti warrior's gene sequence forward in time and merge it with a compatible host. Once Saga! destroyed the temporal genetic transposer, the powers faded away. Armageddo suffered a bump on the head during the conflict (courtesy of debris that fell on the villain's head when Saga! pushed a shiny red self-destruct button) which induced a case of amnesia of daytime soap proportions. Even Labyrinth couldn't uncover any memories that might instruct others on how to build the device,

Personality: Can you say megalomaniac? Comic book lunatic megalomaniac? A parody of a comic book lunatic megalomaniac?

Actually, Armageddo is a little more complicated than that. He has something of a multiple

personality disorder, becoming new individuals and new criminals whenever he is defeated. When Armageddo is defeated, he may become the brooding Atomic Terror, when the Atomic Terror is defeated, he may become King Kronos (the Nuclear Overlord of Crime), Mr. Insidion ("the Most Despicable Man on Earth"), Dim Jung (Radioactive Ninja and former wide receiver for the BC Lions of the CFL), and so on. Each of these personalities will likely differ in style, although Armageddo's goal of world conquest will not change.

Powers/Tactics: In addition to his superhuman stats, Armageddo has radiation inspired powers that allow him to project blasts of varying capabilities. Armageddo's tactics are to fly around, weaken his opponents with his area of effect and explosion attacks, and then use his major beam weapon to mop up the survivors.

Armageddo changes personality, and his powers evolve too (the "who am I this week" variable pool enables this). When he adopts a mad scientist persona like Dr. Megalon, he's suddenly able to use that pool to build fantastic devices. When he becomes Mr. Insidion, that pool becomes the vehicle by which he makes chain gestalts. When he becomes Dim Jung, the pool becomes invisibility and a hand to hand attack with extra knockback that looks like a wild martial arts attack.

Campaign Use: Okay, Armageddo's the campaign's comedy relief nutcase villain, that much is obvious. When you want things to get a little (okay, a lot) silly, that's when the green spiky mask comes on, and Armageddo takes to the sky.

However, unlike other comic relief villains, Armageddo is also a live hand grenade waiting to go off. If a player is clever, he can usually defeat Armageddo without even having to throw a punch, just by simple trickery. If he's sloppy, Armageddo has the potential to cause major damage. On the other hand, unless Armageddo grows a psycho-killer personality, this will rarely be much of a problem; his standard way of handling his enemies are to show up, issue a vague threat about how he'll leave you twisting in the wind and watch you suffer, give a melodramatic laugh, throw you in an easily escapable deathtrap and leave.

Appearance: Armageddo wears a ridiculous looking green spiky costume with a black mask and cape; it resembles the costume worn by a villain in a Flash Gordon serial. He is in his mid-30s; out of costume he has a modest athletic build, average looks, and black hair and green eyes.

THE BLOOD RED KING

GESTALT OF MISERY AND HUMAN SUFFERING

POWER LEVEL 20

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+7	+4	+10	+7	+7	+5
25	18	30	25	25	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+15	+10	+12	+15

Skills: Bluff 6 (+11), Diplomacy 5 (+10), Intimidate 13 (+18), Knowledge (arcane lore) 8 (+15), Knowledge (behavioral science) 13 (+18), Notice 6 (+13), Sense Motive 13 (+20)

Feats: Connected, Eidetic Memory, Fascinate (Intimidate), Fearsome Presence 10

Powers: **Absorption 5** (Both Types; Limited: Only versus lethal damage), **Blast 20** (cause bleeding; Burst Area, No Saving Throw, Perception Range, Selective Attack; Indirect 3, Precise, Subtle 2; Alternate Powers: **Drain All Physical Traits at Once 20** [drain someone dry of blood; Normal Range], **Mental Attack 18** [attack the soul], **Mind Control 10** [command those ruled by fear; Area Burst, Selective Attack]), **Comprehend 3** (Languages; Power loss when used with anyone who has never known suffering, -1 pt), **Environmental Control 5** (aura of fear and madness; Distraction 2; variable descriptor), **Gestalt Immortality** (Regeneration 9 [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection; May only be killed permanently by a child)]), **Immovable 4**, **Immunity 110** (a nearly invulnerable evil; all physical and energy damage, Fortitude effects; Limited: ½ strength), **Insubstantial 4** (Transform self into cloud of bloody mist), **Shield 4** (Limited: Only versus those who are bleeding), **Super Senses 12** (detect bleeding target [acute, accurate, analytical, extended 2, radius], Postcognition, Time Sense), **Super Strength 1**, **Teleport 10** (form a trail of blood and then retake human form), **Transform 15** (human to monster; Continuous)

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple+14, Damage +20 (blast), +7 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -24, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Blast, Drain, and Mental Attack; versus targets with holiness powers or who have never sinned or who have been recently absolved of sin; -3 pts), Vulnerability (attacks from Holiness Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2), Vulnerability (attacks from children; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 83+ Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 392 + Combat 24+ Saves 16– Drawbacks 7= **537 Total**

Actual Name: Not Applicable
Occupation: Archvillain, Would-be Prince of Hell
Legal Status: None. (Unsurprisingly, no country claims citizenship)
Gestalt Type: Pure (1989 wave)
Goal: Become King of Hell
Power Level: World-Beater
Height: 6'0" (183 cm)
Weight: 200 lbs. (91 kg)
Hair Color: Black
Eye Color: Red
Birthplace: Boston, MA.
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: Former Partner of the Headless Man
Known Relatives: None.

Note #1: The Blood Red King has a terrifying attack in his highly modified Blast 20, but he rarely ever uses it to its full capacity, generally "pulling his punch" to do less damage than he otherwise could. The reasoning is simple – corpses don't generally suffer, and suffering is what the King is all about. However, if forced, he is quite capable of killing pretty much anyone when he wants to so. There are several very good reasons he's the one entity on Earth that terrifies everyone else, and that's just one of them.

Note #2: The King occasionally shows up with horribly expensive plot devices operating in the background of some scheme or another. At the discretion of the GM, this may either be treated as exactly that, a plot device with no concern to point costs, or, if desired, he can instead treat the King as having Variable Power 20 with limitations based on how infrequently it gets used.

Note #3: As a guideline for when BRK makes monsters, treat his Transform attack as Shapeshift of the same rank used as an attack – in other words, the victim's existing points may be shifted around and an additional 75 points added in for good measure.

"UNDERSTAND THAT I AM COMING FOR ALL OF YOU, TO BUTCHER YOU LIKE RABBITS CAUGHT IN A TRAP."

BLOOD RED KING SCENARIO HOOKS

Accursed Are The Peacemakers

The King has gone on a killing spree, targeting people seeming at random. It turns out the King's managed to get hold of an oracle, and is determining the identities of people destined to bring peace and joy to the world, and is snuffing them out before they can make their positive contribution to human destiny. Stop him from doing this.

Blood of Evil

The Blood Red King goes to a blood bank. While it may sound like a preface for a joke – he makes a deposit, not a withdrawal. Did he do this just to cause a panic, or is there evil blood waiting for some poor sod to receive a transfusion and turn into a monster?

Collection

Some people collect stamps. The Blood Red King, however, has been liberating serial killers and war criminals from prisons around the world and is hiding them. What does the king plan to do with thirty mass murders and when will he release them? Or is this part of his plan to open the way into Hell?

Background: Some philosophical arguments may never be resolved. Is there a god? Does mankind possess an immortal soul? Will the Cubs ever win the Series?

However, there is one philosophical question that has been answered in the Gestalt age, an age-old question that has been laid to rest for all time.

That question concerns whether Evil truly exists. If mankind ever doubted it, it knows better now. The name of Evil is the Blood Red King.

The Blood Red King was born in the First Gestalt Wave of 1989, and was immediately consumed by his purpose. He attacked the national cathedral in Washington DC, and began a long spree of murders. Sometimes he was slain, and then returned from the dead. Once America Man made the mistake of sending him to prison, where the Blood Red King slaughtered every one: every guard, every inmate, every teacher and janitor, before he walked away.

Once he went to the White House spokesman and told him if he ever told a lie in public again, he'd die. At the press conference where the spokesman explained why he was quitting, he tried to avoid a question, and promptly bled to death.

He visited the house of a little old lady who owned fifty cats, and turned them into feral monsters. They ate her, and then attacked the other houses in the neighborhood, racking up a body-count of three pensioners, six children, and numerous pets.

Three times, he's kidnapped buses of school children, and stranded them on a desert island, to see if they'd reinvent William Golding's "Lord of the Flies."

He founded a cult which has targeted religious leaders and charities: in the United States alone, since 1996, they've been linked with thirty-six church burnings, the murder of over fifty reverends, pastors, bishops, rabbis, imams, and other church leaders, and the deaths of hundreds of worshippers. The King targets medium sized churches and charities; those that have a positive impact on the surrounding community are the most likely to be targeted. As one GTV commentator aptly put it: "the Blood Red King hasn't declared war on religion – he's declared war on kindness."

Shortly after his emergence, it became obvious that the Blood Red King was the embodiment of horror, champion of every emotion that sickens and terrifies people. He loves the classic tropes of horror literature, but combines them with less literary atrocities.

He is a Bogeyman for both adults and children; he exists to make people afraid, and the more fearless the person, the better he likes it. Sometimes, he'll embark on a grand scheme that results in hundreds of bloody deaths. Other times, he'll satisfy himself with a casual encounter that will destroy one person's life. The "quality" of the misery he spreads (particularly if it satisfies his twisted sense

of irony) is as important to him as the quantity.

As the years have passed, the King has honed his powers to frightening levels. He created monstrous servants to do his dirty work. A few rebelled against him: the vampire Night Huntsman was particularly troublesome. But all but a handful were faithful to his agenda. He was the Blood Red King. He was the Gestalt of Misery and Suffering. And he spread those qualities everywhere he went, through the cities and countryside of America, through China, and England, France, Palestine and Russia; he spread misery and despair, increasing in sadistic inventiveness and power. He acquired many names: Blutkoenig in Germany, King Blood in Japan, Kaalailm ("Black Ritual") in India, and others too terrible to mention.

Infamy isn't enough to sate the King. He harbors new ambitions; he desires power, and not just on a physical level - he craves metaphysical power. He became convinced that Hell could not just be created; it already existed, and he could find a way to enter it, and once he entered Hell, he would become its new King. By kidnapping oracles, he determined that Hell could be reached in Los Angeles. And so began a long series of battles to gain control of the city of Angels, a series of battles fought against the Hollywood Knights superhero team – although he still travels the world seeking new forms of misery and suffering.

Personality: Imagine a being that only lives to see other people bleed, for whom tears are laughter, and pain is joy, for whom the neuroses of modern life are a Gordian knot that must be quickly severed so one can wallow in the greater sufferings of the human experience.

A being who takes joy in using your dreams as a weapon against you. Someone who hangs people from the rope of their own pleasures.

A being who believes the Lord's greatest creation is Hell, whose his sole political ambition is to seize that burning damnation and claim it as his prize.

A being, a dark god, a Blood Red King.

He walks the stage of the world, that grandest of theaters, and says his lines in a voice so loud and so clear that none can fail to hear his words or mistake them for something else. He takes the comedy of the world and strips it of nuance and humor. He takes the tragedy of the world and rends it free of catharsis. He is as grand as a god and as grim as a demon, and rakes the skulls of human psychology with sharp red fingers.

He rarely addresses anyone directly, but holds a conversation as a series of pronouncements. That is the Blood Red King: the world is his kingdom, flesh and blood are his dominion, and the human soul his most cherished plaything.

Powers/Tactics: The Blood Red King's powers are based on the creation of misery and suffering. His Transform attack turns people into monsters. His Change Environment allows him to create a

wide variety of effects, from filling the area with evil laughter, to causing blood smears that appear everywhere. His attacks open wounds on the bodies of his targets. When he teleports, he transforms himself into a bloody trail that flows to a point and suddenly coagulates into his dark kingling form.

The King prefers to have superpowered minions on hand during a fight, and let them do his fighting for him. He prefers an easy massacre to a good fight. If forced to fight, he'll open wounds as quickly as possible, and try to get as many opponents bloody as possible. He'll also attempt to draw fire from attacks which do Lethal damage to himself.

The Blood Red King is the premier adversary on Gestalt-Earth; no single active entity rivals him in raw power and vile purposes. His attacks are obscenely powerful, and this is intentional - he's capable of killing an entire team of supers if they aren't careful. Heroes should keep this in mind before engaging him.

He's also, as far as everyone knows, indestructible. In 2001, in an unprecedented (and uncharacteristic) use of lethal force by the Titan, Trevor Griffin threw the Blood Red King into the sun. Six months later, the King was spotted back again on earth, the living defilement of both Man and Gestalt.

Campaign Use: The Blood Red King is meant

to be terrifying; horror is very hard to effectively do in supers game. He employs a lot of "GM permission required conventions" (one player who brought a long time, nearly invulnerable PC into a convention game against the BRK said he was the only villain who'd ever made that character bleed), but it's necessary in order to put fear into the hearts of players who may become complacent.

It's good for villains not to be pure evil, to have humanity in their background. That way, they contrast better with the Blood Red King, who is pure, unrelenting evil. The King is less a character and more a force of nature, and the interesting thing about BRK scenarios is not the PC's interaction with him on a personal level, it's a measure of the PC's resolve in the face of evil and tragedy.

Appearance: The Blood Red King appears to be a gaunt Caucasian gentleman in rich Victorian garb, a long red frock coat, tall (6'2"), dark-haired, with long sideburns. As Edge has put it "this guy out-Christopher Lee's Christopher Lee."

His face is covered in blood, as are his hands, and he always leaves a train of bloody footprints in his wake. If it were not for the blood, one might call him handsome in a severe way. His voice is deep and resonant, his laughter is harsh, and his tone is often imperious and slightly anachronistic.



HEL POWER LEVEL 12

GESTALT REINCARNATION OF THE NORSE DEATH GODDESS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+7	+6	+10	+2	+5	+5
25	22	30	14	20	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+15	+14	+8	+10

Skills: Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 7 (+9), Language 9 (Danish, English, Finnish, German, Latvian, Norwegian, Old Norse, Russian, Swedish), Notice 6 (+11), Sense Motive 6 (+11)

Feats: Attack Specialization 4 (touch), Equipment 5 (Nagelfar), Fearsome Presence 5

Powers: **Death Touch 8** (No Saving Throw; Power loss versus targets with any form of Immortality powers, -1 pt), **Drain Charisma 5** (linked to Death Touch), **Environmental Control 5** (aura of impending death; Distraction 2), **Force Field 8**, **Gestalt Immortality** (Regeneration 9 [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection; May only be killed permanently by Ragnarok or judgment of Odin)]), **Immunity 31** (Fortitude effects, Nagelfar's Dazzle effect), **Speed 5** (gliding on the ground as if it were ice), **Super Move 2** (Dimensional Move 2 [any Quasi-Asgard Dimension]), **Super Senses 3** (detect death [ranged, accurate]), **Super Strength 1**, **Transform 4** (removes fingernails from corpses)

Combat: Attack +14 (touch), +6 (other), Grapple +14, Damage +7 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -8, Initiative +6

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Summer Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2), Vulnerability (attacks from Life or Healing Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 62+ Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 113 + Combat 24 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 4= **233 Total**

Actual Name: Hel
Occupation: Death Goddess
Legal Status: Ruler of Niflheim
Gestalt Type: Pure (2001 wave)
Goal: Build Her Ship of the Dead
Power Level: Respected
Height: 5'11" (180 cm)
Weight: 130 lbs (60 kg)
Hair Color: Black/Corpse White
Eye Color: Blue/Empty Socket
Birthplace: Niflheim, The Gestalt Dimension
Current Residence: Niflheim, The Gestalt Dimension
Group Affiliations: Partner of the Living Gun, Ally of the Philosopher
Known Relatives: None (at least none active on Earth)



NAGELFAR VEHICLE

Str 75, Speed 5 (flight), TGH +14, SZ Colossal

Features: Dazzle 10 [Aura, Sustained, Alternate Save: WILL]

Cost: 5 Equipment Points

Background: Some Death Gestalts are merciful, even gentle creatures – and then there's Hel. Originally daughter of Loki, Norse Trickster God and father of many monsters, Hel was installed as the Queen of Niflheim, Lowest of the Nine Worlds, where she took those dead who were denied the glorious warrior afterlife of Valhalla. Hel used the fingernails of the dead as timber to build the ship Nagelfar, which would sail at Ragnarok.

But Ragnarok, despite many loud prophecies, did not come. Fewer and fewer people came before the great walls of Niflheim, or to grasp with frigid hands on the well of Hvergelmir, lowest point of the Nine Worlds. And as other god-Gestalts have noted, time became disjointed for her; the Nine Worlds broke apart in a way even Mimir did not foresee, and Hel broke with them.

Then she awoke in Midgard, a world that had become strange to the gods, but where life was plentiful and for a short while, Hel achieved bliss ending them. But Kinestar, a dark woman who reminded Hel of the gloomiest of the Aesir, opposed her and forced her to flee. It was obvious that she had much to learn about how time had weathered Midgard, but she would learn.

Hel made several alliances, including one with a man named Professor Beresford, the Philosopher, who dedicated his life to the possession of tomes of knowledge. The Philosopher spoke big words, but they did not prevent him from being captured by Columbia and placed in a heavenly prison – and that was no great matter for her. Death's Grim Mistress grasped Beresford's weapon, a flying pistol named The Living Gun, in her cold dead fingers, and foretold the weapon that it would be the first member of her true alliance, one destined to make the world as cold and as dead as her heart.

Personality: Hel is the cold, cruel, silent matriarch of death. She believes in the power of death and in its – and her – supremacy over all things. Other death Gestalts and divine Gestalts may be treated

**"WELCOME TO THE STRAW
DEATH, AND THE
UNENDING WINTER'S CHILL!"**

as equals, but other than that, people are either tools to be manipulated or toyed with. Some call it arrogance – she calls it being queen of death. She is reasonably polite with her allies, until

they're no longer of use to her (at which time she callously abandons them). Her coldness and regality provide a contrast with her current partner, the Living Gun.

Hel likes to target soldiers and other warriors with her death attack (as a way to spite the Valkyries who would normally take them to Valhalla), and (believe it or not) people with long fingernails. Her ancient covenant with Odin calls for her to provide provisions for those who die from disease or old age, so she tends to avoid attacking those targets.

Powers/Tactics: Hel's greatest power is her death touch, which subjects people to the effects of rapid aging.

Hel typically moves silently toward her foe (her teleport) and touches them; while receiving her death touch, the victim's face briefly has the same half-death/half-living appearance as Hel's.

Campaign Use: Hel and the Living Gun are provided to serve as the first two members of a GM constructed supervillain team that can challenge the PCs once they've hit the mid-high (PL 12) range. Hel will want the team to help with her pet project, and will be willing to help them attain (temporary) wealth and power in return. She's noticed that some of the gods and giants (i.e. superhumans) of the modern world are immune to her touch, and since it offends her sensibilities that creatures should be immune to her, she's willing to enter into alliances to get the job done.

Appearance: Hel is a tall woman, nearly six feet in height; her right side is that of a beautiful young woman, while her left side is that of a mummified corpse. She wears a gown which looks like a beautiful, brightly colored maiden's dress on the right side, and a worn, raven black dress on the left.

HEL SCENARIO HOOKS

Disorder In The Court

Tired of being bound by her ancient agreements with Odin, Hel is looking for a way to ensnare Odin in court. First she must find someone who is considered a legally binding proxy for the Lord of Carrion, then she has to find some court with the legal authority that's binding in all of the Seven Worlds. Somehow, the PCs get involved in all this.

Nail In The Coffin

Hel's figured out how to complete her ship of death; find a Gestalt who can trigger epidermal growth, force him to grow people's fingernails to an incredible length, and kill them. Stop her.

Suicide Ain't Painless

A dying billionaire wishes to be killed by Hel – but the goddess of death does not do suicides. Angered by her refusal, the billionaire is determined to get Hel's cooperation, even if it means he has to spend his entire fortune and kill hundreds of people to do it.

LIVING GUN SCENARIO HOOKS

Frame-Up

There's a spree of ordinary people shooting individuals at random. No, it's not mind control; it's the Living Gun jumping into people's hands and forcing them to pull the trigger so he can frame them for murder. ("Why? Because I'm a bad guy, señor!") The PCs are called in to figure out what's going on.

Run And Gun Offense

Pursued by the PCs, the Living Gun decides to hide in the worst place possible – a gun show!

Shotgun Wedding?

The Living Gun falls in love with a PC's weapon – such an exquisitely shaped barrel, such a beautiful chrome finish! But despite bringing her gold bullets, and taking out full-page ads in major gun magazines to proclaim his love – his beloved magazines to proclaim his love – his beloved weapon continues that unhealthy relationship with the superhero that uses it. There can only be room for one man for in her life, so that superhero must die!

"I AM ZEE LIVING GUN, SENOR. AND YOU ARE SOON TO BECOME ZEE NOT-SO-LIVING GESTALT, HEH HEH, HEH!"

THE LIVING GUN GESTALT OF GUNS

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+7	+6	+10	+2	+5	+5
25	22	30	14	20	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+8	--	+10	+5

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Sense Motive 6 (+6)

Feats: Attack Specialization 4 (pistols/self), Dodge Focus 6, Improved Aim, Improved Critical 3 (pistols), Improved Initiative, Precise Shot

Powers: Blast 9 (Penetrating), **Feature 1** (instant self-clean to a shiny polish), **Flight 3**, **Immunity 30** (Fortitude Effects), **Protection 8** (Impervious), **Shrinking 12** (diminutive; Continuous, Normal Movement, Normal Toughness; Permanent; Innate), **Super Senses 6** (detect guns [acute, analytical, extended 2, radius])

Combat: Attack +14 (pistols/self), +6 (other), Grapple -6* [to escape], Damage +9 (blast), +0 ("unarmed"), Defense +14* (+7 flatfooted), Knockback -8, Initiative +10 (*includes Size modifiers)

Drawbacks: Disabled (No arms or legs; com, maj, -4), Vulnerability (attacks from Anti-weaponry Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 9 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 16+ Powers 123 + Combat 24 + Saves 9– Drawbacks 6 = **180 Total**

Background: No one's quite sure why a 1911 .45 caliber Colt revolver would come to life, except for those four familiar words: "it's a Gestalt thing". The Living Gun likes to tell people that his owner was a bandit from Tijuana who was electrocuted on death row in a Texas prison at the moment of a Gestalt Wave. He's also claimed to be the weapon that a Russian Colonel used to assassinate a Chechen terrorist leader at the moment of a Gestalt Wave, and the gun bought by the head of the NRA at the moment of a Gestalt Wave.

In short, the Living Gun has no idea how he came to life, and doesn't particularly care. He just like to talk, crack stupid puns (most of them gun related) and shoot things, in that order.

The Living Gun was active in the American Southwest for close to six years, performing petty robberies (though without much luck in handling the loot). Occasionally he'd pose as a discarded gun, allow himself to be used by a criminal lowlife, then rob him when he got the drop on

him. But once again, it was one thing to rob someone, quite another to actually enjoy the benefits. On the other hand, shooting people made the perfect antidote to its angst. The Living Gun's reputation actually reached a point where a prominent NRA rep admitted: "Okay that gun does kill people!"

Eventually the Living Gun came into the possession of Professor Beresford, a supervillain who called himself

the Philosopher. The Philosopher teamed for awhile with Hel, and after Beresford was captured, The Living Gun attached itself to Hel. He's looking forward to being a member of Hel's proposed villain team – provided he has someone who can carry his share of the loot.

Personality: One word best describes the Living Gun—manic. He never stops moving or talking. And although his mannerisms are cartoony and comical, his actions aren't – the Living Gun is as much a hardened killer as any Gestalt.

The Living Gun has one serious weakness; it has an almost cartoon-intensity romantic fixation with other weapons. If someone tries to pull a gun on him, and the weapon is nicely polished, the Living Gun may attempt to seduce it; fly over to it, nuzzle its muzzle, say mushy and slightly dirty things to it, threaten to kill someone unless they deliver it flowers, etc. Likewise, really big weapons may be treated as rival male weapons ("You may be a big tough magnum .50 caliber, señor, but you do not frighten me!") to be disposed of with its rapier sharp wit and even pointier bullets.

Campaign Use: On its own, the Living Gun is way over-the-top, a character that'd be more suited to a superhero parody game than a serious campaign. However if his manic nature is contrasted with Hel's grim seriousness, then he becomes a character who can fit the tone of a more serious campaign. Likewise, Hel's grim nature becomes even more pronounced alongside the Living Gun.

For a more serious tone, cut the cheezy accent and give the Living Gun telepathic and mind control powers to get people to pick him up and shoot him. Change his flight to teleportation — he always seems to appear near a place where some mentally unstable person can pick him up.

Appearance: The Living Gun appears to be a 1911 Colt .45 revolver with a sleek black and silver finish. It talks with an embarrassingly cheezy Mexican accent.

THE MAGICIAN

GESTALT OF STAGE MAGIC

POWER LEVEL 13

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+5	+4	+5	+4	+4	+5
20	18	20	18	18	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+9/+5*	+8	+8	+13

*w/o Force Field

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Bluff 8 (+13), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Disable Device 8 (+12), Disguise 12 (+17), Notice 8 (+12), Perform (acting) 8 (+13), Profession (stage magician) 8 (+13), Sense Motive 8 (+13), Sleight of Hand 12 (+16)

Feats: Benefit (federal police powers), Connected, Luck 4

Powers: ESP 9 (sight and hearing; Distracting), **Flight 5** (dynamic; Alternate Power: **Telekinesis 4** [accurate, dynamic]), **Force Field 4** ("aura of confidence;" Limited: requires his magician garb), **Immunity 1** (suffocation [Sustained]), **Illusion 13** (all senses; Selective Attack; Alternate Powers: **Concealment 10** [all senses], **Telepathy 13**)

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple+10, Damage + 5 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -5, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (Anyone who sees through his illusions and tricks; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 54 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 101 + Combat 22 + Saves 16 – Drawbacks 2 = **218 Total**

"AND FOR MY NEXT TRICK... A SUPERHERO DIES!"

Actual Name: Hel
Occupation: Death Goddess
Legal Status: Ruler of Niflheim
Gestalt Type: Pure (2001 wave)
Goal: Build Her Ship of the Dead
Power Level: Respected
Height: 5'11" (180 cm)
Weight: 130 lbs (60 kg)
Hair Color: Black/Corpse White
Eye Color: Blue/Empty Socket
Birthplace: Niflheim, The Gestalt Dimension
Current Residence: Niflheim, The Gestalt Dimension
Group Affiliations: Partner of the Living Gun, Ally of the Philosopher
Known Relatives: None (at least none active on Earth)



Background: Avram Wolchek grew up in a carnival. His father was a sideshow magician, and his father before him had been a magician. Doing magical tricks was in his blood. Pulling the wool over people's eyes, using them as "marks", and feeling superior to them – well, that was also in his blood.

In 1994, during the Second Gestalt Wave, Avram developed gestalt powers, linked to "magic". When he was performing, he really could do magic, or so it seemed. His illusions were incredible.

However, as Avram discovered what he could do, his darker nature was unleashed. He did tricks and illusions that horrified and humiliated his audiences. He used his magic act to belittle people. Perhaps if he had incorporated more of a sense of humor about it, it might still have been a success.

But there was something about revealing people's innermost secrets to a huge audience that made Avram very unpopular. The circus tried to fire him. Avram used his telepathy powers to blackmail the circus owners, but eventually went too far. Avram learned that they planned to turn him over to the authorities. He arranged for an accident to happen to the circus owners, and disappeared into the night.

Avram used his illusion powers to commit minor robberies, then he laid low and considered his options. He could continue to get money directly, using his powers to commit crimes as a common thief, but risked capture by superheroes. He certainly could not go it alone. Fortunately, his illusionary powers had brought him to the attention of the Council of Mind, and Influence. Influence was quite pleased with the way

THE MAGICIAN SCENARIO HOOKS

Greatest of All Time

Mandragora the Great, a new stage magician who's taking the country by storm, claims to be the greatest stage magician in the world. Avram really doesn't care about the claim — but the heroes might expect him to, and they might try to use Mandragora's bluster to ensnare him. How can the Magician set it up so the PCs' own trap turns against them?

Brats All Folks!

Years ago, when the Magician was on the skids, he tried to rob a kid's birthday party. Now that kid is an obnoxious spoiled teenager and, in a fit of adolescent rebellion, he's trying to contact the Magician and present himself as his new assistant. Stop him.

House of Illusions

The Magician decides to gild the lily and train himself to become a master at effects wizardry. He hopes to build a safe house where he can combine his powers with state of the art special effects with his powers and lead any potential enemy to his doom.

A PC in his/her secret ID is taking a class with him.

that Avram Wolchek was using his powers; he would make psionics a force to be feared. Avram received instruction from Influence to befriend various New York supervillains (Energy Master and Despot) and manipulate them in ways Influence liked. Avram realized that Influence's enormous psionic power dwarfed his own. He didn't like that feeling. Avram gave into Influence without a fight.

Avram did make an alliance with Despot, Energy Master, and Jericho Bronze, forming a small villain quartet called the Blackguard. Within a year of their inception, Despot, Energy Master, and Jericho Bronze defected to the Tyranny League. Avram attempted to join, but Imperator wasn't impressed by his record and told him the door was closed, until such time as he considered expanding the membership, or until the Magician proved himself.

Avram was embittered by the decision, and in the months that followed, he found himself reduced to committing petty robberies. The nadir of his career came when he was captured by Starbird when robbing a children's birthday party. Yes, it was a birthday party for rich children — a senator's son, in fact — but it was still a humiliating effort.

Avram quickly escaped, but the course of his life stung him. He realized that he had gotten lazy. He had not been using his mental powers — his gifts — to their fullest potential, nor had he been developing his powers. He was determined that he would never be a joke again.

Avram went to Imperator and demanded to be made a member of the League. This time, Imperator was more impressed with Avram's fire, but had other plans for the young illusionist. Instead of becoming an overt member of the Tyranny League, he would be a covert operative. Computor forged a new identity for Wolchek, that of a government bureaucrat, recently transferred from a new department and jurisdiction. It would be up to Wolchek to guide his career to the upper echelons of power.

Wolchek would take any opportunity for respect that he could get and agreed to the assignment. When asked Wolchek what new name he wanted to use, Wolchek answered "Eric Weiss". This was a joke — Ehrich Weiss was Houdini's real name.

"Eric Weiss" used his powers to advance himself very quickly in the bureaucracy of United States law enforcement, while training his psionic powers with Despot, developing routines that pushed his illusionary powers to new and impressive levels. He also pushed himself physically, vastly improving his strength and endurance. He performed occasional crimes as the Magician; he told himself that he needed to test his powers and keep from getting soft; in truth, the deep cover operation bothered Avram and he felt a need to perform. Imperator (and his other master Influence, who approved of the cover assignment) were not particularly happy about this, but they understood the needs of a gestalt as much as anyone.

Three years later, Weiss's hard work and ma-

nipulations paid off. The ATF was putting together a team of superheroes, and Weiss managed to get himself appointed as team coordinator. For the Magician, this would be the greatest performance of them all, manipulating a team of government heroes so they would serve as his tools to power.

Weiss has reached a point where he's chafing under his masters' leash. He wants something better from life than serving either the Tyranny League or Influence. He wants to be the one in control. Unfortunately, his powers have plateaued. He figures the only way that he'll be able to wrest his freedom from the League or from Influence is to enter the Gestalt Dimension; if he were to develop his powers in direct contact with that place, he might find a way to boost them and never have to serve anyone again. The ATF superhero team is the Magician's means to that end.

Personality: Avram is a grandstanding show-off. His stage persona has become his off-stage personality; he is constantly performing for everyone, including himself. The most disturbing thing about Avram is his sadistic streak; he enjoys hurting and humiliating people, and getting a good laugh at someone else's expense. Avram is a bully, but an intellectual as opposed to a physical one.

As Eric Weiss, the Magician has gotten quite fond of his personal power; he likes being able to give orders and directives, and actually has a soft spot for the gestalts under his command. But Weiss is virtually incapable of self-sacrifice under any conditions, and the ATF team is no different. Avram is a calculating man with sociopathic tendencies, obsessed with personal power, and haunted by some of the failures of his past and the lack of respect he receives from the Gestalt community. It's a lack of respect that he intends to change.

The Magician sees himself as a trickster figure. He enjoys using an image of himself (sending it after scouting an area with clairvoyance) to meet with heroes and tempt them and goad them. The Magician is only beginning to explore what he can do to people through this form of manipulation, but he's learning the art of ulterior motives very quickly, and the art of directing heroes against potential rivals.

Powers/Tactics: The Magician has a gestalt bond with the Gestalt of Stage Magic. He lives to perform, and to find practical uses for his stage talent.

The Magician likes to use his Images power from a distance and manipulate the battlefield with minimal risk. Once he's made the improbable seem probable (i.e. people figure out about the illusions) he then uses telekinesis or (if he's had a chance to set traps); booby traps and other deceptions of his trade.

Appearance: The Magician is a tall man with a slim but wiry build, 6'2" and 200 lbs. He appears to be in his late 20s to early 30s (his Eric Weiss identity looks older and has greying hair). He wears a dark suit that accentuates his slim physique, and sometimes wears a top hat that accentuates his height. He has jet black hair, and (in Magician guise) a thin mustache and a goatee. His voice is a confident tenor.

MALIGNO

GESTALT OF IMPS AND DEVIL'S BARGAINS

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+0	+3	+4	+0	+4	+5
10	16	18	10	18	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+13	+10	+10	+13

Skills: Bluff 8 (+13), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Sense Motive 8 (+13), Stealth 8 (+11), Sleight of Hand 8 (+11)

Feats: Distract (Bluff), Fascinate (Bluff), Luck 3, Speed Reading

Powers: **Additional Limb 1** (tail), **Concealment 10** (all senses), **Flight 3**, **Gestalt Immortality (Regeneration 9** [Resurrection 1 per action (True Resurrection)]), **Immunity 80** (all physical and energy damage; Limited: ½ strength), **Protection 9** (Power loss: when tricked into doing something dangerous to himself, -1 pt), **Shapeshift 5**, **Shrinking 8** (tiny; Continuous, Normal Traits; Permanent; innate), **Super Move 1** ("Now the joke's on you;" Dimensional Move – The Grey Dimension, "Land of No Fun;" Attack, Perception Range, Reaction; Limited: Only versus those who successfully play jokes on Maligno; Progression 10 [mass]), **Super Senses 5** (time sense), **Transform 15** ("Maligno's end of the bargain;" human to superhuman; Continuous; Alternate Powers: **Illusion 12** [all senses], **Mind Control 12** [One Command – "Be Bad!"], **Transform 10** [any inanimate object into a dangerous and damaging version of itself])

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple+1*, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +9* (+ 7 flatfooted), Knockback -7, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Politeness Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 32 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 261 + Combat 20 + Saves 22 – Drawbacks 2 = **349 Total**

Actual Name: Maligno
Occupation: Prankster
Legal Status: Citizen of the Grey Dimension
Gestalt Type: Pure (1996 wave)
Power Level: World-Beater
Height: 1'4" (40 cm.)
Weight: 35 lbs. (16 kg)
Hair Color: Green
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: The Grey Dimension, the Gestalt Dimension
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: None.
Known Relatives: None.

"SURE, SISTER, YOU WANT FLYING NUNS? YOU GOT 'EM! (THIS IS GONNA BE MY BEST STUNT EVER!)"



MALIGNO SCENARIO HOOKS

Maligno, Bastion of Polite Society

A bored socialite decides to keep Maligno as a pet at the most exclusive gala at the season. Word of this leaks out to the heroes, but the matron's above the law in her home town. Yet the amount of fun that Maligno could wreak at such an event is astronomical. Stop him.

No Yards on the Play

A team of All-Star football players from the 1970s wants to kick the butts of a modern team on the gridiron. Enter Maligno, who can make that happen. However if they win the game, they become Maligno's slaves. The only way for them to avoid that fate is for the team to lose.

The Day Maligno Cried

Maligno feels homesick and he doesn't understand why — he hates his home in the Grey Dimension, but now he feels a longing to return. Maligno turns to his old enemies (you), offering to give up mischief for one whole year if you can solve the mystery of his "feelings".

Background: Gestalt, geschmalt. All Maligno knows is that he was born in the Grey Dimension "The Land of No Fun", and it really, really sucks there. Maligno would have toiled away there for the rest of time except that a little boy named Jeffrey Moore wanted his sister dead, and was willing to do anything to do it, so he performed a magic ritual to summon Maligno. He thought Maligno was only a character in a story, but Jeffrey's desire made him very real. Maligno, the imp whose role in life is to make bargains with evil children (and then tormenting them once the devil's pact has been fulfilled) was very real, as was the ensuing tragedy.

For a years after the Moore's family's death, Maligno wandered the world, making deals with lying, soulless hateful children, and then leading them to their destruction once the bargain was over. However, in one critical case, the Journeyman intervened and stopped him. Maligno was furious — and intrigued. Surely there had to be more to life than tormenting soulless brats? The Journeyman opened up a world of new possibilities: what if Maligno decided to put the child torment crap on hold, and became an honest to goodness, no holds barred costumed bad guy? He'd have a lot more fun!

So Maligno decided to take off the kid gloves and torment everyone. He took particular delight in causing disasters — the firemen who set fires, the air traffic controllers who directed planes into having head-on collisions. He'd have had even more fun, except for all those superheroes kept showing up and spoiling everything before people could really party. And worse, there were a few of them, like Rex, who were clever enough to find ways to make deals with him and then screw things over so that he ended up in Grey Dimension. Fortunately his rep had gotten around, and every time he ended back up in the Land of No Fun, some idiotic kid would summon him and make a new bargain, and Maligno would be back in the world, baby!

Personality: Maligno is an evil, evil, evil little pest. Self-centered, narcissistic, and a bit of a buffoon, Maligno's lives to cause good people to go bad. — it's his *joie de decieve*. He's lecherous, rude, and if he were a movie character, he'd be played by Danny DeVito at his obnoxious worst. Although, like other fairy tale imps, he feels compelled to follow an agreement to the bitter end, so he'll never betray a bargain (though he'll twist the hell out of it).

Maligno has two major weaknesses. First, he hates short jokes, Second, he loves fine cigars. It's

easy to manipulate him into cutting a favorable deal when you wave a fine Cuban under his nose.

Powers/Tactics: Maligno is a World-Beater because superheroes shouldn't be fighting with him. He's a Trickster villain, and should be approached on that level. Maligno never stays and fights — instead, he causes trouble, goes invisible and cackles, and when the heroes eventually find him, he offers to reverse what he's caused only if the heroes will agree to a battle of wits and sign a contract guaranteeing that they become his slaves if they lose! Fortunately, the only supers who've ever lost have been freed from slavery by other supers.

Maligno sometimes has superhuman bodyguards (guys whom he's tricked into making a bargain) to protect him, for those GMs who want to add some combat to a Maligno scenario.

Several of his powers require a little additional explanation. His shapechange isn't an effective disguise; it's a comedy power that lets him do rude and clever things. His extra-dimensional movement is only when he's been tricked: he'll usually vanish one body part at a time until they all disappear, leaving behind a rant for a few seconds (which includes a lot of cartoon swearing) before he fades back to the Grey Dimension.

Note: As a guideline for when Maligno makes supermen, treat his Transform as Shape-shift of the same rank used as an "attack" — in other words, the target's existing points may be shifted around and an additional 75 points added in for good measure.

Campaign Use: Maligno is a villain for players who like to hoist the bad guys on their own petard. As he likes to use his powers to cause mobs of people to do bad things, Maligno is often an excuse to run "how do we stop a disaster" or "how do we stop a lot of people without hurting them" scenarios.

Any reduction in Maligno's power level will encourage the players to take the fight to him directly and not role-play with him, so don't reduce his powers, he needs his level of invulnerability to make his schtick work in a world of superheroes.

If you're hunted by Maligno, he thinks you're a "knob" whom he can trick into doing his dirty work.

Appearance: Maligno appears to be a very short green skinned man with green horns jutting out of his forehead and a prehensile tail. He wears an ugly zoot suit and a derby with a pattern that matches his suit, (or a pointy cap with a skull insignia when he *really* wants to be bad.)

POWERJACK

GESTALT OF PRIDE AND ENVY

POWER LEVEL 15

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+15	+6	+15	+2	+2	+7
49	22	40	14	14	24

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+15	+15	+9	+10

Skills: Bluff 8 (+15), Diplomacy 8 (+15), Handle Animals 8 (+15), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Stealth 4 (+10)

Feats: Attack Specialization 4 (unarmed), Attractive, Connected, Benefit 5 (wealth 5), Improved Initiative, Minions 8 (60, as Criminal archetype in core M&M rules)

Powers: **Illusion 8** (sight; Aura, Sustained; Limited: Only vs mental attempts to read his thoughts/memories, Phantasm), **Immovable 6**, **Immunity 1** (age [1/2 strength]), **Impervious on Toughness 10**, **Leap 5**, **Morph 5** [humans], **Strike 10** (Area Line, Penetrating; mighty [+15 damage with modifiers combined]; Alternate Powers: **Enhanced Feat 8** [Fearsome Presence 8], **Reflective on Toughness 10**, **Snare 14** [Full Round Action, Limited: Only up to Toughness of material in use, Limited: Requires material of opportunity, Touch Range]), **Super Strength 12** (shockwave), **Telekinesis 8** (Area Shapeable; Limited: Only for Lifting, Touch Range)

Combat: Attack +14 (unarmed), +6 (other), Grapple +36, Damage +15 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -37, Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from those stronger than himself; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 94 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 20 + Powers 102 + Combat 24 + Saves 11 – Drawbacks 2 = **258 Total**

Actual Name: Jack Lombard

Occupation: Industrialist, Financier

Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record

Gestalt Type: Bonded (1989 wave)

Power Level: Respected

Height: 6'5" (198 cm.)

Weight: 265 lbs. (119 kg)

Hair Color: Brown

Eye Color: Blue

Birthplace: San Francisco, CA. USA.

Current Residence: San Francisco, CA. USA

Group Affiliations: None.

Known Relatives: Patricia Lombard (mother), Alice Lombard (sister)

"SURE I WANT TO SEE YOUR LOVED ONES WEeping OVER YOUR DEAD, DISGRACED CORPSE, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME A SUPERVILLAIN."

Background: Jack Lombard grew up with everything. Money, wealth, looks, athletic ability, even a few brains. When his parents died in a plane crash at the age of 17, he became President and CEO of the Union Oriental Bank of California, and made it one of America's richest small banks. But that was nothing compared to what happened when Jack was 20, in 1989, when the First Gestalt Wave and he became a virtual god among men.

Jack got all the breaks.

When Jack realized what he'd become, he knew he had to become a superhero. Not that he ever liked comic books, but he knew he could be ten times the superhero that America Man was. He came out of the "gestalt closet" and declared himself openly superhuman. For a year or so, he made a sincere effort at being a superhero, but a 1990 incident where he put a street gang in the hospital caused a media uproar. Some of the



POWERJACK

SCENARIO HOOKS

Duplicate: You receive a visit from an unusually polite Powerjack. He claims he's the "good side" of Powerjack who's been recently split off. He wants you to help him unite with his bad side, but what's really going on? Is there actually a schism, or is this some sort of elaborate scheme to establish an alibi in case he's ever caught committing crimes in the future?

The Improbable

Powerjack: Powerjack travels into a Probability Lord Tunnel, gets all the power he ever dreamed, and goes on a rampage. The Titan tries to stop him, but Powerjack gets the drop on him with a sucker punch, and this time he takes him out. Now the Titan is at his archenemy's mercy. You need to rescue him, but this new Powerjack is awfully tough...

Who Is Bombast?

A man contacts the team by telephone, quickly introduces himself as a San Francisco businessman and tells the heroes: "You know that new ultra-powerful merc Bombast? He's not the rookie people think he is — no one suspects he's really..." and then there's the sound of a sickening crunch...

Who is Bombast? And why did the businessman call you, of all people? (And if you've got a secret ID, how'd he know to call you?)

kids were crippled for life; Jack's reaction was to call his lawyers and have them clean up the mess. The public was outraged. Many other superheroes distanced themselves from Jack; Jack had never been a particularly friendly colleague, and he had a history of having "misunderstandings" with male superheroes.

Nonetheless, Jack managed to keep much of his reputation despite these destructive battles, and even though he often came across as a phony to many people, a good PR machine can work wonders. In 1994, however, a new gestalt wave happened, and a new generation of supers emerged. Powerjack was forgotten as the press fawned over the new boys, especially a superhuman named the Titan, who seemed just as big, just as strong, just as good-looking as Jack, but much more humble and likeable. Jack immediately wanted to fight him, and he spent six months arranging for the confrontation. Unfortunately, it did not go as Jack had planned (see Great Battles in Superhuman History!, The Titan vs. Powerjack, page 36).

After the loss, Jack went into retirement. His investments in Zhengcorp were paying off far better than his superhero career, and by 2000, he was one of the richest men in America. He allied with his good friend Hannibal Poole, using Poole's "Deep End of the Poole" PR firm to start a smear campaign against the Titan and other supers. He also started up Genejack, a company on the leading edge of mass chain gestalt production and genetic engineering. What people didn't realize that Genejack's ultimate goal was to genetically engineer himself into a superhuman who could beat the Titan. For the last ten years, he's been receiving treatments. They haven't boosted his strength, but after ten years of intense treatments, he's experienced one interesting change: he's learned how to do some limited shapechanging. He's tried to gain access to Ar'Kayadin genetic engineering secrets, but so far Tarradan has proven unreceptive (boosting him above the Titan's level would also put him in the same league as the Ar'Kayadin champion, the Ar'aax, and any possibility that the Ar'aax might be defeated by a non-Ar'Kayadin is unthinkable).

Powerjack's also made connections with villains. With the help of Influence, he's also learned how to mask his thoughts so that anyone who reads his mind will find false memories and a false personality. Between that and his shapechanging powers, Jack's finally decided to do something he's wanted to do for years but has never had the guts to do — become a full fledged supervillain. Dressed in a gold and blue body stocking, he's calling himself "Bombast" and has been spearheading mercenary operations around the Bay area.

Jack's goal is to become the most powerful man on Earth, regardless of the cost. And if the Ar'Kayadin won't help him, perhaps those Eiko he

keeps hearing about will...

Personality: Jack's a Strongman gestalt, but judging on his personality, "the Gestalt of Envy" would be a better title. Despite being arguably the most fortunate man on Earth: strong, handsome, rich and almost immortal, he's happy with nothing. He always looks at other people's happiness and holds it against them. He is incredibly driven to succeed, and is extremely arrogant when he reaches his goals. He has incredible charm, but he almost always comes across as a self-serving phony. He has trouble with long-term relationships, and one of the areas which particularly delights him is causing rifts between superheroes and their spouses or fiancés/fiancées, particularly with the Titan (though he's also responsible for Stuntman's recent divorce).

Jack is a bit cowardly, preferring easy victories to another epic fight like the one he had with the Titan.

He's also cautious enough to have come up with several backup plans in case his new identity goes awry. He's used Influence and one of his telekinetic pupils to give himself an alibi: on several occasions a mentally dominated bodybuilder has dressed up as Bombast, appeared in the same place as Powerjack, leaping away just as Jack is about to reach him. If that falls apart, he's paid Influence a large sum of money to publicly "reveal" that Jack was under his mental domination all the time, and that Powerjack was merely a victim of his "evil mind control".

Powers/Tactics: Powerjack is a Strongman gestalt, a master of many of the tricks of the powerhouse trade. He relies more on well-honed instincts than on formal training (which is enough for most opponents). His powers aren't all a product of the gestalt: shape changing and reduced aging are both the results of an extremely laborious and expensive genetic engineering campaign (which has left him addicted to the process). His Mental Shapeshift power (which provides decoy images to fool a telepath) is the product of meditation and Influence's experimental psionic imprinting.

Campaign Use: Powerjack is an example of how to take one of the templates (in this case the Strongman Gestalt template from page 135), raising its power level, and picking and choosing from the suite of powers to produce a character.

Powerjack is a good foil for "pretty boy" PCs. If a PC's a little conceited and actively pursues personal popularity, then Jack is going to be someone who gets in the way of their happiness.

Appearance: Jack is an extremely good-looking man, 6'5" and 325 lbs. of rock solid muscle, with red hair, fair skin, and blue eyes. As Powerjack, he wore a red and black bodystocking with a starburst on his belt stylized "J" in a shield on his belt. As Bombast, he wears a blue and gold bodysuit and a domino mask, and has a bluish skin tint (though he can't shapeshift his eyes).

THE QUESTIONER

GESTALT OF QUESTIONS

POWER LEVEL 9

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+2	+3	+5	+7	+5	+5
12	16	20	24	20	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+8/+5*	+8	+8	+10

Skills: Bluff 8 (+15), Diplomacy 8 (+15), Handle Animals 8 (+15), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Stealth 4 (+10)

Feats: Attack Focus 2 (melee), Attack Specialization (scythes), Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 5, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 1, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Grab, Improved Trip, Luck 3, Speed Reading, Stunning Attack, Sweeping Strike

Equipment: scythes [strike 2; mighty]

Powers: **Boost Melee Damage 8** (Limited: Only after target has refused or failed to answer a reasonably easy question), **Mental Attack 10** (Limited: Only after target has refused or failed to answer a reasonably easy question), **Telepathy 10** (Limited: Only to catch someone in a lie; Requires a Knowledge [behavioral science] check), **Super Senses 8** (extended hearing, extended vision, postcognition [acute, analytical; Limited: Only to determine when something is out of place]), **Universal Translator**

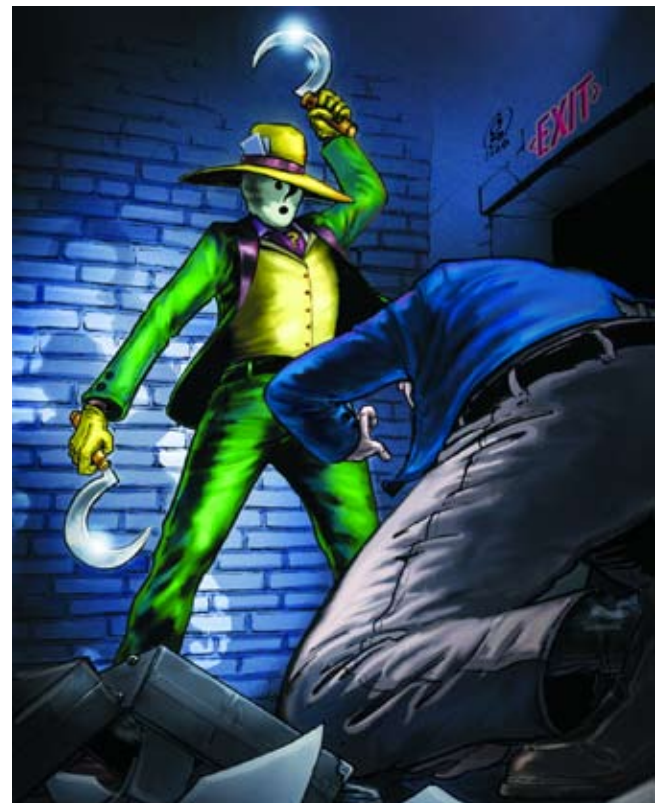
Combat: Attack +9 (scythes), +7 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +8, Damage +3 (scythes, but up to +11 with Boost), +1 (unarmed, but up to +9 with Boost), Defense +10 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -4, Initiative +8

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Secrecy Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 52+ Skills 22 (88 ranks) + Feats 24 + Powers 59+ Combat 20 + Saves 13 – Drawbacks 2 **188 = Total**

Actual Name: Dr. Markus Query
Occupation: Former Psychologist, Now Criminal
Legal Status: American Citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1994 wave)
Goal: To discover the ultimate question of life
Power Level: Respected
Height: 5'11" (181 cm)
Weight: 185 lbs. (84 kg)
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: Newark, New Jersey
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: None
Known Relatives: None

"WHAT... IS...
THE... ANSWER!"



THE QUESTIONER SCENARIO HOOKS

Is Life Just A Game of Jeopardy?

After taking an experimental mind expansion drug, the Questioner suddenly knows the answers to the questions that have bothered him all these years! Unfortunately, he's forgotten the questions. He's going on a mad rampage demanding that people ask him questions, as he's unable to think of the questions himself. Stop him (and try to get him back to normal).

School for Scandal

Convinced that the public education system is not sufficiently demanding, the Questioner invades a low achieving high school in order to whip them into shape. But when he discovers that the students just don't care about learning, he becomes dangerously unstable.

The Questioner's Meaning of Life

Mark goes on an abduction spree, kidnapping people from all walks of life to take to his Symposium of the Coerced, which will debate life's biggest mystery. Stop him. An alternate method of running this plot might be as a "game show" where he asks the "contestants" to debate the meaning of life. Of course, for those who lose... get what's in *The Box*.

Background: Markus Query is convinced that the Gestalt has a sense of humor, because how else would you explain a person with his particular name receiving his particular Gestalt? Even so, it's still a mystery – a big mystery in a world of infinite mysteries.

Mysteries always appealed to Markus, even as a kid he'd spend hours in a local library, or drag home tomes on Egyptian hieroglyphics that weighed almost as much as he did, or treat encyclopedias like a medieval monk treated the Bible. Books were cool. Books didn't tease, or make fun of people, or pick them last at sports. Books weren't stupid or ignorant. Books were his best friend.

Eventually people convinced Markus that his social problems were his fault, and that he needed to get to know people better, and that everything in the world could be explained in terms of the human dynamic. Eventually, after a long, meandering academic career, he became a psychologist.

Psychology didn't interest him. Exposure to the same old human problems bored him. It didn't matter to him that he was good at helping people solve their problems or making the world a better place. This wasn't getting him closer to answering the Big Questions, the ones that engaged him.

One day, he learned he could force people to answer the questions that bothered him: force them, or leave them twitching on the ground.

He saw bonding with a gestalt as an immense opportunity to finally answer life's biggest questions. Embracing his powers and his role to the fullest, Query dubbed himself "the Questioner" and hired himself as a mercenary supervillain. He felt that the heroic world was too constrictive,

too establishment; the establishment didn't like it when people asked the Wrong Questions. So he choose the other side, the side of the subversive, the side of those who weren't afraid to lay waste to the world to bear its secrets, the side who would gladly pick the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge, and who didn't fear the laws of man and God.

Personality/Motivation: The Questioner has been described as a combination of George Carlin and Diogenes in supervillain guise. Everything that the Questioner does is part of an elaborate game to find the answer to something.

It seems that every year that goes by makes the Questioner more and more desperate to find answers to everything, and that he's losing his grip on his sanity and unanswered questions gnaw at his soul.

Powers/Tactics: The Questioner will always ask his target a question before combat (although sometimes he gets too wrapped up in his questions to defend himself.)

Markus is a capable martial artist (which he studied during several years of training himself in the orient) and has experimented with question mark shaped mini-scythes.

Campaign Use: The Questioner fits the puzzle niche villain. Heroes who enjoy philosophical debate should enjoy encounters with the Questioner, as should those who enjoy sucker-punching philosophical windbags.

Appearance: As the Questioner, Query dresses in an elegant three piece suit with a featureless green hood over his face (with a stylized question mark logo covering most of the center). A fedora completes the supervillain look.

RICK THUNDER

GESTALT OF THUNDER

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+4	+5	-1	+0	+2
16	18	20	8	10	14

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+10	+9	+8	+4

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Drive 4 (+8), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+3), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+3)

Feats: Dodge Focus 3

Powers: **Absorption 5** (goes to healing; Energy Storage, Power Magnet; Limited: Electricity only), **Blast 10** (thunderbolt; Line Area, Penetrating; Touch Range; Alternate Powers: **Blast 10** [ball lightning; Explosion], **Blast 10** [forked lightning; Autofire; accurate 2]), **Dazzle 8** (sound of thunder; hearing; Burst Area, Linked to Blast array; Touch Range), **Environmental Control 8** (thunderstorm effects; mix-and-match option at 5 pts per rank), **Force Field 5**, **Immunity 10** (electrical effects), **Super Senses 4** (precognition [Limited: only for knowing when thunderstorms will happen])

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +9, Damage +10 (blast), +3 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -5, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Weather Gestalts countering his Effects; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 26 + Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Feats 3+ Powers 124 + Combat 20 + Saves 13 – Drawbacks 2= **188 Total**

Actual Name: Richard Callaghan
Occupation: Criminal Mercenary
Legal Status: American Citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001 wave)
Goal: To make lots of money
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 5'11" (181 cm)
Weight: 163 lbs. (74 kg)
Hair Color: Blond
Eye Color: Green
Birthplace: San Antonio TX. USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: None
Known Relatives: None



"WHEN I WANNA BE HEARD,
I GET HEARD.."

RICK THUNDER SCENARIO HOOKS

Academy

One of your newest PCs is going under cover at the Laidley Academy to ferret out its secrets. The general public doesn't know who he is – but he fought Rick Thunder in one of his earliest encounters and Rick would recognize him on sight. Guess who the guest speaker is going to be for tomorrow's class?

I'll Take It!

Rick Thunder is tired of being poor, and when a corrupt Texas politician offers him a million dollars to fake a political assassination attempt, he takes it. But is the kid being set up by people far more cunning and deadly than himself?

Riders of the Storm

Rick's gone completely nuts. He thinks that in every storm, there's a woman at the center, a woman that he can bring to life. What happens when he enters the heart of the largest storm ever recorded – on the day of the next gestalt wave? Will his desires accidentally unleash the most destructive gestalt yet?

An Oracle gestalt has given you a warning. Stop Rick at all costs.

Background: Rick Callaghan's great-grandparents came to Texas in the 1870s and made money in ranching. The "Circle C" ranch was a small and prosperous business until the early 1990s, when the economic slump and the consolidation of the cattle industry finally drove the family into bankruptcy. Rick's dad committed suicide. Rick, who had been a spoiled rich kid, lost all his toys. Both the death and the loss of "his stuff" drove him a little nuts.

Rick was always a wild kid, but now he dropped out of school, robbed houses, and did drugs. By the age of 13, he was into stealing cars (and wrecking them) and unwanted advances on young women. He ended up in a foster home, then a center for juvenile offenders. Everywhere he was sent, he left a trail of destruction.

In 2001, the crazed fifteen-year-old Rick was dancing naked in a drunken stupor on top of a barn. A thunderstorm was raging, and the whiskey made it feel like a good idea to goad a tornado that was on the horizon, telling it to make a beeline straight toward him. Suddenly he was struck by lightning. Rick laughed, and challenged the lightning to hit him again. It did. Rick laughed again, and yelled something that might have been "Is that the best you can do? Hit me again!" had he been less drunk.

Normally, surviving eight direct lightning strikes and a subsequent fall from a barn roof would have merely made it into the local papers or a nationally syndicated "Can You Believe It?" column, but any freak accident on the day of a gestalt wave gets noticed quickly. While recovering in hospital, Rick received a call from the Laidley Institute, asking if he'd like to accept a free scholarship. Booze, hot girls, and other amenities were also promised.

Rick spent a year in "school" (which was really Hannibal Poole's training camp for young supervillains) before he got bored and ran away. As far as the Headmaster was concerned, Rick could have graduated in five minutes after he walked in the door, when it became clear that he needed less indoctrination to become a supervillain than any other student in the Institute's history. Rick did make a few good contacts while at the Institute and learned how to (marginally) fake a secret identity. He embarked on the career as a mercenary supervillain, taking the name "Rick Thunder" as his nom de guerre.

It hasn't gone all that well. You know the stereotype of the supervillain who robs a bank and then spends a year sunning himself in the Caribbean? Well try the stereotype of the villain who can't hold onto his money and who's so poor that he's walked into a McDonald's and threatened to start blasting unless they give him a Happy Meal. Rick's never really had a great payday, he's been beaten up six times (three times by Endeavor), and has been jailed numerous times. Even so, he gets to be destructive, and that goes a long way to keeping his twisted mind happy.

Personality: Once a wild teenager, in recent years, Rick mellowed. Whereas he was a hedonist who lived fast and wild, now he keeps his emotions

in check (though he still doesn't suffer an insult well). When he's been away from a good thunderstorm for too long, Rick sometimes descends into a state of numbness, and the only time he really wakes up is during a thunderstorm. (He likes to climb to the heights, strip off his clothes, and shoot lightning bolts into the sky so he can "communicate" with the thunder). After a really big thunderstorm, Rick reverts to his wild child nature, and goes on a destructive, self-indulgent rampage.

The storm is a drug that brings him to life. His rampages do have their limits. Rick's a sociopath, but he's not a casual killer. Rick will steal from anyone, brutalize them, and enjoy scaring them. Racking up a body count is not part of his plan. Sure he's a borderline sociopath, but he doesn't go out of his way to kill people when he's having "fun". Besides, watching people run away like scared rabbits when he uses his powers is cool. Looking at people's dead limbs jutting out at odd angles in the middle of a collapsed building, on the other hand, is highly uncool.

Powers/Tactics: As a Thunder Gestalt, Rick is surrounded by low levels of electricity at all times (static charges occur quite frequently around him). Rick's powers involve the storm first, with a few electrical and applied electrical feats as secondary powers.

Rick prefers to live in the outdoors, in the wild. His susceptibility reflects his wild nature; an air conditioned room is like rubbing sandpaper on his skin (which makes containing him difficult; he can't legally be held in a Refrigerator, because that environment is deadly to him).

In combat, Rick uses forked lightning on tough targets (like supervillains) while reserving his sheet lightning attacks for conventional forces like the police. He likes to display his powers without directly attacking, as successful presence attacks are fun!

Campaign Use: Rick is an example of how to take the powers from one of the archetype templates, downscale them slightly, and tweak them slightly to build a starting level character. In addition to demonstrating the mechanics, Rick's also a "kid on the path to destruction" whom the PCs can try to mentor and turn to a more constructive purpose.

Rick feels a certain antagonism toward other teenaged supers, especially heroes. He may hunt young teenage superheroes out of spite.

Appearance: Rick is a handsome 18-year-old kid who looks like he's going to grow up to be a strapping adult in a few years. He has waist long blond hair (worn in a pony tail when he's not using his powers). His costume is a blue windbreaker with a fur collar, which is worn open to reveal a large lightning bolt tattoo on the center of his chest. He completes the ensemble with leather pants. He usually goes barefoot.

TARRADAN

ALIEN AMBASSADOR

POWER LEVEL 13

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+8	+6	+6	+4	+4	+6
26	22	23	18	18	22

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+10/+6*	+10	+10	+9

*w/o armor

Skills: Bluff 8 (+14), Diplomacy 8 (+14), Knowledge (history) 6 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+10), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 (+10), Language 2 (English, Russian), Notice 12 (+16), Pilot 8 (+14), Profession (diplomat) 6 (+10), Profession (soldier) 10 (+14), Search 12 (+16), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 8 (+14), Survival 8 (+12)

Feats: Attack Focus 6 (melee), Attack Specialization 2 (whipsword), Benefit (diplomatic immunity), Chokehold, Connected, Dodge Focus 8, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Power Attack

Powers: **Device 6** (Advanced Armor, hard-to-lose), **Device 11** (whipsword, easy-to-lose), **Immunity 1** (age [Limited: ½ strength]), **Super Senses 2** (extended hearing, extended vision), **Super Strength 2**

Advanced Armor (Commlink, Flight 3, Immunity 9 [life support], Protection 4, Sensory Shield 4 [all senses])

Whipsword (Deflect 10 [all attacks; Redirection, Reflection; extended range 3], Strike 10 [Penetrating; extended reach 3])

Combat: Attack +16 (whipsword), +12 (melee), +6 (other), Grapple +22, Damage +10 (strike), +8 (unarmed), Defense +14 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -5, Initiative +10

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from sight-based Dazzle effects; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 69 + Skills 29 (116 ranks) + Feats 23 + Powers 64 + Combat 24 + Saves 15 – Drawbacks 2 = **222 Total**

Actual Name: Tarradan Si'Surhalia
Occupation: Ambassador
Legal Status: Ar'Kayadin Citizen with Diplomatic Immunity
Gestalt Type: None
Power Level: Respected
Goal: To discover his purpose in life
Height: 6'4 (195cm)
Weight: 218 lbs. (99 kg)
Hair Color: None
Eye Color: Red
Birthplace: Galgadi, Evennest, Ar Space
Current Residence: Ar'Kayadu Nom (the Ar'Kayadin base in Siberia).
Group Affiliations: Head of the Ar'Kayadin on Earth
Known Relatives: Abridon (brother), Lukailyes (brother), Asairyinar (brother).



"I DO SO ENJOY LIVING WITH THE AR'TERRANS. FOR A MILITARY HISTORIAN SUCH AS MYSELF, YOUR HISTORY IS SUCH A TREASURE TROVE OF VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION THAT IT CAN'T HELP BUT WARMS THE BARBARIC COCKLES OF MY HEART!"

TARRADAN SCENARIO HOOKS

Bomb's Away

Someone is setting high explosive devices at social functions attended by Tarradan. Tarradan is injured by one blast, and the Ar'Kayadin security forces are stepping in with a heavy hand to uncover the responsible party. So who's targeted the Ar'Kayadin ambassador: Ar'Kayadin rebels, a rival warrior with an old score to settle, the Ar'Turodain – or did the wily Tarradan set himself up so his security teams could gain access to one of the bomb sites to conduct a covert investigation?

It's In the Genes

Realizing that Tarradan's abilities are genetic and not part of the gestalt process, a team of Zhengcorp bioengineers kidnap him. Just before he vanishes, the Ar'Kayadin ambassador has an argument with one of the PCs which Zhengcorp uses to cover their tracks — Zhengcorp uses a PC look alike to make the grab.

The Plague

Hevma Fever, a disease that originated on the Ar'Kayadin world Indrin, has broken out in the campaign city. The Ar'Kayadin are the only ones with a cure – but are you willing to pay Tarradan's price?

Background: Tarradan, scion of House Surhaliya, was born in the city of Galgadi on the military garrison of planet Evennest, the Ar'Kayadin world nearest to the Ar'Turodain Sphere. He was the third of six sons, a handicap that he remedied at the age of 15, when he slew his two older brothers in the *kletenul* duels that led to his ascension to the rank of *ar'elki* (House Champion) at an age when one wouldn't have been expected to make *ar'ulka* (junior champion).

Tarradan's rapid ascension to power did not go unnoticed or unchecked – when a ritual war occurred between houses on the planet Komono, his community's *ar'kar* (overleader) eagerly stripped him of his rank and sent him to fight for the community's honor. Perhaps, he thought, a few years living on a heavy gravity world would tame this homicidal brat.

It did, although in a way that the *ar'kar* did not expect. Tarradan was an Ar'Huriti, a throwback to the Great Warrior Ar, one in whom many of the genetic modifications that had been made to Ar soldiers fifteen hundred years ago had resurfaced. On Komono, Tarradan indulged in the old Ar'Huriti customs that were still practiced in small Ar'Kayadin units.

He found a soldier whom he declared to be his twin, and they were bound to each other and forced to live together in a second womb for sixty days. They were sworn to keep each other alive, for if one died, the other would have to kill himself. They fought each other for the meager scraps of food and water they were provided, while keeping in telepathic contact with each other in the only way permitted to the Ar'Kayadin – by eating telepathic worms. Tarradan hoped the twinning would echo the bonds of great warriors in ancient tales, but alas, it turned out his bondsman was a boring, self-centered lout. For Tarradan, the noblest of rituals turned into an utterly hollow experience.

Tarradan snuck into the hallowed crypts of the ancient war dead, a crime punishable by death. For twenty days, he pried the corpses of great warrior Ar from their stone chambers, and he slept on a pile of bones belonging to the heroic dead. He hoped to infuse himself with their spirits, and for awhile he told himself that he could feel the heroes walk in his skin – even though he knew in his heart they did not.

He stripped naked and climbed the Heavy Mountain, a place where some quirk of physics increased the pull of local gravity to almost crushing levels. He clawed his way to the summit and stood over the plains and shouted for Revelation, waiting for greatness to come and touch him. But it never did. He only got a bruised body and cracked ribs for his trouble.

Gradually Tarradan became disenchanted with the warrior cults, and over time, even with war itself. Battle mostly involved huge amounts of waiting before the fight and an irritating amount of watching imbeciles posture afterward. There was nothing special about it.

Tarradan realized that was missing from

his life was a rare quality not often considered by Ar'Kayadin — spirituality. He put his family aside, and spent the decades between wars on secret missions traveling the known galaxy, visiting historical sites. He talked to philosophers, even to telepaths. He captured enemy soldiers for the specific purpose of engaging in long philosophical debate. He even ventured secretly into Ar'Turodain space, exploring the two million year old ruins of the Lost Race of Shelme, longing for an epiphany. Nothing happened.

In 1999, Ar'Kayadin spies reported that the Ar'Turodain had made contact with a young race of displaced Ar (“and some fools even believe it's our great lost birthworld.”) Most Ar'Kayadin considered Earth to be too far from the Ar'Kayadin sphere to be of any interest. Fort Tarradan, however, nothing was more attractive than an opportunity to explore his heritage. He pulled a few strings and had himself appointed as Earth's first *ar'ixta*, or ambassador.

First Contact was rougher than expected; the Ar'Kayadin encountered Columbia while crossing the orbit of Mars – Earth's heroes had been warned of their approach by the Ar'Turodain, who had advised them to prevent them from landing at all costs. But despite enduring a stream of confusing insults that included the name “Space Nazis”, Tarradan would not be dissuaded, and in the end dissension from within Columbia's ranks deterred Liberator. The Ar'Kayadin landed and made contact with Earth. Eventually they were permitted to set up a base in Russia.

Tarradan's activities on Earth have mostly involved spying and plotting. Remembering how Columbia mistreated him, he's made a special effort of using his spies to undermine them (targeting Starbird, who reminds him far too much of a young Ar'Kayadin warrior for his tastes). He wouldn't mind placing a powerful young Ar'Huriti onto a fledgeling superhero team in hopes of infiltrating the superhuman community and eventually undermining Columbia.

Tarradan has undermined Earth's relationship with the Ar'Turodain every chance he's gotten. He's courted Earth's middle powers, (particularly in South America) offering to elevate them to world power status in exchange for future favors. He does not coordinate the “capture parties” from the rogue Ar'Kayadin world Vettar who kidnap Gestalts and take them as gladiatorial slaves (though he tolerates them). For all his cunning, however, Tarradan is driven by the belief that somewhere on Earth is the epiphany that he's sought for his entire life, that it's connected to this strange “Gestalt” phenomena, and that he's going to find it and control it.

He's quite intrigued by reports of the Gestalt Dimension, and would be very interested to visit a Probability Tunnel, if he knew they existed.

Personality: Tarradan has the personality of an old warrior, even though he's still in his physical prime. He holds youthful enthusiasm in contempt, respecting only those with thoughtful attitudes, the cunning as opposed to the strong. He's always maintained an air of smug superiority and wry hu-

mor in the face of his enemies, knowing it infuriates them. He's aware that many humans consider him "a villain" and is greatly amused that millions of people who know nothing about him could come to such a conclusion about his character. He enjoys playing on this reputation whenever possible.

People who encounter Tarradan find him elegant, witty, and well-mannered – with the personality of a snake lying under the surface. And that's how Tarradan wants people to see him.

And yet, for all of this surface amusement, Tarradan is a haunted man. He wants answers to the large questions of life, but he doesn't even know the questions. He does his best to hide these feelings, but if he ever gets a chance to find what he's looking for, he'll become as obsessed as any Gestalt.

Tarradan prefers to distance himself from other people; he likes to think of people as tools, and actually getting to know and like people is a serious hindrance to that mindset, which he thinks is necessary for his duties.

Powers/Tactics: Tarradan is an advanced genetically engineered Ar'Kayadin; barring a few of the "brickhouses" of the race, he's at the top of the usual strength and toughness scale. Tarradan will never directly involve himself in a combat (as he puts it, "it's hard to twirl one's moustache with bruised knuckles") unless his back is against the wall.

Tarradan still maintains himself in fighting trim, and is still one of the deadliest masters of the whipsword (and most feared duelists) in Ar'Kayadin space.

Campaign Use: Tarradan is the diplomatic face of the Ar'Kayadin. For the most part, his diplomatic immunity will keep any conflicts with PCs down to a cold war level, which will give the heroes a chance to develop a rivalry before meeting him in physical conflict.

Appearance: Tarradan is a tall Ar'Kayadin male, 6'4", with an athletic (but not muscular) build. His skin is engineered with a deep reddish tint (a cosmetic alteration on his natural "Caucasian" paleness), and although he's naturally hairless, he's had thick eyebrows and long white sideburns implanted to give him a more ferocious appearance. He wears an Ar'Kayadin military dress uniform, a tight-fitting black coat covered with insignia (Including one row for the emblems of the houses whose champions he's beaten) and tan pants. His English is tinged with a slight Russian accent.

AR'KAYADIN SOLDIER

POWER LEVEL 8

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+5	+4	+4	+1	+2	+2
20	18	18	12	14	14

Tough

+8/+4*

Fort

+7

Reflex

+8

Will

+5

*w/o armor

Skills: Knowledge (history) 4 (+6), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+6), Notice 8 (+12), Pilot 6 (+10), Profession (soldier) 6 (+10), Search 4 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+8), Survival 8 (+10)

Feats: Attack Focus 2 (melee), Benefit (diplomatic immunity), Chokehold, Dodge Focus 3, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Power Attack

Powers: **Device 6** (Advanced Armor, hard-to-lose), **Device 8** (whipsword, easy-to-lose), **Immunity 1** (age [Limited: ½ strength]), **Super Senses 2** (extended hearing, extended vision), **Super Strength 2**

Advanced Armor (Commlink, Flight 3, Immunity 9 [life support], Protection 4, Sensory Shield 4 [all senses])

Whipsword (Deflect 5 [all attacks; Redirection, Reflection; extended range 3], Strike 7 [Penetrating; extended reach 3])

Combat: Attack +8 (whipsword), +6 (melee), +6 (other), Grapple +11, Damage +7 (strike), +5 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -5, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from sight-based Dazzle effects; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 36 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 53 + Combat 28 + Saves 10 – Drawbacks 2 = **147 Total**

HANNIBAL POOLE

POWER LEVEL 10

GESTALT OF CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+0	+0	+0	+9	+4	+9
10	10	10	28	18	28

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+2*	+5	+6	+12

*+0 flatfooted

Skills: Bluff 15 (+24), Computer 8 (+17), Diplomacy 15 (+24), Gather Information 15 (+24), Handle Animal 4 (+13), Investigate 12 (+21), Knowledge (art) 12 (+21), Knowledge (behavioral science) 12 (+21), Knowledge (business) 12 (+21), Knowledge (civics) 12 (+21), Knowledge (current events) 12 (+21), Knowledge (history) 12 (+21), Knowledge (popular culture) 12 (+21), Knowledge (streetwise) 15 (+24), Knowledge (tactics) 12 (+21), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 12 (+21), Notice 12 (+16), Search 12 (+21), Sense Motive 12 (+16), Sleight of Hand 8 (+8)

Feats: Attractive, Benefit 5 (wealth 5), Connected, Contacts, Defensive Roll 2, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 20 (up to 100 pts in facilities, vehicles, etc.), Improved Block, Improved Defense, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Jack of all Trades, Luck 2, Minions 10 (PLs and numbers varied as needed), Power Attack, Speed of Thought

Powers: Quickness 8 (Mental Only), Super Senses 2 (distance sense, time sense), Universal Translator

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +5, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +5 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -1, Initiative +9

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Justice Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 44 + Skills 56 (224 ranks) + Feats 50 + Powers 14 + Combat 20 + Saves 18 – Drawbacks 2 = **200 Total**

Actual Name: Hannibal Alan Poole
Occupation: PR Consultant, Crimelord
Legal Status: American citizen with no criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (1996 wave)
Goal: To control everything
Power Level: World-Beater
Height: 6'2" (189 cm)
Weight: 205 lbs. (94 kg)
Hair Color: Auburn
Eye Color: Blue
Birthplace: Oakland, CA.
Current Residence: San Francisco, CA.
Group Affiliations: Manipulator of numerous superhumans
Known Relatives: None

"IF CRIME DOESN'T PAY, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS SPREAD? LOSE THE MERIT BADGE, BOY SCOUT, AND MAYBE WE CAN CUT A DEAL."



Background: It was obvious from his earliest days that Hannibal Poole had a gifted intellect. It was also obvious that he had a lot of charisma. What wasn't quite obvious was just how manipulative he could be, because when you're as good at that as he was, no one notices.

Hannibal was fascinated with puzzles and patterns, the more complex the better. He also built ant farms, and when that bored him, he built rival ant colonies, placed them both in a large field and studied their wars. There was something about watching other creatures fight that really appealed to him.

Hannibal grew up in Oakland California, graduated at the top of his class, went on to Harvard, then to the London School of Economics. He performed extraordinarily well at both institutions, having a knack for the understanding of the complex, and explaining minutiae in such a way as not to make it sound boring.

Just before Hannibal Poole received his doctorate, something extraordinary happened. Complex calculations suddenly became astonishingly easy. He didn't need a watch to tell the time, even when he had just flown across the International Date Line. And matters of complexity that had challenged him before had become

child's play. Hannibal Poole had become a Gestalt.

Hannibal wondered about his future. He came to the conclusion that his future had become tied in with what he had become - Gestalts. Whoever controls Gestalts will control the world. You can't get sufficient control over Gestalts through the proper channels - but you can through crime.

So Hannibal Poole decided to go into the business of crime. He formed an ad agency in San Francisco, "Deep End of the Poole", and used revenue from the agency - which came by the bucket load when he won the right to advertise Zhengcorp - to infiltrate San Francisco's underworld, and gradually began to take it over. Poole, under an anonymous guise, began a systematic analysis of San Francisco's criminals, determined which ones were competent, bought their services and began building his criminal empire.

Time passed, and Poole's empire began to gather influence in San Francisco and outlying areas. He failed in only one major area - he only managed to corrupt one local Gestalt, the elemental hero Vanquish. Two local heroes discovered the truth behind his activities - Technarch and Alain Duchamps.

Poole made an arrangement with Technarch, paying him off with technical information. Technarch was not particularly interested in street crime - he's more interested in high technology and the activities of major (conventional) villains like the Tyranny League. However the truce is becoming an inconvenience to both of them, especially as Technarch watches Poole expand into technological interests and weighs an alliance with Poole's rival Weaponsmith.

Alain Duchamps is another story. In him, Poole found an implacable enemy. He used Powerjack and Vanquish in an elaborate but successful scheme that destroyed all of the evidence that Duchamps had on him (discrediting Duchamps with the local police). Another Gestalt who threatened to become an even bigger problem for Poole was the hero Storm Warning. Storm Warning had managed to break into Poole's HQ and pillaged his files, but Poole uncovered his secret identity, and leaked it to the Leviathans, who murdered him before he could go to the DA.

Poole's major rival is Weaponsmith, whose southwest criminal empire (especially in Southern California, New Mexico, and Texas) competes with Poole's plans for expansion. He has managed to get footholds in Las Vegas and Reno, but is only beginning to pull ahead of traditional rivals. However, Poole has made great strides in the Midwest and his recent alliance with the Scarpa-chi family has made him a player with the East Coast syndicates. All of this has come through intermediaries; only a handful of his servants know who they're serving, and Poole's looking for ways to replace them.

Poole's goal of dominating Gestalts is only in its infancy. Like others (such as Apollo), he's decided to try to find young Gestalts, train them and indoctrinate them. To this end, he's founded the Laidley Institute. This superhuman academy tracks down young Gestalts, kidnaps them, uses a Hypnotism Gestalt to wipe out their memory, and then uses a Witch Gestalt

(Circe) to perform "perfect cosmetic surgery" that alters their appearance. Once the students are controlled (and unrecognizable) Poole has them trained to do his bidding. He also looks for non-combat Gestalts with useful abilities, whom he hires into his corporation (or his dummy corporations).

As far as the world's concerned, Hannibal Poole is the head of a very successful San Francisco ad agency, a mover and shaker with the potential "to go places". Some call the mysterious mastermind of the San Francisco crime scene "The Spider" because of the complexity of the web he's woven. It's not inappropriate, but perhaps a better name for him would be the Iceberg, because what you see of him is only a small fraction of what he's about.

Personality: Hannibal Poole comes across as a hyperactive salesman. He is a Big Dreamer with Big Ambitions, and he sees the "people of the impossible" (i.e. gestalts) as the means to this end., so his current goal is to take control of as many gestalts as possible. He dabbles in a lot of fields: films, games, toys, clothing, even perfumes. His office is full of antique toys (especially model railroads). He should be played like a Bond villain combining ruthlessness and showmanship. He's particularly given to telling anecdotes about famous (and obscure) historical crimes. He can go for hours talking about Al Capone (and how he was misunderstood).

Poole's greatest weakness is that he's easily bored. Poole rarely gets enough sleep - it's hard to rest such an active mind. Poole is almost always thinking and plotting about something. He suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder of the first magnitude. He's also an egotist of the first order, and he often holds conversations by shouting at people. He also holds conversations with himself, and sometimes mulls his problems by role-playing the two sides of the argument screaming at each other.

Poole is exceptionally greedy and materialistic. He enjoys living the high life and running in San Francisco's most exclusive social circles. His criminal activities take a low profile, but his personal life (and his legitimate business ventures) are as showy as they come.

Powers/Tactics: Poole's Crime Gestalt manifests itself as a special insight into complex networks. Most puzzles and deceptions are child's play. His superhuman intelligence and cunning help him decode nearly anything if he has the slightest piece of data on it, even languages.

Hannibal Poole has a little martial arts training, but he can't compete physically against an average gestalt and he knows it. He leaves the fighting to his bodyguards (AKA "the hired help").

Appearance: Hannibal Poole is a handsome man in his late 20s, 6'2" tall and 205 lbs. with an athletic build. He has auburn hair, sparkling blue eyes, and typically wears very fine Italian tailored suits.

HANNIBAL POOLE SCENARIO HOOKS

A New Drug

Hannibal Poole's developed a new drug that interacts with people who have Gestalt bonds (but whose Gestalts haven't manifested) and causes them to display bizarre behavior; in this way, Poole hopes to identify those who've made Gestalt bonds, capture them, indoctrinate them, and hold them for the next Gestalt Wave. You need to stop this.

I Can Fix Anything

With betting on the Copenhagen tournament becoming big business, Hannibal Poole, decides to throw his hat in the ring by searching for a Gestalt who represents the archetype of "Winning". Once he finds "Victorious", not even the Titan will be able to withstand him, and he'll be able to lease that Gestalt's services to the highest bidder for a small fortune.

A Real Racket

Poole has hired three telepaths to perform an unusual shakedown. They're being sent to city merchants, on whom they're using their mental powers to compel the vendors into giving away their goods for nothing. It's all part of a protection racket (nothing's more terrifying than watching you destroy the business you made) if you pay, the telepaths don't bother you. Stop the telepaths' rampage, return the stolen goods, and expose the ringleader to make the grab.

STUNTWOMAN

THRILLSEEKER GESTALT

POWER LEVEL 12

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+4	+6	+0	+0	+3
30	18	23	11	10	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+13/+8*/+6**	+9	+10	+5

**vs non-physical, **flatfooted and vs non-physical

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+10), Bluff 6 (+9), Demolitions 6 (+6), Disable Device 6 (+6), Drive 8 (+12), Handle Animal 6 (+9), Knowledge (streetwise) 6 (+6), Notice 6 (+6), Pilot 8 (+12), Riding 6 (+10), Sense Motive 6 (+6), Sleight of Hand 6 (+10), Stealth 6 (+10)

Feats: All-out Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 2 (Harley Davidson motorcycle), Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Stunning Attack

Powers: Absorption 5 (physical, goes to healing), **Boost vehicle-based effects and powers 6** (slow fade; requires Drive/Pilot check as per type of vehicle), **Immunity 5** (breath in low-oxygen environs, cold, heat, radiation, vacuum), **Sensory Shield 3** (all senses), **Speed 1**, **Super Strength 2**

Combat: Attack +11, Grapple, Damage, Defense +12 (+6 flatfooted), Knockback -7, Initiative +8

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (damage taken when her stunts backfire; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 48 + Skills 23 (92 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 43 + Combat 46 + Saves 14– Drawbacks 2 **185 = Total**

Actual Name: Katrina Aubrey
Occupation: Stuntwoman, Adventurer
Legal Status: American Citizen with a criminal record
Gestalt Type: Bonded (2001 wave)
Goal: To discover new and wilder thrills
Power Level: Experienced
Height: 5'11" (181 cm)
Weight: 155 lbs. (71 kg)
Hair Color: Black
Eye Color: Violet
Birthplace: Carson City, Nevada, USA
Current Residence: Mobile
Group Affiliations: Operative of Hannibal Poole
Known Relatives: None



"THIS JOB REQUIRES A WOMAN'S TOUCH. OR A TWO BY FOUR. OR A WOMAN'S TOUCH WITH A TWO BY FOUR."

Background: The woman known as Stuntwoman is named Katrina Aubrey, but that name means nothing. She was orphaned by her mother, a famous movie actress, and spent her first twelve years in foster care. Because of her natural rebellious streak, life in foster care wasn't kind to her, so she ran away from home at the age of 12 and spent seven years living on the streets. She was too smart to get involved in either drugs or prostitution, but lived as a thief and a con artist. She enjoyed playing people for the fools, the more dangerous the quarry, the better she liked it. One of her cons involved posing as "dirty little secret" of a Stock Exchange chairman and selling bogus stock tips; one the victims of her cons was a young businessman named Hannibal Poole.

Her career came to an end with a shoplifting conviction, but a chance encounter with a jailed film star landed her in a role as an extra in a film, which she used to launch a career as a professional stuntwoman. She enjoyed taking risks, and quickly rose to the top of her profession. She often suffered from minor mishaps, but almost invariably walked away from them. It's possible she had bonded with her Gestalt years before she even noticed she had superpowers.

In May 2001, she was performing one of her most dangerous stunts - on a movie that was financed by Hannibal Poole. The cable broke, and she found herself plummeting to her death. It was the most exhilarating thrill of her life, but the landing was the most surprising - she walked away from it without a scratch. She'd become a Gestalt.

To say that Poole was impressed would be an understatement. Hate and revenge gave way to more complicated games. He wined and dined her, and seduced her, and they became lovers for a few months, before he tired of her. This feeling was almost mutual: the two things that Katrina and Poole have in common is that they're easily bored and they both enjoy playing games. Poole persuaded Katrina that the best way to have fun was to put on a costume and go out and become a superhero. If she got credibility, then the heroes would share secrets with her - secrets that Poole would put to good use.

Katrina became involved with a number of superheroes, but pretending to be some altruistic boy scout didn't appeal to her (anymore than joining a pack of abusive sociopaths). Stuntwoman (as she now

called herself) "walks her own path". Sometimes she committed minor crimes for kicks, playing elaborate cat and mouse games with superheroes, whom she'd seduce at the end. Other times, she joined with the villains, and delighted in double crossing them. Stuntwoman follows her own agenda - an agenda of fun - and even the mighty Hannibal Poole has to learn to accept that.

(Of course he doesn't, and therein lies the seed of future tragedy.)

Personality: Stuntwoman is more of a classic femme fatale than a superhero or a villain. She follows her impulses, which usually tell her to steal something, play a dangerous con, or get into trouble. Despite her "bad girl" persona, Stuntwoman's not a particularly evil individual, though she's got a temper and a sadistic streak when she gets hold of someone who's double-crossed her.

Stuntwoman enjoys getting emotionally involved with heroes, making them feel like they're the center of her world (sometimes even pretending to "reform"), and then she casts them aside as soon as she's bored. Occasionally though, she has met a person that she cares about, and almost always regrets it when she loses them.

Katrina may think that heroes are "chumps", but deep down she respects them. Villains, on the other hand, may share many of Stuntwoman's motivations (particularly those who are greedy thrillseekers), but she holds them in complete contempt. (Some might speculate she's transferring her self-loathing onto them.)

Powers/Tactics: The quintessential Thrillseeker gestalt, Stuntwoman fears almost nothing except boredom. People are tested to see if they can keep up with her, and a fight is nothing but another test. One doesn't fight Stuntwoman, one engages in a bizarre mating dance with her.

Campaign Use: Stuntwoman fits the campaign's femme fatale niche. Although she's technically on the side of the bad guys, she's best treated as the classic "playing everyone against each other".

Appearance: Stuntwoman is a gorgeous piece of eye candy, a 5'11" tall Caucasian female, who weighs 155 lbs. She has long black hair and violet eyes. She's clad in leather from head to toe.

STUNTWOMAN SCENARIO HOOKS

Blind Date

Stuntwoman takes you out on a date, and a delightful time has been had by all. Unfortunately, you're attacked by a telepath after the date - at which time you discover that someone's placed a tracking device on you, and drugged you with an undetectable drug that makes you susceptible to telepaths.

Were you betrayed by Stuntwoman? And if so, what do you do about it?

Thrill Of A Lifetime

Stuntwoman says she has discovered a vital clue to the whereabouts of the Tyranny League. She's willing to give it away - all someone has to do is chase her down and catch her. Of course (if she's not lying) the Tyranny League will be out to kill her before she can divulge their secrets.

The Ultimate Stunt

Stuntwoman's stolen a million dollars from a druglord - and she's willing to give it away to the person who sends her the most spectacular stunt to perform (which she'll then attempt). Naturally, there's a lot of interest in the contest (including from the government, other villains, and the druglord from which she stole the money).

THE DAWN BROTHERS

Contrary to popular belief, CounterMeasures is dead. However, former CounterMeasures personnel are active in the FBI and CIA, and the Dawn Brothers is a CIA Black Box project run by CIA ex-CounterMeasures sympathizers, who are working to bring that organization back to life. This is but one of a number of old Black Box CounterMeasures projects; the pinnacle achievement of Project: CounterMeasures, Operation Grey Army, is alive and kicking. The is the source of soldiers for the Dawn Brothers, and one of the most serious long-term threats to all Gestalts.

The Grey Army was founded in 1990, when a troika of CounterMeasures personnel: Agent Keith Costner (now a bureaucrat in the CIA), Special Agent Tom McGinley (now a senior agent in the FBI), and Project CounterMeasures Director Andrew Dewalt (who committed suicide shortly after being indicted by Congress in 1992) recruited Franklin Fontaine, a Perfectionism Gestalt who could unlock barriers to human achievement. Over the years, Dewalt's trained several hundred agents from the US Army, Navy, and the intelligence community, transforming them into gifted normals whose abilities approach the superhuman. The backbone of the Dawn Brothers is a dozen Grey Army personnel who have infiltrated that organization and are transforming them into a far greater threat than they've ever been before.

The only person with a leash on the Grey Army is Costner, who oversees recruitment and who runs the training facility as his own private fiefdom. Costner is not a Gestalt, and is even more adamant in his belief that Gestalts will destroy humanity today as he was in 1989. He's used his CIA connections to recruit like-minded people into positions of authority in the CIA, but with limited success (his superiors consider most benign Gestalts (i.e. superheroes) to be useful tools in safeguarding the security of the nation).

In the last few years, the first of the Grey Army soldiers have begun "Stage 2" (the engagement of enemy forces). A Grey Army soldier has the following stats and equipment.

GREY ARMY OPERATIVE POWER LEVEL 7

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+4	+4	+4	+0	+1	+2
18	18	18	11	12	14

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+9/+5*	+8	+8	+6

*w/o armor

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Bluff 4(+6), Climb 4 (+8), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Demolitions 6 (+6), Drive 6 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+6), Knowledge (technology) 4 (+4), Notice 10 (+11), Pilot 6 (+10), Search 10 (+10), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Stealth 6 (+10), Survival 6 (+7)

Feats: Equipment 8, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Assault Rifle (**Blast 5** [Autofire, Penetrating; accurate 2]), Combat Suit (**Protection 4**, **Immunity 2** [suffocation], **Sensory Shield 4** [all senses], **Super Senses 2** [lowlight vision, radio])

Powers: Mind Shield 4 (anti-psionic training)

Combat: Attack +7, Grapple +12, Damage, Defense +8 (flatfooted), Knockback, Initiative

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from sight-based Dazzle effects; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 31 + Skills 20 (80 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 4+ Combat 30 + Saves 13 = **108 Total**

THE LEVIATHANS

Background: Gestalts originated in the Gestalt Dimension, which is tended by the Metagestalts. The decision to allow a Gestalt Wave was not universally accepted by these entities, and one of them, who called himself Precaution, decided to make plans in the event that the Gestalts got out of hand.

Precaution's plan was to create a single living weapon – the Leviathan King, who would sleep in the dimension of the mind, waiting to be woken in the living world at a moment of Precaution's choosing. Within that strange dimension, the sleeping King absorbed the ambient energy of the various dimensional inhabitants, and nursed his growing strength – when he awoke, he'd be unstoppable. But Precaution's plans went awry. The supervillain Influence, fleeing from a losing battle with Columbia, found a way into the Gestalt Dimension. There he discovered the King asleep in his crèche.

Curiosity overwhelmed the villain as he beheld the king, a giant curled into a fetal ball, as fully-formed as an adult, but with an infant's face. He used his telepathic powers to peer into the sleeper's mind – and a third eye opened in the center of the King's forehead, and the Leviathan was born with a telepathic scream that shook every corner of the Void.

Even so, Influence was fortunate. The King had awoken too soon, possessing only a small fraction of the power that Precaution had intended, otherwise Influence would never have escaped from the encounter with his life – or his sanity – intact. The telepath managed to flee back to our dimension,

and telekinetically sealed the gate behind him.

Pondering his encounter with Influence, the King came to two realizations: first, his purpose in life (the destruction of all Gestalts); second, the fact that he couldn't achieve it on his own. He needed allies. The King spent some time wandering the Void, where he found protogestalts gently gestating on the mental energies of our world's inhabitants. This filled the Leviathan with utter revulsion. He destroyed several of the protogestalts, but as his executions became slower (and more sadistic) it occurred to the King that he might be able to use his powers to reshape protogestalts into something more to his liking. So, combining the essence of protogestalts with that of other creatures in the Gestalt (and channeling his own power into the mix) he created the first proto-Leviathans. When the next Gestalt Wave came, these unformed creatures entered the world of the living, and became the King's servants.

For every id, there must be superego. For every desire, there must be repression. This, the Newtonian law of psychology, came to its fruition with the creation of the Leviathans.

If Gestalts are the unlocked desires of humanity, passions and dreams made flesh, then the Leviathans are that force of human will that seeks to restrain and repress them. Leviathans live to destroy Gestalts, those realization of unchecked human desires, and to subjugate humanity. The Leviathans boast that the day will come when all things that exist will be under control, for they live to dominate. Leviathans are the ultimate in control freaks.



Leviathans are extremely arrogant and pompous. They treat normal humans as vassals, and Gestalts as prey who are destined to be destroyed by them. They do not tolerate disrespect if there is any way they can safely punish it.

No one is certain why the King chose the name "Leviathan" for his brood. Perhaps because they came from the depths of the human psyche; like the Leviathans of legend, they were monsters of the deep, and they were Giants, larger and greater than humankind. (A few experts have even suggested calling them "Nephilim").

At best estimate, about one hundred and thirty Leviathans came into existence in the 2001 Gestalt Wave. All but handful have remained faithful to the Leviathan cause. Leviathan missions primarily involve intelligence gathering on Gestalts, and assassinations of Gestalts. Leviathans will work with Gestalts when it advances their goals, but these alliances of convenience usually fall apart quickly – and bloodily.

Leviathan names are strange and often long; the longer the name, the higher the position the Leviathan has attained in their hierarchy. Leviathan names have been described as sounding like a hybrid of Latin and Sumerian. Wolniwolnos. Arimathius. Torhane. Utiaveri. Hasinhirius. Ominos.

The Leviathan hierarchy is (in order of rank, from highest to lowest): King, Prince, Duke, Knight, Chancellor, and Caitiff. Knight and Duke are the two most commonly encountered castes. Dukes are leaders, Knights are soldiers, Chancellors are advisors, scientists and interrogators, and Caitiffs are spies. The Leviathan structure is quasi-feudal/medieval. There is a single King, who oversees six Princes, thirty-six Dukes, and 216 Knights. In addition, they are known to have an Oracle who provides them with insight about the future.

Leviathans are not gestalts. It's arguable that they could be called "cousins" of gestalts (a related "race") but Leviathans do not register as gestalts on a gestalt detector. However, telepaths will register on a psionic detector.

The stats of the Leviathan King have been left for the GM to determine. Stats for the Princes will be included in *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*.

Powers/Tactics: Leviathans act in combat according to caste. Caitiffs and Chancellors avoid combat whenever possible. Knights close and fight with anyone. Higher caste members only directly fight targets with exceptional reputations, otherwise they sit back at range and watch.

A Leviathan sword is an inherent power which may be summoned into their sword hand at will. It's as much a psionic as it is a physical object, so it cannot be harmed or taken away. The sword is symbolic of their strength and predatory nature

Leviathans retain a more tenacious hold on the Gestalt Dimension than other minds. Because they "overlap" dimensions so heavily, attacks which effectively target the dimensional boundary (or in game terms, attacks which

affect desolid) are very effective against them.

A Leviathan can watch or hunt practically anyone who's a Gestalt. They prefer to hunt those who are interested in their domain (i.e. the Gestalt Dimension)

Appearance: A Leviathan averages about thirteen feet in height. They have a third eye on their forehead which is the focus of their psionic powers. Leviathans also have mouths on the palms of their hands, from which they take psychic sustenance. Except for Knights (who dress in faux chain mail) they typically wear robes that give them a somewhat mystical appearance. Each caste typically has its own emblem; Princes have a burning castle set in a square; Knights have an upraised sword in a circle; Dukes have an upraised fist in a triangle.

Leviathans are overwhelmingly male; the only known female is the renegade Ominos (pronounced "Ominous"), leader of the powerful mercenary supervillain team known as the Psionic Seven.

LEVIATHAN KNIGHT POWER LEVEL 11

"THE GESTALT ANIMAL SHALL BE SLAUGHTERED, YOUR GRACE. PLEASE PUNISH ME IF I DISPLAY ANY EMOTION AT ITS DEMISE, SAVE (OF COURSE) SHEER PLEASURE."

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+4	+4	+4	+0	+1	+2
18	18	18	11	12	14

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+11	+11	+6	+10

Skills: Diplomacy 4 (+7), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Specialization (psychic sword), Teamwork 2

Powers: **Communication 10** (mental; Limited: Other Leviathans only; rapid, selective, subtle), **Growth 8** (huge size; Continuous; Permanent), **Immunity 80** (all physical and energy damage; Limited: ½ strength; power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Mental Attack 6** (Linked to Strike; Touch Range), **Protection 4** (power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Sensory Shield 3** (all senses), **Strike 6** (psychic sword; mighty), **Super Senses 4** (detect gestalt [acute, analytical, ranged]), **Super Strength 1**, **Teleport 3**

Combat: Attack +7* (psychic sword), +5* (other), Grapple +14*, Damage +14 (psychic sword), +8 (unarmed), Defense +5* (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -14, Initiative +3
(*size modifiers included)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 26+ Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 111 + Combat 28 + Saves 13– Drawbacks 2 = 183 Total

LEVIATHAN DUKE POWER LEVEL 14

WE REINTRODUCE THE ANCIENT WARS, THE CONFLICTS THAT TOOK PLACE AT THE DAWN OF THE WORLD WHICH MANKIND STUPIDLY CALLS 'MYTHS'. WE REINTRODUCE THE ANCIENT WARS – BUT THIS TIME, NO ANIMAL SHALL WITHSTAND US.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+4	+8	+0	+2	+5
30	18	26	11	14	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+13	+10	+6	+12

Skills: Diplomacy 6 (+11), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 6 (+8)

Feats: Attack Specialization (psychic sword), Teamwork 2

Powers: **Communication 10** (mental; Limited: Other Leviathans only; rapid, selective, subtle), **Growth 8** (huge size; Continuous; Permanent), **Immunity 80** (all physical and energy damage; Limited: ½ strength; power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Mental Attack 6** (Linked to Strike; Touch Range), **Mind Control 14** (third eye mesmerism), **Protection 5** (power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Sensory Shield 3** (all senses), **Strike 6** (psychic sword; mighty), **Super Senses 4** (detect gestalt [acute, analytical, ranged]), **Super Strength 3**, **Teleport 4**

Combat: Attack +8* (psychic sword), +6* (other), Grapple +14*, Damage +14 (psychic sword), +8 (unarmed), Defense +5* (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -14, Initiative +3 (*size modifiers included)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 39 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 148 + Combat 30 + Saves 16 – Drawbacks 2 = **239 Total**

LEVIATHAN CHANCELLOR POWER LEVEL 10

"OF COURSE WE SHOULD DESTROY THEM UTTERLY, YOUR GRACE. BUT BEYOND THAT, I ADVISE THAT WE GET AS MUCH INFORMATION FROM THEM AS POSSIBLE."

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+5	+2	+5	+1	+3	+3
20	14	20	12	16	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+9	+8	+5	+10

Skills: Bluff 4 (+7), Diplomacy 4 (+7), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+8), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Specialization (psychic sword), Inventor, Teamwork 2

Powers: **Communication 10** (mental; Limited: Other Leviathans only; rapid, selective, subtle), **Growth 8** (huge size; Continuous; Permanent), **Immunity 80** (all physical and energy damage; Limited: ½ strength; power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Mental Attack 6** (Linked to Strike; Touch Range), **Protection 4** (power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat), **Sensory Shield 3** (all senses), **Strike 6** (psychic sword; mighty), **Super Senses 4** (detect gestalt [acute, analytical, ranged]), **Teleport 3**

Combat: Attack +6* (psychic sword), +4* (other), Grapple +14*, Damage +14 (psychic sword), +8 (unarmed), Defense +5* (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -14, Initiative +3 (*size modifiers included)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 22 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 111 + Combat 26 + Saves 13 – Drawbacks 2 = **181 Total**

LEVIATHAN CAITIFF POWER LEVEL 10+

"OF COURSE WE'RE THE LOWEST CASTE OF THE LEVIATHANS. WE HAVE TO WORK WITH GESTALTS AND THEY SATURATE US WITH THEIR ANIMAL TAIN. WHEN THE LAST GESTALT IS DEAD, I HAVE NO IDEA HOW WE'LL PURIFY OURSELVES!"

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+8	+3	+6	+0	+2	+2
26	16	23	11	14	14

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+10	+9	+4	+9

Skills: Diplomacy 4 (+7), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Specialization (psychic sword), Teamwork 2

Powers: **Communication 10** (mental; Limited: Other Leviathans only; rapid, selective, subtle), **Growth 8** (huge size; Continuous; Permanent), Immunity 80 (all physical and energy damage; Limited: ½ strength; power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Protection 4** (power loss: attacks with the Affects Insubstantial power feat, -1 pt), **Sensory Shield 3** (all senses), **Shapeshift 2** (imposture), **Strike 6** (psychic sword; mighty), **Super Senses 4** (detect gestalt [acute, analytical, ranged]), **Telepathy 12** (subtle 2; Alternate Powers: **Mental Attack 6** [Linked to Strike; Touch Range]), **Teleport 3**

Combat: Attack +6* (psychic sword), +4* (other), Grapple +14*, Damage +14 (psychic sword), +8 (unarmed), Defense +5* (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -14, Initiative +3 (*size modifiers included)

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 23 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 137 + Combat 26+ Saves 11 = 209 Total (**Note:** The Caitiff's Shapeshift allows it to emulate traits which may potentially take it above a PL 10.)



EIKO SCOUT SHIPS AND CONSTRUCTS

As the players should only be dealing with Eiko scout forces at the start of the campaign, stats are provided only for the basic scout transport ship and the three scout constructs: the Neutralizer, the Dissector, and the Transmitter. Stats for the invasion force, the advanced soldier constructs (and for actual members of the Eiko race) will be given in *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*

Because the basic Eiko sense is based on Spatial Awareness, their Constructs are designed to receive and transmit sensory information based on that unusual sense group. The Eiko psionic signature is the Eiko "writing", telepathic impressions left behind by Eiko psionics that can be interpreted on touch; this is how Eiko record and relay information that's too unimportant to be relayed by memory drums.

EIKO TRANSPORT SHIP

VEHICLE

Str 85, Speed 15 (Flight), TGH +14/20, SZ Awesome

Features: **Navigation System**, Powers [**Force Field 6** (Impervious), **Mind Control 12** (Area Burst [progression 10 (area)]; Limited: One Command Only – "Don't Attack the Ship," Touch Range), **Regeneration 22** (+9 recovery, Injured 4, Disabled 4), **Super Senses 40** (blind-sight [extended 10] **detect Eiko psionic signature** [acute, analytical, extended 10], **detect probability fields** [acute, analytical, extended 10]), **Sensors, Security System**

EIKO DISSECTOR

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+4	--	-1	+2	+3
30	18	--	8	14	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+10	--	+5	+6

Powers: **Flight 5**, **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Protection 10** (Impervious), **Strike 9** (Penetrating; mighty), **Super Senses 21** (blindsight [extended 3], **detect probability fields** [acute, analytical, extended 3], **detect genetic structures** [acute, analytical; limited: only after using Strike on target], **detect Eiko psionic signature** [extended 3], **radio**), **Super Strength 2**

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +18, Damage +10 (mental blast), +10 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -10, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Disabled (no conventional physical senses; com, mod; -3

Abilities 26 + Powers 103 + Combat 24 + Saves 5 – Drawbacks 3= 155 Total

EIKO NEUTRALIZER

POWER LEVEL 10

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+4	--	-1	+2	+3
30	18	--	8	14	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+10	--	+5	+6

Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), **Mental Attack 14** (Linked to Paralyze), **Paralyze 10** (Alternate Save: Fortitude, Burst Area [progression 4 (area)], Selective Attack), **Protection 12** (Impervious), **Speed 2**, **Super Senses 28** (blindsight [extended 4], **detect Eiko psionic signature** [extended 4], **detect energy signatures** [acute, analytical, extended 4], **detect probability fields** [acute, analytical, extended 4], **radio**), **Super Strength 2**

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +18, Damage +10 (mental blast), +10 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -10, Initiative +4

Drawbacks: Disabled (no conventional physical senses; com, mod; -3 pts), Power Loss (Mental Attack and Paralyze when target not in contact with the ground, -2 pts)

Abilities 26 + Powers 188 + Combat 24 + Saves 5 – Drawbacks 5= 238 Total

EIKO TRANSMITTER

POWER LEVEL 14

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+4	--	-1	+2	+3
30	18	--	8	14	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+16*	--	+5	+6

*+10 vs. Physical Attacks

Powers: **Absorption 6** (Energy Storage; goes to array), **Blast 14** (Area Line, Penetrating; Affects Insubstantial; Alternate Powers: **Create Object 12** [Impervious; Limited: force walls only], **Healing 5** [Area Burst (progression 3 [area]), Perception Range, Total; Limited: Only Eiko constructs], **Teleport 15** [Limited: Only to locations containing receivers]), **Growth 8** (Continuous; Permanent; Innate), **Flight 5**, **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Leap 4**, **Protection 12** (Impervious), **Strike 8** (Aura, Sustained), **Super Senses 51** (blindsight [extended 10], **detect Eiko psionic signature** [extended 10], **detect energy signatures** [acute, analytical, extended 10], **detect probability fields** [acute, analytical, extended 10], **radio**)

Combat: Attack +6*, Grapple +24, Damage +14 (blast), +10 (unarmed), Defense +6* (+3 flatfooted), Knockback -20*, Initiative +4 (*include size modifiers)

Drawbacks: Disabled (no conventional physical senses; com, mod; -3 pts)

Abilities 20 + Powers 248 + Combat 32 + Saves 5 – Drawbacks 3= 312 Total



X: CAMPAIGN SECRETS

FOR THE GM'S EYES ONLY

THE NEAR FUTURE

Events that may happen in the near future (depending on PC intervention) include:

Fire In The Sky. The New Luddites target Orbit City for destruction by smuggling large quantities of explosives aboard and detonating them in the station's oxygen stores. Orbit City will be destroyed unless someone stops them.

Commanding Vampire-In-Chief. The Night Huntsman attempts to infiltrate the US Secret Service by transforming key personnel into vampires. His goal is to get access to the White House and vampirize the President.

Targeted Are The Peacemakers. The Blood Red King kidnaps the Oracle Gestalt Insight, associate of the Hollywood Knights. He wants to use Insight's prophetic powers to uncover the identities of people who are destined to become peacemakers, and kill them or transform them before they can change the world.

Ambush. The Prodigal kidnaps the parents of a member of a USMC Vanguard member and threatens to kill them unless he leads their squadmates into an ambush. The member agrees, and the team will suffer heavy casualties unless an outside force intervenes.

The Third Eye Is The Deadliest. The Leviathans create a device that can transform gestalts into Leviathans. They will attempt to use it on as many gestalts as possible.

C'mon Baby, Drive My Car. The Genius Dr. Berkov, Pride of Russia, completes a prototype for a mass-producible gravitic car. This development will draw interest from a lot of people (the Tyranny League, the Overking, Vlastitel, Weaponsmith, the US auto industry and many others.) He's already in partnership with Technarch.

Fleet Action. Coordinating their investigation of the wrecked Eiko craft with the Ar, the US military learns an Eiko fleet has gathered in Eiko space and is heading toward Earth. They decide to keep the news from the general public; though there are numerous leaks, few believe them.

WHAT THE TYRANNY LEAGUE IS PLOTTING

The United States Army will field-test the first prototype in its battlesuit program, a 12' foot battle armor suit called the Schwartzkopf Mk I. As they did in Atlanta, the Tyranny League will attempt to destroy

the prototype and kill anyone associated with the project.

There's a near economic collapse, as the Tyranny League (and Computor) unleashes a scheme that will cause the Dow to drop by 5000 points in a week, unless the heroes stop him. Computor's working with an Economics Gestalt who hopes to make an unbelievable fortune from investments after the crash.

If the Tyranny League does not destroy the US Battlesuit program, former Counter Measures personnel who have infiltrated the army will order the first US Power Armor Infantry Brigade to attack a major superhero team (i.e. possibly the PCs) in order to test the effectiveness of their new invention against gestalts. Even if the PCs survive, anti-government sentiments among gestalts will rise if the attack is made public, and the Tyranny League will use the incident to attempt to recruit more gestalts to their cause. If left unchecked, this plotline could escalate into open warfare between gestalts and the United States government.

THE EIKO INVASION

In a few years, the Eiko fleet will arrive at Earth. They're too big for Earth to handle on their own; someone will need to go off-planet and persuade the other Ar races to help humanity, while Earth's heroes perform a delaying action.

If the Ar'Turodain were persuaded to help defend the Earth, the Eiko will declare war against them and the Ar'Turodain-Eiko War will resume again. The Ar'Turodain will request human gestalts to help fight in their war.

WHAT DR. POWER IS PLOTTING

The reason that Theresa Power has been kidnapping people is to recreate her father. She and her operatives are using a DNA virus to rewrite their victims' genetic code, so they'll become transformed into a new Matthias Power. She has several hundred "daddies" in cold storage at her base. In a few years, unless someone intervenes, Dr. Power succeeds in creating a duplicate of her father, Matthias Power. The new Matthias will begin a scheme of world conquest, using his daughter's formidable resources.

Theresa has hundreds of duplicates of her father under "construction"; it will be almost impossible to destroy them all, though the clones will probably give it a good try – the "real" Dr. Matthias Power will want to destroy the "imposters". Unfortunately, the "Power Wars" will almost certainly cause

a lot of collateral damage, and no one can predict what Theresa will do if something horrible happens to her father.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

In response to the destruction caused by the Tyranny League and the growing disfavor of Columbia, the White House and the NSA unveils a new team of Gestalts lauded as “the most powerful swift response unit ever assembled”: *ActionAmerica*. The eight members of this team will be:

America Man II. Whether this is a new America Man or the original in a slightly altered costume, the general public doesn’t know (he’s not). But there’s no question

that he’s very powerful and he’s the leader:

Other members include:

Alpha: Gestalt of Pride (or Humiliation), currently active in Dallas.



Blossom: The humorless Miami-based battle-suit engineer tries her hand at another superhero team (after her membership in Columbia fell apart.)

Eagle: A native American who can mentally command eagles or sprout giant eagle-feathered wings.

Fighting Fortress: A reformed supervillain with electrical powers (though no one’s saying who he was).

The Intermediary: One of the team’s most controversial members, a reformed supervillain who can look into the past and speak with the dead.

Johnny Steel: An African-American who’s able to transform himself into a 12’ tall, living metal statue and who boasts that he’s stronger than the Titan.

Pathfinder: A speedster who can use her powers to accelerate others, and is a tracker and forensic expert without peer.

Silver Star: A gun-toting super-soldier who quickly earns the tagline “the man with more guns than anyone else on the planet”.

The team will quickly get a reputation for “making Columbia look humble” and “leaving no stone or civil liberty unturned in pursuit of their duty”. Whether there’s any truth to this (or whether this is just sour grapes on the part of veteran supers who are jealous of this new team’s high profile) is a GM call.

Another obvious question is whether anyone is fomenting dissent between the US Government and Columbia. The answer is “yes”; Influence and Despot are both (independently) using their powers on mid-level administration officials and the most volatile individuals in the conservative media. Some (both in the media and among gestalts) suspect their work,

but no one has been able to prove anything, and (so far), the administration is reluctant to entertain the thought that they may be compromised. For his part, Liberator knows that after the events of Red August, the public tends to react badly to cries of “mind control” even when they’re true; he would rather investigate the allegations personally and uncover the truth without disturbing the public’s sleep.

Whether this turns out to be a mistake, only time (and the GM) can tell. However, Columbia does have a lot of political allies and media influence of their own, and it’s unlikely that the adversarial relationship will last for too long.

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT

What happens when a massively powerful telepath (like the “Mandate of Heaven”) telepathically manipulates a nation – say, Taiwan – into voting to join China, and the international community knows it but can’t prove it? The world’s about to find out.

And what happens when China starts unveiling its newly developed telepathy bombs and other weapons that target people for psionic population control? This will be the start of a very interesting arms race.

WHY EVERYTHING HAPPENED

The biggest question of the last century is... why? Why did the Gestalt phenomena happen in the first place? Here’s the full story:

The increase in human population and the subsequent increase in psionic energy were putting humanity’s collective unconscious at risk. As the Gestalt suffered, it would be reflected in the Shellworld as increasing madness in the general population. The Metagestalts came to the conclusion that mankind needed to be culled, or they’d eventually experience a psionic overload that would result in mankind’s self-destruction. Gestalts were created because they were a efficient way to spend psionic energy —and cause widespread death without dooming the entire race.

Much like Gestalts, the Metagestalts reflect raw human emotions: Hope, Hatred, Love, Faith, Despair, etc. Those which reflecting positive emotions believed this was the only hope for mankind’s continued survival; if you gave humanity the power of gods, they’d find ways to save their race - and just as important, the stories that would be created around such legends would make them immortal.

Meanwhile the metagestalts who represent negative emotions relished the havoc that they would wreak on the earth. As far as they’re concerned, Gestalts are mankind’s executioners - they just don’t realize it.

A third faction opposed the empowerment of humanity. To repair “this dreadful mistake”, they created the Leviathans to hunt gestalts. However, the negative emotions needed to devote one’s life to

mass murder is a spiritual infection; the Leviathans don't just want to exterminate gestalts – they want to dominate mankind.

The Metagestalts' plan hasn't resulted in the death of as many humans as they expected, however, because Gestalt waves and Gestalt powers tap into psionic reserves from the Gestalt Dimension, it's relieved some of the environmental pressures on the dimension. Unfortunately it's also forced the Metagestalts to create a bureaucracy to tend unformed Gestalts, and that's greatly increased politics within the Dimension.

The Metagestalts are looking at those few individuals capable of transporting back and forth freely between the Gestalt and the Shellworld with alarm. They especially fear that a Gestalt scientist might learn how to build a device that will transport people back and forth between the two worlds. There is a Metagestalt agent currently on Earth who has been engineering the death of Gestalt scientists. That agent is Torhane, who poses as a renegade Leviathan and a friend of Columbia.

A lot of speculation has surrounded the date of the First Gestalt Wave – why September 22nd? Was there a secret government experiment? Alien psychic bacteria secretly falling to earth? Psychic tremors from the collapse of the Eastern bloc? Alas for the poetically minded, there was no special reason September 22nd was chosen as the day of the first wave. Nor is there a special trigger for other gestalt waves (other than the periodic need for metagestalts to release excess energy from the Gestalt Dimension). As one T-shirt puts it: "Gestalt happens."

A NASTY SECRET IDENTITY

Computer of the Tyranny League is really Dr. Richard Greer, inventor of the Quadrant Computer chip, and programmer of the NYSE A.I. Failsafe. The League is using the A.I. to manipulate the stock market - and hide billions of dollars of embezzlement. One of the reasons the League hasn't committed as many robberies lately is because they haven't needed to do so; they're as rich as they want to be. America's financial prosperity is a bubble they plan to burst at the right moment.

The League has not just been assassinating scientists; they've also targeted economists (based on Failsafe's recommendations). Russian economics Gestalt Grigory Sidorov is a likely assassination candidate in the near future.

Computer isn't the only "player" in the League; the Scarlet Knight's current secret identity is that of "Peter King", handsome CEO of the King Group, an industrial/media conglomeration that's grown to a multi-billion dollar industry in the last five years. Peter became the businessman that his family had always wanted him to be, though a lot of his profits are funneled to finance League activities, and he's a lot less of a jet-setter since he lost his right arm in the last fight with Columbia.



KOREAN WAR, REDUX

Sung Yong-sun became the vice president of North Korea and sits at Kim Jong-Il's right hand - he's possibly the most powerful politically oriented Gestalt in the entire world. Sung Yong-sun has been organizing a unification movement in South Korea, using the recent economic downturn to drive a wedge between the United States and South Korea, as a prelude to a takeover and reunification of the two Koreas. On Gestalt-Earth (even more than in the real world), Korea is a major flash point, thanks largely to Yong-sun's persuasion and oratory skills. No one suspects Yong-Sun's true nature - yet.

As in the real world, North Korea has nuclear weapons. They also have a world class teleporter who's capable of delivering them anywhere on the planet.

But much of the rhetoric is a diversion for Yong-Sun's real activities; North Korea has been employing Gestalt specialists to produce experimental weapons and have also struck a deal with the Ar'Kayadin. At some point in the neat future, they're going to launch an invasion of South Korea, and the world is going to be engulfed in one of the great crises of the modern age.

IT WAS TOO EASY

Igor Mironov was not really Vlastitel. Mironov was a bone thrown at Maskrobat to throw him off the scent (and to test Kavalerist's loyalty). There's

someone even more manipulative who is the real Authority, and in fact, Mironov was sacrificed as part of his (or her) scheme.

Maskrobat does suspect that it was too easy to catch Vlastitel, and he hasn't dropped his guard. However, Kavalerist is completely oblivious to the possibility of retribution.

IN TOO DEEP

Several superheroes are deep cover agents of Hannibal Poole, who used the Hypnotist to bring them secretly under his control. They include the ATF's Gunslinger, Railgun, Lightning Girl, Canada's Sheltie, Mexico's Pegador, and the invisible crime-fighter Fade (a Chicago-area resident whose existence is not yet known to the general public). These people are unaware of their situation, but code words have been telepathically placed that will place them under Poole's control (during which time they'll report any secrets to the crime boss Gestalt).

WHERE HAVE ALL THE HEROES GONE?

America Man hasn't really disappeared; he became bitter, retreated from society, only to be captured and brainwashed by Hannibal Poole. Now the world's first superhero secretly works as an enforcer for Hannibal Poole, who is his guide to the dark side of America.

And, yes, since that happened, America doesn't seem like such a bright place to live anymore.

At some point, America Man is going to re-emerge, but whether he betrays the world's heroes or reconnects with his original heroic ideals will depend on the actions of the PCs, because someone will have to do something that inspires him again.

The America Man who's with ActionAmerica is not the original, (but he *was* his biggest fan when he was a kid.)

WHO CALLED THE FALCON?

Horus, a young man from the Hot Gods, was "summoned" to deal with a special menace to mankind – the great serpent Apep, the signs of whose coming have already been seen. He'll arrive in the next Gestalt Wave. Horus is destined to battle him, but who will be standing beside him?

SECOND JOB

The Maverick Man has a second identity - he's the Klansman, a Gestalt who works with the KKK, and is responsible for several church burnings.

The Maverick Man is also involved in putting together Team Maverick, which will be employed by a major tobacco firm as a southern US hero team and a marketing gimmick that's directed especially toward kids (though they'll deny that charge).

KIDNAPPED!

Gunka, the Japanese cult leader, is in league with the Ar'Kayadin. He's providing genetic materials from his best agents (exceptional normals); the Ar'Kayadin are cloning them, aging the clones, and programming them to serve Gunka - and (secretly) the Ar'Kayadin. In exchange for this service, Gunka will deliver combat-capable Gestalts to the Ar'Kayadin to serve as their gladiatorial slaves.

BASE SUSPICIONS

There's a large underwater Ar'Sarashar base about two hundred miles off the coast of California. A handful of old UFO reports were really describing Ar'Sarashar scout craft. It's led by a relatively civil and progressive Ar'Sarashar named Deraylin, who's one of the most intelligent minds of the Ar'Sarashar leaders, the Directors.

Deraylin plans to secretly cultivate the potential of humanity and Gestalts so they can be used as weapons against an Eiko swarm, a mass uprising of the Eiko against all Ar races that he views as inevitable. Unless major changes are made in the galactic status quo, the Eiko swarm will begin in the year 2107 (this is a *very* long-term plotline).

The Ar'Sarashar aren't the only secret aliens on Earth: Red Morgan, the Vancouver-based supervillain, is an escaped Ar'Kayadin gladiator. The son of the Ar'aax, unaware of his true heritage, is currently attached to the Ar'Turodain security contingent on Earth. And worst of all, the Ar'Turodain archcriminal Radaa is indeed on Earth, posing as a researcher for a major biotech firm.

MY SECRET WORLD

A second gestalt city, *Hasuni* (Bastion) is secretly being built in the middle of a refugee camp near the Rwanda/Zaire/Uganda border, using the same gestalts who built Kuumahali. This city is meant to serve refugees from the many wars that have devastated the region and give them complete protection against marauders and a good place to live. Local UN officials are facilitating the building; when word leaks out into the general public, it will spark a major debate in the international community on the role of gestalts. Metagestalts will be unable to oppose it. It will attempt to consume the mental force of all sentients on Earth.

VOZIAN THE SURVIVOR

The mysterious leader of the Ar's Crimson Brigade (see page 153) is actually a fifteen hundred year old A.I. – the same one which lowered the defenses of the planet Wystad to the Eiko, an act which led to the planet's destruction. Founding and guiding the Crimson Brigade is an act of atonement.

If either the Ar'Kayadin and the Ar'Turodain governments (and even some Crimson Brigade

members) knew the truth about its identity, they'd want it destroyed, so it poses as an alien entity to protect itself. It's driven by an extreme hatred for the Eiko, and would be willing to sacrifice many lives if it led to the Eiko's complete extermination.

WHY THE EIKO AREN'T MORE DESTRUCTIVE

For twelve hundred years, knowledgeable Ar analysts and philosophers have asked themselves a very important unanswered question: "Why haven't the Eiko completely wiped the Ar out of the stars?" The official answer is usually "because the Ar are such great and tenacious warriors". Like most claims of military prowess, it's full of hot air.

Eiko wars are religious ceremonies. They priest drums which govern Eiko society believe that wars should only be fought on hallowed ground. In Ar space, the only world considered truly holy to the Eiko was Wystad, the planet which was the site of the first Ar/Eiko conflict. However, Eiko, like any social creature, goes through cycles of philosophic thought. Every few centuries, the Eiko control drums become dominated by more secular thoughts; during these times, war is considered a less sacred and more pragmatic activity (this is when the Eiko swarm and launch much more aggressive attacks against the Ar, a cycle of violence which typically ends when enough soldier Eiko die off to allow the religious Eiko to regain control of the species). Usually, the Eiko dedicate only a small fraction of their resources and energies to war.

Unfortunately for Earth, the presence of Probability Tunnels (and the Gestalt in general) makes the planet a very holy site to the Eiko, and what is sacred must be sanctified.

A MOLE IN THE BOTTOM OF THE LEAGUE

One of the Tyranny League members is a traitor — the Hand of Chaos. He owes his true allegiance to Dr. Theresa Power. He's never had to betray the League —aside from providing intelligence to the good Doctor, —but when it looks like the League's days are numbered, he'll jump back to his mistress.

THE NEW COLUMBIANS

Columbia has been recruiting and training young Gestalts to form a reserve team of reservists. "Mako", "SunShadow", and "Strong Guy in Tights" are all codenames for the next generation of Columbia, who are being trained at a secret facility that Liberator has built in the Caribbean.

THE COMING OF AUTARCH!

The next wave of Gestalts will produce a number of very powerful villains, but arguably the most dangerous of the lot will be August Wills, a failed politician who, indicted for corruption at the moment of the next Gestalt Wave, will experience a

transformation that elevates his intelligence and charisma. Autarch's goal will be nothing less than to take over the United States (and eventually the world) in order to purge its political systems of corruption and establish a new world order, with Autarch as its benevolent dictator.

To further his aims, Autarch will form his own version of the Tyranny League, but this team, *the Autarch Council*, will be a team of ruthless idealists, not greedy psychopaths.

The other major villain team that will soon emerge are the *Dark Lords*. They include *the Lord of Hands* (who controls people's hands), *the Lord of Voices* (who can literally put words in people's mouths, among other things) *the Lord of Eyes* (who can control what people see), *the Lord of Songs* (who can bring things to life by singing about them, or mentally dominate someone as long as they're singing) and *the Duke of Strides* (who controls people's feet). Initially appearing as a traditional villain team, they'll target high-tech installations in an attempt to monopolize the development of high-tech equipment for their leader, the Lord of Science (who may or may not be Technarch in another guise). The first of these devicers is an experimental cloaking field used by each member of the team/

CRISIS - WHAT A CRISIS!

The Strong Man was really the Zambian Strongman Gestalt Umsipha, who (at some point in the future) will travel back in time to help Columbia defeat the Devastators. Big Bang was linked to a very powerful energy source from the future, and when he pushed his powers to their limits, he produced a window in time that allowed Umsipha to appear at a critical moment. The current Gestalt Wave has produced a lunatic energy controller with similar abilities to Big Bang named Wormhole; Wormhole will become a key player in the Crisis that will allow Umsipha/Strong Man to travel back in time again. (And yes, Umsipha will alter his physical appearance for the trip.)

Big Bang's physical body was destroyed in the fight with Columbia, but his consciousness was projected forward, into the future and is plotting revenge. His revenge that will begin when the timestream catches up to his displacement - he reappear next year, on September 22.

Big Bang is the force behind the crisis that's destined to occur. In this crisis, he will take possession of one of the Matthias Power duplicates that his daughter has created, and use Power's resources to set up his scheme (along with an alliance with the Leviathan King). He will put a number of devices into the Gestalt Dimension, and when the next Gestalt Wave occurs at the end of the year, it will channel the energy of the Gestalt Wave into a single being and create the Omega-Gestalt, a Gestalt entity with the combined power of ten thousand Gestalts. The Omega-Gestalt is an entity of destruction. Even the

metagestalts will not be able to stop this threat.

AND WHO IS IN COLUMBIA'S PENTHOUSE?

This secret is being left untouched, for now. This may be covered in a future supplement.

THIRD DAY

The follow-up to the Day of Monsters and the

Day of Weapons (if any) is being left entirely to the GM.

AND VICTOR EISMANN REALLY IS...

...a mystery that's being handed over completely to the GM. No future sourcebook will ever reveal his "true" identity, so he can be used as a major plot point that the GM can customize to suit the needs of his campaign.

WHY HASN'T SHE CONQUERED THE WORLD YET?

If you think through the goals and personalities of each of your master villains, you need to ask yourself that painful but revealing question. Let's go down our list of master villains and ask that question:

The Tyranny League hasn't conquered the world because their plan to consolidate their conquest is still in progress. They've got the firepower to take their shot, but Imperator's a good enough strategist to know that he won't be able to maintain his hold on the globe if he attacks now, so he's doing a lot of behind the scenes preparation to secure the future of the Imperator regime.

The Blood Red King has other goals than world conquest, though he eventually plans to plunge all of mankind into Hell.

Hannibal Poole is already well on his way toward gaining control of every part of the world that matters to him.

Influence is dealing with a lot of recent setbacks, and is preoccupied with training the Five. He has a few minor schemes in the works, but it will be a few years before the Five are ready to embark on Influence's major scheme.

The Leviathan King continues his exploration of the Gestalt Dimension. He's also heard about the Eiko, and is putting his plans on hold until after the invasion; if the invasion sufficiently weakens Earth's gestalts, he might be able to step in to deliver the finishing blow.

Portal and *the Byzantine*, two people who are usually considered to be "minor villains", both have very ambitious schemes in the early stages: Portal plans to open doors to "the Horde dimension" and unleash an army of a billion soldiers plucked from alternate Earths to serve as invasion force. The Byzantine has captured two Russian Time Gestalts and plans to kidnap more; he hopes to synchronize a temporal bubble that he'll manipulate to alter the timeline as he wishes.

There's another would-be world conqueror named *Fatemaster* whose plans will be revealed in *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*.

As for *Dr. Power*, it's very complicated. No one has the resources or knowledge that Power has, no one has the potential to unleash as much chaos as she does – and daddy wants her to conquer the world. And therein lies the rub.

Power's love for her father is superficial; it was programmed into her by years of abuse. At her core, Theresa knows what her father did to her, and despises him. As a result, she subconsciously sabotages her plans. She's also aided by her AIs, who are extremely devoted to her, and who know what a bad thing it'd be if she succeeded in conquering the world for her father. So she inevitably leaves an opening for a smart hero to foil her plan – which, in typical twisted fashion, usually causes her to develop a grudge against that particular hero.

With Power, everything eventually turns into psychodrama of the most sordid sort.

XI: CAMPAIGNING

The best campaign worlds have no shortage of interesting dilemmas and conflicts to explore. The Gestalt timeline is specifically designed for a campaigns with a lot of short and long term problems: the more plot hooks, the merrier.

VARIANT CAMPAIGNS

One campaign possibility is to start the First Gestalt Wave on September 22 of the current year, and start the campaign when the players get their powers. The players will have the additional problem of dealing with their powers, and the world's reaction to their abilities.

Another variant is a "classic archetype" campaign. This is Gestalt without the weird edge; all Gestalts are bonded, there is no Gestalt Dimension, and the player choice for archetypes should come from the following list, which is meant to reflect the most common Archetypes used by the comics:

Animal, Detective, The Elements (choose one), Justice, Mad Scientist/Eccentric Professor, Magician, Martial Arts Style Champion, Monster Hunter, Monstrous Hero, Mythic Warrior, Mythological Reincarnation, Regional Protector, The Seasons (choose one), Soldier, Speed Demon, Strongman, Swash-buckler, Trickster, Vengeance, Weapons Master.

The limited selection of archetypes will make it easy for newcomers to get into the campaign. For additional ease, pick and choose from the templates provided in this book; if the GM wishes to allow other Gestalt Archetypes (or fill in some of the more general ones, like the Animal Gestalt), consider creating a new template for each additional archetype

and leave room for the players to customize their characters.

Conversely, if the players really want to play in a weird game, they can play a Pure Gestalt only campaign. For those whose taste runs to the truly bizarre, predetermine that all player characters in the campaign are the personification of something like a poem or a song, or the reincarnation of a historical or folkloric figure reborn in the modern age.

Since Gestalts represent archetypes (just like ancient deities), there's a natural confusion between Gestalts and mythic gods. "The gods return" is also a logical variant for a Gestalt game.

CREATING STORIES

As a four-color comic book campaign world, Gestalt's storylines reflect comic book storylines. The heroes react to the actions of an antagonist (a super-villain), attempt to stop him, and get into a big fight. Pathos is generated by the situation, by the character's backstory, and by the villain's motivation.

Also, there are a lot of story hooks scattered throughout this book. Use them.

Additionally, the unique nature of Gestalt suggests other areas which the GM can use to mine creative bits (which often spin off into plots when the player plays along) and some basic conflicts that can be expanded into fill stories. These include:

INNER CONFLICT BETWEEN MAN AND HIS GESTALT

When a person is a Gestalt (particularly a bonded Gestalt), they're driven to do a lot of crazy things. A regional protector Gestalt may attempt to free a guilty man from jail, just because they share the same background or ethnic stock. A Music Gestalt may disrupt the world by giving a concert in the

MATTERS OF PLAY

In the four Gestalt campaigns played to date, the timeline is more advanced than the timeline in the book. In our campaigns, the Hollywood Knights went to Hell and destroyed the Blood Red King, the Tyranny League was defeated by a vast alliance of superhumans (led by the ATF) and are now safely locked away, and the Eiko invasion is long over (although it cost many lives, both human and superhuman).

For my players, this book presents an "alternate" Gestalt-Earth universe to the one they played in, one where many of the most interesting situations are still left for the PCs to resolve.

middle of a busy street. A Firefighter Gestalt might be walking through a building that's clearly not up to code, and pull a fire alarm in order to test the reaction time of the people in a building and keep them on their toes. Fighting the battle - and losing - with one's inner demons is a way to generate plots; it's something the player characters should experience during the campaign.

VILLAIN SEEKS A CAMPAIGN SECRET

One of the most powerful psychological forces is curiosity, and there's a lot to be curious about the weirder fringes of Gestalt-Earth: the Gestalt Dimension, Probability Lord artifacts, and weird Gestalt phenomena. Villains might go to considerable lengths to uncover the secrets of the campaign world, putting innocent lives at risk, unleashing something terrible, or becoming transformed into abominations.

This scenario is particularly appropriate if you're running a horror campaign or any campaign with a dark tone. A common theme of horror is the dangers of dealing with "things man was never meant to know".

This scenario works best when there's a strong connection between the hero and the villain. Remember the principle of *a five year old's fun*: the most satisfying joys are those that most appeal to the five year old within us. It's one thing to stop a bad guy from getting what he wants — but another thing entirely to play keepaway from our archenemy.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Government and corporations are always doing things they shouldn't, and always covering up their misdeeds. Power corrupts (except for a true hero, of course) and therefore most powerful people in Gestalt have to be the most corrupt.

Conspiracy theories on Gestalt-Earth run to the very bizarre:

- A shapechanger has replaced the Titan and plans to hand the world over to an alien occupation force.
- The Ar is a government created fraud that is being used to manipulate the public into supporting their secret agenda.
- Gestalts have existed since the dawn of time. The secret masters have decided that now is the time to go public with their obscene genetic experiments, which they disguise with Gestalt mumbo-jumbo.
- The Tyranny League are actually friends of Columbia. Their menace was manufactured to give Columbia a nemesis that allows Liberator to manipulate public opinion. The dead members of Columbia and the T-Gang aren't really dead (except for Thrillseeker, who learned the truth and was eliminated by Liberator).
- Mind control technology is built into every digital watch and cellphone

However there are secret government programs that monitor Gestalts, and many corporations are interested in Gestalts that could boost their profit margins. And some of their things they do to attract and control them are on the shady side, and they're a source of conflict in the game, especially in the corporate world. So, there are lies out there to expose.

EXPLORATION

One aspect of comic books that has been lost in the modern world is the pulp thrill of exploration, encountering weird phenomena, gateways into strange new worlds. While the longing to explore may be passé in today's information age; in Gestalt, the discovery of the Gestalt Dimension and extraterrestrial life has rekindled mankind's spirit of discovery and exploration. Explorers embark on their expeditions for both idealistic and practical reasons; exploration Gestalts would be more idealistic, while Gestalts concerned about the impact of outside forces on the world will be driven by more practical concerns.

WEIRD MCGUFFIN THEATER

A by-product of the Gestalt Wave has been the appearance of strange phenomena and Gestalt related objects. Some of these objects, ("McGuffins", as they are sometimes known) have the power to make major changes to the campaign and to those living in it. Refer to the Strange Gestalt Phenomenon section for other weird events that have happened in the campaign setting.

CARING AND FEEDING FOR ONE'S GESTALT

Encourage players to engage in activities that are not strictly related to the superhero arena. Not all Gestalts are built to be optimum crime fighters or supervillain combat machines. A Regional Protector Gestalt isn't just going to fight the enemy; he's going to go around the neighborhood and clean up the place, get to know his community, and encourage neighbors to come together. A Martial Arts Gestalt isn't just going to fight; he or she is going to be a teacher and a philosophical champion. A Chess Gestalt is not just going to want to play the game, he'll want to teach the game and sponsor tournaments.

It is not the GM's role to tell player how to play their characters, or to interfere in the role-playing process. But the GM can use NPCs to give the PCs ideas, and the GM must pay attention to his PCs and reward the player for creative play. When a player begins to plan non-combat activities, a GM should always ask two questions: first, how can I do something interesting and unexpected with this plotline; second, how can I get other PCs involved? Players can be very generous when it comes to giving a GM an interesting plot, even when they don't wish to be.

CROSSING OVER WITH GESTALT-EARTH

Even if you're not gaming in a particular campaign world (such as Gestalt), other campaign worlds make interesting places for your campaign to visit.

If a player character is guest starring in Gestalt for a few sessions, GMs should be liberal with characters' powers when translating characters over.

If a player character from another campaign is coming over to Gestalt permanently, they should rewrite the character to abide by the rules of the campaign. The player can assume some changes were made to the character when he/she crossed the dimensional boundary.

At first glance, Gestalt-Earth doesn't have many of the attributes of a good alternate world, most of which typically involve a recognizable twist on the real world ("What if the Nazis won World War II?") and an epic struggle to overthrow a dictator. Gestalt-Earth's high concept ("What if Archetypes Came To Life?") is a harder one to wrap your brain around. While there's plenty of villainy on Gestalt-Earth, there's no easy opponent (unless someone wants to do a "Dr. Power takes over the world" scenario, and frankly, there are better ways to run this scenario than by using this setting).

However, there is room for other campaigns to crossover with Gestalt-Earth. We did it in the original Hollywood Knights campaign, violating the "no extra-dimensions" rule, preserving some of the uniqueness of the setting by saying, "the dimensional boundaries are very thick around Gestalt." There are several approaches that a GM can use Gestalt-Earth and make for some interesting scenarios:

Gestalt-Earth as an Enemy Universe. Given that the Gestalts on Gestalt-Earth are the embodiment of the collective unconscious, visiting heroes may be treated as an invading system. In this case, the heroes and villains of the world will act as antibodies, instinctively recognizing other-dimensional supers as foreign and attacking on sight. Only pacifist or diplomacy Gestalts would be able to treat with the "intruders" without fighting; visiting heroes may wonder about the natives' sudden, unprovoked desire to attack, especially since every account indicates that the heroes of this world should be much more reasonable. This approach presents Gestalt-Earth as a puzzlebox; Superheroes will have to figure out why they're being attacked by this world's most respected figures, and how to escape.

Gestalt-Earth as a World of Strange Supers. In this approach to Gestalt-Earth, make the supers rarer, and have fewer costumed adventurers. Instead, play the world as a normal world, with a lot of bizarre superpowered people running around (look at the list of "Unusual Gestalts" and have most Gestalts take this approach). In this case, the PCs will have to deal with strange people in out-of-control situations. This is another puzzlebox scenario.

Gestalt-Earth as a Deprived World. In Gestalt-Earth, there are no mutants, no magic, and no high technology. Player characters from other universes

are targets because they have genetic material or neurochemistry that can be reliably replicated to produce superhuman cadres (once scientists native to Gestalt-Earth realize the truth about them). Superhuman technology is even more desirable, if only because engineers are more common than geneticists, and performing reverse engineering on technology is easier than reverse engineering on genes. In this scenario, the PCs land on Gestalt-Earth, treat it as a normal superhero world until they reveal that they're different ("but this looked exactly like our world with different costumes!"), and then let the hunt begin!

Magical heroes might have the problem that their spells and protections don't work on Gestalt. Whether a power or ability is neutralized on Gestalt-Earth is a GM's call.

Gestalt-Earth as the Opponent When Worlds Collide. The classic epic mini-series involves universes in collision, and only one may survive. You can have a "Clash of the Cosmic Continuum" where the hero's universe and Gestalt-Earth begin to merge and heroes are forced to battle each other to see which Earth survives. This is a good excuse for angst-ridden fight scenes, but of course the real puzzle will be to figure out how to ensure that both worlds survive. Meanwhile certain villains (such as the Tyranny League) plot to ensure their Earth is the only one to survive; other villains (such as the Blood Red King) plots to spread their influence to a new world, while more nihilistic villains plot to destroy both worlds!

Gestalt-Earth as a Homeworld for One Member of a Supervillain Team-up. Two or more villains from different worlds get together and figure that if they collaborate, they'll conquer all of their enemies. Usually, this results in either the villains betraying each other, or by being pounded by more enemies than usual.

Gestalt-Earth as a Parody World. Although not recommended by this excessively serious author, Gestalt-Earth makes a great place to parody the excesses of the four-color genre. If anything, representing individuals as the embodiments of concepts makes them more susceptible to silliness and parody.

Gestalt-Earth is a fun place to live; there's no reason anyone wouldn't want to live there, provided that they can put up with a little mayhem.

GESTALTS IN NON-GESTALT CAMPAIGNS

Gestalt is meant to be used as a single piece, with the gestalt archetype concept employed as the core of the campaign. Naturally gamers, being a contrary breed, sometimes have no respect for an author's intent. If you like the idea of Gestalt, but don't want to make gestalts the central focus of your game (or abandon your game to play a new setting), there are a few ways to incorporate the concept into your campaign.

Gestalt As One Of Many Origins. There's nothing to say that a Gestalt Dimension can't exist alongside benign mutation, experimental technology, and magic as viable origins. Having empowerment by the collective unconscious as one of many origins may make it more

difficult to discover the root cause of the phenomenon, as many experts might assume it's another form of magic.

Gestalt As A Special Case. Suppose a powerful magical or psionic entity decided to appraise human worth by bringing forth the embodiments of human ideals and letting them loose in the world to test them? Sounds like a viable variation on the Gestalt concept to me. There may only be a few Gestalts in this campaign; they might be a small family or "pantheon" of supers with a shared origin (which may lead to some nasty infighting among "the Twenty Embodiments of the Human Ideal"), much like mutants occupy a sub-universe in the larger Marvel Universe.

The Gestalt phenomena might also be limited to a special place; a lost city, used by aliens as a base on Earth long ago. The Gestalts were originally experiments, but now they run the place, bringing order, beauty, and (occasionally) madness to their people.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Several cinematic GMing techniques are recommended to emphasize a gestalt's nature and reward players who use them. These techniques are the Establishing Scene, the Solo Scene, and the Spotlight Moment.

THE ESTABLISHING SCENE

One way to apply the origin and the choices that the player has made in character creation is to give them an Establishing Scene during the first scenario of the campaign. This *doesn't* have to be the character's origin. Remember those scenes in a movie which introduce a character and either showcases his internal conflict or just shows off how cool he is? *That* is what this scene is all about.

An establishing scene is a 3-5 minute scene (don't run longer scenes when they only involve one player) that either shows how the pure gestalt reacted to the world when they first appeared in it, how a bonded gestalt responded to discovering their abilities, or just a cool bit with a PC showing off their powers (the "terrorize the street gang or mugger" scene is commonplace in comics — don't hesitate to hand over complete control of the scene to the player if he feels comfortable; as an introduction, it beats a visual description).

An example of an establishing scene, albeit one for the bad guys and not a PC, is the "Origin of the Questioner" story in the sidebar on page 56.

Once these establishing scenes are done, fast forward to the present day and the present situation. You might occasionally, when it serves the need of the story, hand control of the scene of the player to describe a Flashback (for example, the first time the PCs' encounter an alien, give the players a Flashback to what they were doing when the Ar'Turodain made first contact).

TAGS, YOU'RE IN!

GMs love atmosphere — but in practice, music and RPGs often don't go together well. If a movie stopped for 30 seconds so the director could set up a musical cue, you'd get bored, but that's precisely what happens when a GM stops a game to find the right piece of music, and fiddles with the controls for so long that the "perfect moment" is lost.

Consider the use of music in a cartoon series like *Batman: the Animated Series* or *Justice League*. They often use short 10-15 second pieces to showcase a character or emphasize the drama of a situation. These 10-15 second snippet of an atmospheric theme at a key scene can be a real attention getter, and so are tags for individual characters, which serve as a short theme piece.

A GM should feel free to experiment with things that enhance the atmosphere of the game. If you have a computer, set it up so individual 10-15 second tags play for dramatic situations and/or important NPCs and villains.

For player theme music, let the player select their character's piece — even including variations for different moods: ("This is the bummer version of the Armbrust theme for when he lets the team down!"). You can let the player play their music at appropriate music ("I'm doing a presence attack... cue my theme!") or let them play it as a reward.

Again, don't play the entire CD, however much you may like the theme music from *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings*. 10-15 seconds is plenty; longer selections quickly lose their impact. Keep music short, sparse, and dramatic.

THE SOLO SCENE

Most GMs try to keep a group of PCs together as much as possible; but sometimes it's worthwhile to give characters a little time in the spotlight. Consider starting a game with one character thrust in the middle of an action scene. Keep the scene to a maximum length of 5-10 minutes. Get the other players to brainstorm complications to throw at the PC during the sequence to keep them involved. Good plot ideas may be invented that the GM can latch on for later use.

A solo scene is a good place to spotlight a PC's Goal (as per a goal pursuit session.)

THE SPOTLIGHT MOMENT

In a movie, you know the moment when the music swells and a character faces the ultimate challenge for his goal? When a character must make a dramatic decision between those he loves and what he believes in? A good GM should learn to recognize that moment and showcase it. At a dramatic point in the adventure, freeze the clock or put things in slow motion to focus on the drama.

Slo-mo villainous actions, with the motions being acted out (such as a telepathic villain focusing a hostage to put a gun to his head and pull the trigger) also gives the PCs extra time in which to declare they're going to intervene.

Learn to identify player clues: When a player is in a role-playing groove and showing hesitation, he's often showcasing his own personal dilemma. Reinforce what the player's feeling.

Learn the iconography: When you can, use established visual iconography for the Archetype. For example, in the samurai genre, the frame narrows until we only see a close-up of the eyes, so during a spotlight moment for a Samurai Gestalt employ that image and linger on it. For a strongman



superhero, holding up a crumbling building while innocents escape is an iconic moment. When you get one of these, go into great descriptive detail, and (if it doesn't hurt pacing), reinforce them with the character's musical rhyme (see Sidebar, Tags, You're It!).

Once per session, arrange for one of the PCs to experience a "Championing moment", where they use one of their major powers in a showcase. If someone's a Local Protector, let him prevent a building from collapsing, then describe in detail the ecstatic reaction of those he protects. If he's a Sprinter Gestalt, give him a moment when he has to outrun something. If he's a Food Gestalt, let him walk into a starving village holding an impossibly huge banquet. Ask yourself "how am I going to make the character feel good about championing his archetype?". Recruit other players and have them suggest ways to enhance these special moments.

THE TWO-WAY STREET

We mentioned earlier that Gestalts are a "two-way street"; that when a character experiences a major triumph, those associated with his archetype prosper, and when he suffers, so does that which he represents. But how do you represent this?

Rather than invent a new mechanic for Prosperity, the easiest way is to handle it in-game, and use media reports. For instance, if a Strongman

gestalt has a major triumph, reward the player by letting him create and narrate a news story involving his archetype: someone broke a weightlifting record, a mother experienced a freakish burst of strength when she was saving her kids, etc.). Similarly, if they fail, show a setback in the press. (The GM should hesitate to link major tragedies to the PCs unless the player's a Tragedian who enjoys the angst).

EXTREME MEASURES

PLANNING VS. REALITY IN THE ATF CAMPAIGN

I've seen a lot of good campaigns over the years, but no one really talks about how a campaign is planned and implemented. I thought it might be interesting to take a look at how a campaign starts and how it develops, from the core idea to an actual game session.

I had run two campaigns on Gestalt-Earth (the New Columbians and Hollywood Knights), but by the end of the Hollywood Knights campaign, I had burned out on GMing. The Knights campaign had lasted over two years, and I had been blessed with some of the finest players that a GM can have, but after awhile, keeping the challenge alive without warping the universe becomes a problem. The gaming group was used to going through campaigns with two-year life cycles, and it felt like time to give the Knights a rest.

Surprisingly, the burnout didn't last very long, and I was ready, even eager, to run again in a couple of months. Since the Knights' gaming group was full, I decided to try to get a group of players together after work; fortunately, I was working at a computer game company, and there was no shortage of good players.

PLANNING

PART ONE: HIGH CONCEPT

I figured I could run a maxi-series, a campaign with ten to twelve sessions, and not burn out; if the game were successful, I could continue it, but the long-running campaign wouldn't be the overriding concern.

I didn't want to do a generic superhero team campaign. The two previous campaigns, the New Columbians and the Hollywood Knights, had both been traditional superhero games and it was time to do something a little different.

The high concept came first. "What if the heroes worked for the ATF" was the inspiration for the game; I didn't sit down and analyze the factors that made for a good campaign; I simply listened to my muse, and when the concept came to me, I sat back and analyzed it. The ATF was controversial (in the real world) and controversy breeds interest. I'm not terribly fond of conspiracy theories (if I had to make a choice, I'd say government is usually more incompetent than

malevolent), but I could work in themes of government subversion into the storyline and see how players handled it. Just as importantly, in the context of the overall Gestalt storyline, the United States was getting hammered by the Tyranny League, the League's enemies were not getting the job done, and the government had every reason to be reactionary.

I called the campaign "Extreme Measures", from the saying "extreme times call for extreme measures." One of the things that the government needed to do would be to update Operation Strongbox, covert government files that contain information on super-heroes. This would bring the PCs into conflict with heroes as well as villains, leading to some interesting moral dilemmas.

The other key idea was that the government would make an attempt (probably ill-serving) to use the heroes as a supervillain deep cover group; they'd send the Extreme Measures team out in different costumes, and have them perform operations that would earn them a villainous reputation, and then use that reputation to infiltrate the supervillain community. This was a campaign by itself, and never got used to its full potential. But I liked the idea of giving the players missions with a lot of variety.

Finally, I decided that someone in the ATF (the Extreme Measures program) would be a Tyranny League mole that the players would have to deal with. Uncovering this mole would be a key event for the initial story arc.

PART TWO: POWER LEVEL, HOUSE RULES

I decided that I wanted to keep Extreme Measures to the same power level as before – in Hero System terms (the ruleset I was using), a base of 300 points.

I added the house rule for Luck, which affected Nick Kesting's Wild Card character. Initially, the player only got Luck points if they rolled a "6" on a d6. Nick's ability to roll luck, however, was awful, even with his 7d6. I eventually revised the Luck rules so they resembled those of other modern games.

PART THREE: VILLAIN SELECTION

Once I decided on concept, power level and tone, I needed to choose my cadre of villains, the Extreme Measures' Rogues Gallery. A superhero campaign, more than any other genre, is defined by the villains; superheroes tend to be reactive, not proactive, and coming up with villains that the heroes (and their players) want to interact with is extremely important.

Fortunately, I already had a cast of hundreds of villains created for Gestalt, including many characters on the periphery of the campaign who didn't make major appearances in the two earlier campaigns (mostly to compete in the Copenhagen tournament). Distinctiveness is very important. I know GMs who think nothing about taking an old scenario,

dusting it off, and running it with new PCs. That's fine for them, but this is about as far from my operating procedure as it gets. I like novelty, new experiences, and the more new (or untapped) villains I use, the closer I can get to a campaign with a unique tone.

Even though Extreme Measures was planned for a limited shelf life, I needed Ultimate Bad Guys, a villain whose presence would underscore the entire campaign and be felt even when he was not on screen. For New Columbians, this was Fatemaster. For the Hollywood Knights, it was the Blood Red King. For the ATF, I chose the Tyranny League. These villains wanted to overthrow the United States government, the government that the ATF was sworn to protect. At the end of the Hollywood Knights campaign, they had caused major damage in their attack on Atlanta and they were winning their war with Columbia. They were the obvious choice.

I try to run my campaigns in arcs, and I needed a bad guy for the initial story arc, the intended maxi-series. The bad guy I chose was the Magician, a minor illusionist from the New Columbians campaign. In the New Columbians campaign, he had pretty much filled the role of The Loser, a master villain wannabe who was eventually reduced to robbing rich kids' birthday parties. I had wanted to reinvent the guy for awhile, so I gave him a substantial power boost. More important, I gave him a much more respectable role: he assumes the identity of Eric Weiss, government bureaucrat and administrator of the Extreme Measures program. Reinventing the Magician as a scheming authority figure did much to restore his stature, as did giving him some minions (the Magic Company), a group of mercenary villains who were the Magicians' toys as much as his followers. The Eric Weiss name was an in-joke and clue to his true identity (Ehrich Weiss was Harry Houdini's real name. No one picked up on that clue until after the Magician had been revealed, including a couple of the Houdini buffs in the group!)

The Magician wanted personal power above all else, and believed that the way to get it would be to develop his psionic powers to their fullest, by entering the Gestalt Dimension and studying there. Weiss's ultimate goal was track down a portal into the Gestalt Dimension and use it to empower himself.

I also needed a real villain team to oppose the ATF, their opposite numbers. The Deregulators, a team that made a brief appearance in the Hollywood Knights campaign (as cannon fodder for the Knights at Copenhagen), was another obvious choice. Several of the Deregulators' members were given altered backgrounds to make them a closer fit for the player characters. The Deregulators' anti-government agenda was something that the ATF was born to fight.

The final villain I wanted to use was Night Huntsman, the vampire created by the Blood Red King. I wanted to use him because I wanted to wrap up the dangling "Lamia" sub-plot from the New

Columbians campaign, and because vampires make good villains. The Night Huntsman had never made an appearance in either of the previous campaigns, so it would give the ATF another unique foe.

While it's great to use unique foes, using well known opponents from other campaigns does reinforce the idea that it's a shared world. For returning foes, I wanted to use the Menagerie, the team of animal villains that I regretted never springing on the Hollywood Knights. Armageddo was also another person who had to make an appearance; he's always wacky fun for a GM to use. And I wanted to wrap up the long-standing Daemon Washington DC vigilante plotline from the original New Columbians campaign.

These weren't the only long-standing plotlines I wanted to use. One of the early enemies of the New Columbians was Iron Gauntlet, a Neo-Nazi martial artist. Iron Gauntlet had faked his own death, and took on a new identity as Liberty, a member of Team Maverick, the tobacco industry's superhero team. I wanted the PCs to investigate Team Maverick and discover this old plot thread.

PART FOUR: THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

As important as a group of good villains are to the campaign, the PCs are all-important. The PCs I ended up with were as follows:

American Avenger (Steve Perrin). Francis "Chet" Marion, an over-anxious southerner, super patriot, and oldest son of a large Carolinian family. "AA" looked up to Columbia's Liberator as his hero. American Avenger was a telekinetic brick (who manipulated a Multipower) with a lot of tricks. He was given the position of team leader.

Chunin (Floyd Grubb). Also known as Atemi, The Gestalt of the Journeyman Ninja. Chunin viewed Daimyo of the Tyranny League as the jonin of ninja and desired to kill him off so he could take his title. A government recruiter discovered Chunin and hired him into the ATF. Chunin views the federal government as his employer and serves it with complete, frightening loyalty.

Gunslinger (Brian Freyermuth). An amnesiac DEA agent who could summon weapons at will. Gunslinger affected a Western motif. Gunslinger became amnesiac because of a near death experience at the hands of the Scarpachi mob family (who would show up later frequently in the campaign), and became a grim, modern-day gunslinger.

Shifty (John Deiley). A shapechanging Gestalt of Conformity. A pure gestalt who was just starting life, Shifty demonstrated an ability to mock others that was awe-inspiring.

Superego (Gabriel Valencia) The Gestalt of Control Freaks. Traumatized by his town's destruction during the Eiko Invasion (which had already happened in the campaign), Superego vowed never to let this happen again. Superego was a powerful psionic, but had trouble relating to people.

Wild Card (Nick Kesting). A Gestalt of Luck. A

former stuntman whose marriage fell apart due to his alcoholism, and whose ex-wife was about to marry a rival stuntman. Wild Card could throw cards with a wide variety of effects, and had a very large amount of luck.

These were some good character concepts, all of them with potential depth, and all played by good role-players. We had a clear leader type in American Avenger, a good range of powers and potential for subplots. We had internal conflict provided by Superego's natural tendency to take control, and Chunin's unique brand of cold ninja professionalism (In fact, Floyd's bravura characterization has spoiled me; I'll never be able to look at a PC ninja the same way again).

Wild Card's player provided me with the perfect fit for a subplot. In the Hollywood Knights, the GMPC was Jim Goddard, the Stuntman, a Gestalt of Toughness. At the end of the campaign, Jim was about to leave the team, marry his girlfriend, and move to the East Coast. What better way to fit things than to make Stuntman into Wild Card's rival, and Stuntman's future bride into Wild Card's ex-wife?

The final hook I needed before starting work on the actual scenarios were the associated NPCs. Eric Weiss was a given, as was Agnes Marion, American Avenger's mother. I wanted the team to coordinate with the FBI, so I invented Mary Longstreet, a daughter of a civil rights leader whose brother was a Baptist minister (and was active in the civil rights movement. Longstreet's personal agenda occasionally pushed her into using the ATF as an instrument to protect civil rights). Nobody in the campaign ever really figured out her conflict of interest (except maybe Chunin, and at times he could make Labyrinth look like a gossip).

I like to have a GM "voice in the party", a minor superhero who would allow me to make comments on player action and allow me to role-play when the PCs are alone. This would be a GM PC, strong enough that the PCs wouldn't always be hauling his butt out of the fire, but weak enough that he wouldn't grab the spotlight from the main characters. I had used Stuntman successfully in this role in the Hollywood Knights game (by the end of the campaign, the separation between character and GM had reached frightening proportions). I created "Big Red", a Fire-fighter Gestalt, as my GM voice. Poor Red. He was an incredibly nice guy with strong morals and not an ounce of deceit in his body. He ended up leaving the team.

The other major NPC was Chad Walker. I had become fascinated by reports I'd read of the really odd behavior of human prodigies. Chad was meant to be such a prodigy, not only intellectually, but also physically. He had a vast number of interests and some really strange avocations. He liked Etruscan pottery, hacking, the Biathlon, and Greco-Roman wrestling, and he *really* wanted to be a Gestalt. He hung around the ATF because he loved the camaraderie of being in a pack of alpha males. He snuck his way into superfigths and despite his sub-standard defenses

(8 PD, 8 ED and no resistant defenses is a death wish on Gestalt-Earth), his tactical knowledge allowed him to make an important contribution to a number of the ATF's battles. Chad was part genius, part out-of-control teenager. He ended up being more of a GM voice than Big Red, and his mansion (he came from a long line of extraordinary adventurers who had a tendency to die young) was the team's second base. He was also built on a lot more points than the PCs (an ubermensch is an expensive archetype) which caused occasional point envy in some of the players. Chad also had definite sexual obsessions, which added a certain smarmy humor to the campaign.

Gaming at work provided me with a few challenges. Since I was doing it on a work night, and because I'm not quite as young as I used to be, I

decided to set a 7:00 PM to 10:15 PM time schedule. This meant that pacing had to be kept tight and scenes would have to be pretty short.

I also tried to make an effort to improve my staging; I tend to sacrifice visual detail to pacing, and I wanted to try to reverse that. I still need to work on this. I also did some experiments with music and visual aides, but they clashed with my GMing style and I don't think they were particularly effective.

Background: Son of a pair of ATF operatives, Francis Marion's father was murdered by a Moonshine Gestalt named White Lightning. Later Marion drew his own Gestalt and captured his father's killer. Thanks to nepotism, his mother pulled strings to get "AA" the leadership role on the ATF's fledgling super-team, the American Task Force.

As leader of the ATF, the American Avenger has mostly distinguished himself by flying headlong into trouble, drawing fire, and watching his teammates clean up the mess. He tends to chalk up his frequent bouts of unconsciousness to bad luck. He admires Liberator and hopes one day to join Columbia.

He and Freedom Smith of the Deregulators are archenemies. He considers Freedom Smith to be a piece of terrorist scum. Freedom Smith considers him to be a symbol of every young American who blindly follows the government and perpetuates the cycle of corruption.

AMERICAN AVENGER POWER LEVEL 10

Created by Steve Perrin

"I promised to let you walk. I didn't promise to let you walk out of here under your own power..."

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+10	+6	+6	+0	+0	+3
30	23	23	10	11	16

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+12*	+9	+10	+6

(*+10 with only standard force field active, +6 w/o either force field)

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+14), Bluff 8 (+11), Computer 1 (+1), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Investigation 3 (+3), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Pilot 8 (+14), Sense Motive 8 (+8), Stealth 8 (+14)

Feats: Attack Focus 2 (melee), Benefit (Status – Federal Police Powers), Defensive Attack, Equipment, Improved Grab, Improved Throw, Improved Initiative 2, Teamwork 2

Equipment: Commlink

Powers: ESP 8 (Normal Sight), **Force Field 4** (wings), **Force Field 4** (extended force field wings; Affects Others [Only affects others on 2 ranks]; Tiring; Progression 2), **Immovable 2** (Linked to Extended Force Field), **Light Control 4** (Linked to Force Field, Touch Range), **Strike 6** (force field sword; Penetrating; dynamic, mighty [+11 Penetrating with Strength added]; **Alternate Power: Flight 5** [dynamic]), **Super Senses 6** (blind sight, direction sense), **Super Strength 4** (heavy load: 12 tons), **Super Strength 3** (heavy load: 100 tons; Linked to Extended Force Field)

Combat: Attack +9 (melee), +7 (ranged), Grapple +23 (+26 with extended force field), Damage +10 (unarmed), +11 (force field sword, penetrating), Defense +7 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -6 (-14 with extended force field wings, -3 with no force fields), Initiative +14

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Regional Protector Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 53 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 11 + Powers 63 + Combat 28 + Saves 13 – Drawbacks 3 = 180 Total



PART FIVE: SCENARIOS

I was now ready to start planning scenarios. Some of them came naturally from the background and the characters; others came because the team was meant to have missions and become a government strike force.

I divided the scenarios into three types. The first type was Main scenarios, the intended order of scenarios for the campaign's planned arc. I would weave the overstory of the Magician's quest for the Gestalt Dimension into these scenarios.

The second type were the "short and weird" scenarios which were designed to be "filler issues" that I could insert into the campaign and run with a small group in case many of the players were absent on a particular evening.

The third type were the PC driven sub-plots, scenarios suggested by the PC's backgrounds that I could weave into the main storyline and develop as we went along.

This is the list of scenarios I came up with before the start of the Extreme Measures campaign.

MAIN SCENARIOS

- 1) *Militia*: The team must infiltrate an armed camp that's being used as a gathering for militia members; some of whom are believed to be Gestalts who are either interested in overthrowing the government, or taking advantage of other people's attempts to overthrow the government to cause trouble.
- 2) *The Circus*: The team is asked to investigate a Cirque du Soleil style operation for unknown Gestalts and catalog the members of the circus who are really Gestalts. However, the circus is suddenly plagued by a series of murders that the player characters will have to solve. (One of the clowns was affected by the Blood Red King to become the Gestalt of Sick Jokes, and has been playing them on people).
- 3) *The Pardon*: The team is asked to go to New Orleans and present a Presidential pardon to the vampiric supervillain Night Huntsman, provided he agrees to help track down the Blood Red King. But the Night Huntsman and his vampire servants have their own ideas, mostly dealing with draining the PC's blood, then accepting the presidential pardon.
- 4) *Bloodspurt*: The team is asked to compete in a brutal superhuman martial arts tournament in Thailand to catalog some Far East Gestalts, only to learn that the matches are to the death (the tournament is being sponsored by a Gestalt that feeds on violence and death). Should they stop the operations?
- 5) *The Staffer*: The team is asked to investigate the staff of a Ross Perot-like independent candidate to see if someone on the campaign is psionically manipulating the press to bring him to national prominence. But what happens

when a government official asks someone in Extreme Measures to play dirty politics on the candidate?

- 6) *Background Check*: The team is asked to do background checks on Team Maverick, the tobacco industry's team of corporate sponsored supers, only to learn that Liberty (the team martial arts expert) is really Iron Gauntlet, an ex-neo-Nazi super-soldier, and a leader of the Tyranny League Auxiliary Corps, and someone who has connections to the Argentinean government's biochemical augmentation program. Do you capture him, use him to set up bigger fish, or blackmail him for personal gain?
- 7) *The Assassin*: Someone's been assassinating scientists involved with the Argentinean research; the government wants to know who is responsible (it's actually the work of Technarch, a superhero with no scruples about killing people and who, although fond of technology, worries about the combination of neo-Nazis and genetic engineering) Should Extreme Measures discover the truth, they'll get an offer from Technarch to work covertly for him.
- 8) *Return from Space*: SunShadow, Warlock, and Slapshot of the New Columbians (who went missing at the end of a previous campaign) return from space with disturbing news about an Ar'Turodain-Eiko alliance. But are they really the heroes? The government wants Extreme Measures to find out. (They aren't. They're shapeshifters in the service of Radaa, an embittered Ar'Turodain scientist who wants to create a wedge between the Earth and the Ar'Turodain).
- 9) *Sane?*: Armageddo has been released from prison and seems to have regained his sanity. The government is suspicious, and wants you to keep a tag on his operations. What is really going on with Armageddo and his followers? (It's all a set-up for a new master plan, as Armageddo prepares to unleash a brainwashing machine on the public; your director, Eric Weiss has his own reasons for wanting to keep tabs on Armageddo; last Christmas, Armageddo created a device that allowed entry into the Gestalt Dimension). The Magician should make his way into the Gestalt Dimension, and this should lead into the climactic session of the first plot arc.
- 10) *The Club*: There's a small club in San Francisco called the Gestalt Club where people with Gestalt abilities are said to frequent. Enter the club and find out who's really a member and who isn't. (This should start a second plot arc, if needed).

SHORT AND WEIRD SCENARIOS

- 1) *The Vigilante*: The Washington DC area has

been plagued by a vigilante, the Daemon, for nearly two years. End this long-standing plot thread (i.e. capture this vigilante and bring him to justice.)

- 2) *The Download*: Someone's developing a mind control image/sound file that they can place on the Internet and use to mind control people into sending them money. He's openly admitting that's what he's doing: "download this file and experience mind control; warning, you'll lose \$10 every time you view this". The perpetrator has successfully argued in court that the image is an expression of his free speech and that he's committing no crime. The government wants you to secretly investigate him to see if there are any other (more sinister) applications that he's come up with.
- 3) *Stormwatch*: There's been unnaturally rainy weather over Tucson for the last twenty-eight days. The government suspects a Gestalt is responsible, and wants you to find out who it is (as it turns out, there's a Gestalt of Depression who is in the area, a depression that expresses itself as rain).
- 4) *If It Says It In The Veracity, It's So*: Someone has been delivering newspapers to every house in Charlottesville, Virginia; a non-existent newspaper whose every story is true (the Charlottesville Veracity). They suspect a Gestalt is involved, and want the Gestalt's true identity uncovered (she's a pure gestalt called the Papergirl, the Gestalt of dependable newspaper delivery). The newspaper's phone lines and e-mail address also work (although they can't be traced and its physical address is non-existent).
- 5) *Film at 11*: There is a Gestalt of Investigative Journalism. She's trying to get the dirt on any government activities, and a rogue agent (the Gestalt assassin of dirty government conspiracy theories?) is trying to kill her.

PLAYER DRIVEN SUB-PLOTS

- 1) *Kidnapped*: The Anti-American begins kidnapping government officials, including American Avenger's mother, in an attempt to force a showdown against America Man (which will soon involve American Avenger). (Depends on NPC roll for sessions 1-4).
- 2) *The Bribe?*: American Avenger's mother finds out about mysterious payments to Extreme Measures associate director Eric Weiss, and asks his son to look into them (use this one around scenario 7-8).
- 3) *The Ex*: John Johnson's ex-wife Lily is remarrying, to John's old friend and rival Jim Goddard. Jim is also known as the Stuntman, formerly of the Hollywood Knights, and one of the most respected superheroes in the business. This will also put John's kids in danger from the Stuntman's enemies, Weng Chiang and her

minions, including the supervillain Reaver, Muscle Master, and the Combat Knights. (Not to mention what would happen if Jim found out his friend is really a government sneak).

I also needed to find a way to develop the main storyline. This is what I originally came up with:

Ongoing Plots and Revelations

- 1) The associate director (i.e. supervisor) of Extreme Measures, Eric Weiss, is really the supervillain known as the Magician. He's looking for a way into the Gestalt Dimension, where he believes he can increase his powers to become nearly invincible. He's also feeding data to the Tyranny League in exchange for substantial amounts of cash.
- 2) Dr. Canus has been engineering animals with telepathic transmission abilities who have been gathering secrets, and then recording their memories on a special machine. He's using people's pets as a blackmail tool, mostly to supply him with funds for scientific research. One of the people he's been blackmailing is the Magician. The Magician doesn't like to be blackmailed, so he'll try to send the PCs out to bust Dr. Canus and the Menagerie.
- 3) Dr. Canus, in response to whatever actions that the PCs took against them, arranges for the Derregulators to learn the heroes' secret. Freedom Smith blackmails them; Extreme Measures must lose to the Derregulators in a public fight, or their operation will be publicly exposed. Should the Magician learn that the Derregulators know the truth, he'll order the team to murder the Derregulators.
- 4) Eventually a way appears into the Gestalt Dimension, and the Magician tries to get in. The PCs capture him, expose him, and have a choice whether to expose the entire rotten operation.

PART SIX: THE INITIAL SCENARIO

As the time approached to do the scenario, I became convinced that the initial scenario "Breaking the Siege" was too complex to run for a group that had a lot of newcomers. I replaced it with an adventure that would give them a chance to meet each other, test out their combat capabilities, and start the overstory.

I didn't want to do a massive amount of "how did I join the team" stuff, so I set the scenario at a point where the characters had all been contacted and recruited by the government. This saved me a lot of exposition and a lot of individual character scenes. I like individual scenes, but gaming at work gave me a limited time to work with them.

The structure of an ATF scenario ended up as follows: unless the last session ended with a cliff-hanger, it would begin with a couple of small scenes

which focused on individuals and advanced personal subplots, which I tried to keep to about ten to fifteen minutes of game time, and which I cycled weekly between the PCs. Fortunately the majority of the players found the trials and tribulations of other PCs entertaining, and they weren't seen as boring, as long as they were kept short.

This was followed by the main adventure. This structure had the advantage that it allowed me to start the game even though some of the players had not yet arrived.

I then sat back and wrote the notes for the first scenario. Notes are a blueprint for a run, a list of probable events, but never fixed in stone (I'll throw out an event that doesn't feel right, or run with something the player does), but it gives me a solid basis for the run and makes it more comfortable for me to GM. The notes for "Getting to Know You" were:

EXTREME MEASURES #1

"GETTING TO KNOW YOU"

Expected characters:

Super Ego, American Avenger, Shifty, Chunin, Gunslinger, Wild Card.

- 1) June 5. An explosion in the war room of the Pentagon. Several dozen people are killed. The Tyranny League claims responsibility.
- 2) Cut to American Avenger talking with his mother, Agnes. She's on crutches; she was injured by the blast while consulting at the Pentagon, but she's tough. She's evasive about what happened. She warns American Avenger that Extreme Measures has some "unusual" people working for it.
- 3) John Johnston (Wild Card) meets his ex-wife, Lily, and their son Greg, for the first time in three years. Greg doesn't recognize him; he wants to call his soon-to-be "stepfather" Jim Goddard, "dad".
- 4) Switch to the waiting room at the Treasury Building. They've been asked to arrive at 8:30. Super Ego, Shifty, American Avenger, Wild Card, Gunslinger, and Chunin arrive in that order.
- 5) An hour and a half wait. Kathy Staples comes in at 9:30 and locks the door behind her.
- 6) Ten o'clock. They're let in. The assistant deputy director, Eric Weiss is ready for them.
Eric Weiss. Tall, distinguished, Dark haired, Caucasian. 40. Director.
- 7) *Kathy Staples.* Tall, red haired, Caucasian, 25. Weiss's assistant.
- 8) *Chad Walker.* Short, massively built, long blond hair, hyperactive Caucasian, 22. Computer coordinator.
- 9) *Mary Longstreet.* Short, severe, African-American, 35. Secret Service Coordinator.
- 10) *Agnes Marion.* Average height, slightly matronly, Caucasian. 43. Public Relations.

They want the group to:

- infiltrate villain groups and anti-government agencies.
 - investigate anti-government organizations for Gestalt powers.
 - investigate the development of paranormal technology.
 - update Operation Strongbox.
 - form an ATF superhero group.
 - create a villain team for deep cover assignments (PCs must come up with alternate codenames, and they suggest that several villains be integrated into the group to increase variation between the hero and villain teams' powers).
- 11) Robbery at the 1st Federal Savings and Loan; it's a bank frequented by many government employees.
- a) *The Magician.* Tall, slender, dark-haired, Caucasian, 35.
 - b) *Jannisary.* Big, well-muscled Arabic, wearing almost stereotypical terrorist garb. Carries a big gun.
 - c) *Inertia.* Big, buxom, long auburn hair, well-muscled woman, it looks like she's called Inertia because inertia is probably the only thing that's keeping her costume on. What little of it there is...
 - d) *Meathook.* An athletic looking man, 5'10", a black and gold bodysuit, a gold Zorro mask with blank eyes, and a long gleaming black metal harpoon on his right hand.
 - e) *Bombast.* A tall (6'3"), well-muscled blond Caucasian in a blue bodystocking, with a yellow cape and an exploding atom symbol on his chest. Wears a blue half-mask over his face.
 - f) *Tapestry.* A fine Persian rug. A sentient flying carpet, the sort that's associated with the Arabian Knights. The carpet from Disney's Aladdin, but with a snarky attitude.
 - g) *Snowstorm.* A frozen man, athletic and slightly taller than average, with freezing air rising from his body.

EXECUTION

PART ONE: "GETTING TO KNOW YOU"

I was now ready to run. The players gathered at 7 PM on Tuesday, June 18, 1996, in a small conference room at work. I started the campaign with a mood piece, Hole's "Doll Parts" played as I narrated a Tyranny League attack on the Pentagon, and then shifted over to a scene involving American Avenger, Steve Perrin's would-be patriotic leader character, and his mother who had been assigned to the Extreme Measures program and had been injured during the T-Gang's Pentagon attack.

The scenario had three parts: the introduction, the meeting at the treasury building where the team

would get to know them, and the robbery. I used a bank plan from "Justice Not Law" for the combat portion of the scenario, although we overscaled it badly. Maps with drawn hex grids are better than trying to guesstimate scale. Eventually, I started using a drawing program to draw maps on hex grids, and overlaid the board with a large, heavy sheet of translucent Lucite, which I drew on. Steve Perrin had a very large box of painted superhero miniatures, and graphic representation was rarely a problem.

The actual scenario went something like this:

On June 5, 1996, the Tyranny League rouses itself once again with an operation that targets the heart of American defenses — the Pentagon. Poltergeist, playing Hole's "Doll Parts", decloaked a combat helicopter several hundred feet from the heart of the Pentagon, and fired two Stinger missiles. The Hand of Chaos, Battleship, Daimyo, Herobreaker and the Scarlet Knight promptly disembark, destroying anything in their path, killing anyone in their path. Poltergeist's grin gets wider. Computor sits back and gathers data. The Tyranny League continues their swath of destruction, then depart...

"Damn Herobreaker!" Chet Marion muttered. It was twelve days after the attack, and the sight of his mother on crutches — and the thought of what would have happened to her if she had been closer to the center of the Tyranny League's attack — was not particularly pleasant. "I'll break him."

Agnes Marion sighed and told her boy not to do anything foolish. He may be the American Avenger, Washington DC's latest superhero, but he wasn't ready to take on the Tyranny League just yet. She turned to him and warned him that there were quite a few odd people in Extreme Measures, and that it might be difficult to cope at first. This included both his teammates and the support staff.

Meanwhile, one of the aforementioned teammates, John Johnston prepared to meet his ex-wife Lily, and his six-year old son Greg. John had been a professional stuntman when he developed a drinking problem, a drinking problem that destroyed his marriage and nearly killed him. His recovery had involved him getting Gestalt powers; he decided to use them to join the government's new Extreme Measures agency. John hadn't seen his wife and kid for three years. He opened the door to find his wife and his child waiting — along with the man who had formerly been his best friend, James Goddard, the Stuntman. Goddard says that he's looking better than he did during their last meeting. Greg, who hasn't seen his dad in three years, wonders who this strange man is.

The meeting goes downhill from there. Stunts mentions that he and Lily are getting married. "No! You can't do that to me!" Johnson exclaims. Jim and Lily attempt to explain that the wedding's been arranged for a long time and that it will take place in a few months. "No!" Johnson protests. "You've got to give me time to get you back!" Lily and Jim uncomfortably leave Greg with him; Greg clearly wants to

be with "Uncle Jim".

The next day is the first meeting of Extreme Measures. The team gathers at the ATF offices at the Treasury Building. Gunslinger is first to arrive, followed by American Avenger. They are having a calm discussion when a metallic mastiff comes through the door and sits down in a corner. The two men look at it oddly, but continue their conversation. A few minutes later, a ninja appears in the doorway; the door was never seen to open. The Gunslinger is suspicious. The ninja introduces himself as Chunin, and says that he's here to join their team.

The mentalist Superego files in, along with John Johnson (AKA Wild Card). The dog turns out to be a shapeshifter named Shifty. They were to be let into Eric Weiss's office at 8:30, but no one opens the door. There is a long wait. Superego attempts to scan the office, and finds two minds behind the door. An hour passes, when an attractive red headed woman enters the office, excuses herself, and tries to unlock the door into the inner office. When the supers try to determine when they'll be let in, she's non-committal. She locks the door behind her.

Unwilling to wait any longer, American Avenger breaks down the door. He sees a tall man discussing things with three women; one of them is his mother. Avenger, in a bad mood, claims that they're showing their guests poor courtesy.

The Gestalts receive a lukewarm apology from Eric Weiss, the tall man who is the Deputy Director in charge of the Extreme Measures project. He explains that the recent losses suffered by Columbia and the recent victories by the Tyranny League have tipped the balance in favor of the villains. The Extreme Measures project was meant to remedy that.

The Extreme Measures program would have three objectives. They would provide a superpowered enforcement arm for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. They would infiltrate those who were threats to national security and put a stop to them. They would update government files on superheroes for Operation Strongbox, files that were woefully inadequate after several years of neglect. American Avenger notes that previous government supers included people like Agent Cromwell. It's no wonder that they were not properly updated. Superego notices that mental powers are being used in the area; Weiss explains that there are anti-psionic devices in the room, reverse engineered from an old Weaponsmith design.

Weiss sends for the team computer coordinator, Chad Walker, a thickly muscled short man with long blond hair who barely looks out of his teens; he doesn't walk so much as leap. Chad surveys the room, mentioning obscure facts about people. He complements American Avenger on his abdominal muscles, says that if he touched Gunslinger's guns he'd probably get shot (Gunslinger agrees) and gets into a discussion of ninja clans with Chunin. He says that he's doing a paper on Gestalts and sex for the

New England journal of psychology, and says that if anyone wants to have sex with him, it'd fit into his research. Gunslinger threatens to kill him if he repeats the offer. Chad claims he isn't gay, he just wants to advance the cause of science, and also asks to be allowed to film anyone who is having sex with any other Gestalt, also for his research. Shifty wonders what this "sex" stuff is. People realize that Shifty is a pure gestalt. Shifty demonstrates his powers; Chad compares him to the T-1000 from Terminator II.

With Chad having made a thoroughly bad impression, Weiss attempts to bring the meeting back to order. He receives a phone call; some supervillains are robbing the First Federal Savings and Loan. The head of the operation is the Magician; two recognized supervillains are with him: Meathook and Jannisary. There are a woman and two men accompanying the Magician whom have never been seen before (Snowstorm and Bombast). Weiss suggests this is a good chance to test the team's tactical abilities.

Extreme Measures piles into a van and charges to the scene of the crime. Chad suggests they find some way to broadcast a signal to them so he might be able to get a visual on the new Gestalts and give them background (if any becomes available) during the fight. Shifty causes a camera to grow out of his shoulder. Chunin asks his teammates to call him Atemi during the fight.

The team piles out of the car. Wild Card breaks down the glass door with a well-placed card throw,

and Jannisary and Gunslinger face off, guns blazing. Gunslinger misses; Jannisary doesn't. Gunslinger is knocked back, winded, but seems more annoyed that he missed. American Avenger runs into the bank and is attacked by Meathook and a big muscle-bound caped figure who calls himself "Bombast". The Magician is present in the back of the bank, but does nothing except comment how delighted he is to see everyone.

Bombast wrestles the weakened American Avenger and bearhugs him; Avenger passes out from the pain. Bombast poses on top of the fallen hero with a foot on his chest. Chunin opens an invisible gateway into the bank and nails Meathook from behind. Superego causes Jannisary to stand as still as a statue, while he's attacked by a flying rug, the Magician's pet, a flying carpet named Tapestry. An inscription on the tapestry reads "Kick the mentalist's ass!"

A scantily clad woman, Inertia, faces off against Wild Card. A freezing man tries to impale Gunslinger with flying icicles, and hisses about people who enjoy the sun too much. Shifty grows into the form of a giant polar bear. "Beautiful." Snowstorm says.

Gunslinger, Wild Card and Chunin pelt Meathook with various sharp objects, leaving him lying in a pool of blood. Bombast takes out Shifty with a painful headlock. Superego hits Tapestry with an illusion that he's changed into a pair of shears and is snipping him to death. Tapestry flies away, threads fraying, with an inscription: "A seamstress! My kingdom for a seamstress!"

The Magician orders a retreat. Snowstorm becomes transparent and flees. Inertia also attempts to get away and runs past Wild Card. Wild Card, remembering the bad experiences that he's had lately with women, attacks her from behind and knocks her out. Jannisary decides to disobey the Magician's retreat order, and shoots the unconscious American Avenger, hoping to kill him. The Magician angrily attacks the insubordinate Jannisary with an illusion that causes him to see American Avengers everywhere. The group now gangs up on Bombast, who puts up a game but doomed struggle. The Magician actually seems amused by the ATF's initial performance, but warns them that they'll meet again, and then teleports away.

Wild Card hears a car screeching towards the bank; it's Stuntman in the Stuntmobile. Stuntman is introduced to the group. Superego takes over, and introduces people, including Chunin, forgetting that he had been asked to call him "Atemi". Chunin wonders what he should do about this threat to his personal security.

Chad examines people's wounds. The team takes the van back to the treasury building. Chad wonders aloud why this team of supervillains just had to show up at the moment of the team's creation — coincidence, or something more? Half the team wonders if these supervillains weren't a deliberate government set-up to test their abilities.

All in all, a fun opening scenario. I didn't lose any players after the initial run, always a good sign



when running a game at a place where the players have a high standard of RPGing. Two of the new players had a problem with Champions mechanics; one of them eventually learned them, the other didn't, and dropped out of the campaign because he found combat too frustrating. I had tried to "shield" him from the complexities of Champions mechanics, believing he'd have more fun if he concentrated on character, not mechanics. This turned out to be a big mistake on my part, all it caused was frustration and was probably the biggest lesson I learned from the game.

PART TWO: THE OPENING ARC

The campaign had begun, and I began working my way through the initial arc. Next week, I returned to my initial scenario plan, and ran the second episode.

The next two scenarios were "Breaking The Siege", the originally planned opening scenario. It lasted two sessions, with the player characters investigating a large militia gathering, which also included the Deregulators in their civilian IDs, the Dawn Brothers, right wing independent presidential candidate Frank Saunders, and a mind controlling demagogue Gestalt who was planning to hijack a nuclear weapon and release it on Washington DC. The demagogue and the Deregulators hoped that destroying the federal capital would lead to a power vacuum that could only be filled by the States, thus returning the political power that had been robbed from them by the Constitutional conventions. The team mingled for awhile with the guests, almost fell into the demagogue's mental command to reveal federal spies (having the villain use his Mind Control on the gathering and give the command "if anyone here is a government spy, step forward made a really good cliffhanger) and then had a big fight with the Deregulators. In the end, the heroes prevailed. The early defeat of the Deregulators did strip them of some of their threat value, although the enmity between Freedom Smith and American Avenger, and Gunslinger and Resistor (one of the Scarpachi brothers) was sustained throughout the campaign.

I diverged from the original plan in the next scenario, deciding that the Cirque du Soleil scenario was too similar to "Breaking the Siege". Instead, I did a bank robbery – with the PCs robbing the bank in their supervillain deep cover identities, only to be opposed by the inopportune arrival of Stuntman and the Anti-Crime Squad. This was the point where the game plan really diverged.

Remember that subplot with the rivalry between Wild Card and Stuntman? At the end of the fight, with Stuntman and the Anti-Crime squad knocked out, Wild Card decided to do something about it. He put the unconscious Stuntman and Pirouette into a sexually compromising position, and asked Shifty to turn into a camera and take a picture. Shifty, not realizing the significance of the action, did as he asked. Wild Card then had the photo delivered to his

ex-wife.

Later, Columbia threw a party and invited the ATF. They also invited Stuntman. Shifty saw Wild Card fume when Stuntman was dancing with his ex-wife. Shifty wondered about Wild Card's strange reaction, and his teammates informed the novice Gestalt of the human concept of jealousy. Shifty suddenly realized that he had been used. Hell hath no fury like an exploited shapechanger - Shifty planned to get even.

The next scenario was also a break from the plan; the Olympics were happening, and I thought it would be fun to do an Olympics oriented scenario. I had the team's NPC, Chad Walker, competing on the US Olympic Greco-Roman wrestling team, only to get badly injured by an Argentinean opponent who turned out to be a genetically engineered Ar'Kayadin soldier. The team exposed the Argentinean cheating, and Chad began to bond with the PCs, especially Gunslinger. But it was actually a chance encounter that drove the next three scenarios and completely threw my scenario plan out the window.

During the Olympic week's solo run, I had Wild Card attempt to foil a jewelry store robbery attempt by the Leopard, a cat burglar speedster Gestalt. He failed, but the Leopard, after clobbering him, displayed some affection for him, and left a ring next to him as a memento. Shifty, who had been monitoring the fight but had decided not to intervene, picked up the ring and kept it.

The next scenario ("SNAFU") saw Weiss suggest the team recruit the Leopard for their deep cover operation, since having two teams whose members have identical powers was almost certain to raise suspicions. The team went in villain ID to the Leopard's ex-husband's house, a man named Marvin "Trick" Kramer, a successful used car salesman. Kramer was too successful – he and his current wife were living the life of luxury, courtesy of the Leopard's crime spree, while the Leopard stayed in a dingy attic room listening to Alanis Morissette on AM radio, hoping for scraps of her ex-husband's affections.

When they realized what a slime "Trick" was, the heroes were outraged. Shifty went down to confront Kramer for his mistreatment, only to discover that Kramer and his wife were also Gestalts (Trick was a psionic, and the new Mrs. Kramer was "Elemental Woman" who could duplicate herself into four elemental forms). Poor Shifty got clobbered good. A fight broke out between Trick and his wives, and the Extreme Measures guys. During the fight, someone referred to Wild Card in his hero name, and Trick heard it. Trick ran away, plotting revenge.

More amusingly, Shifty regained consciousness, shapechanged into Wild Card and approached the Leopard with love in his eyes. "Hi honey, I missed you so much!" the faux-Wild Card shouted, declaring his undying love for someone who really grated on Wild Card. Shifty pulled out the ring that the Leopard had left. "See, I kept the token of your affection close to my heart!"

"Stop it! Stop it! You're making it worse!" Wild Card shouted. The Leopard ran away with the fake Wild Card, sealing her romantic intentions for the rest of the campaign. Shifty had his revenge.

This was fun, although extremely cruel to Wild Card (and to Nick). The name revelation was a major screw-up. I tend to not apply the maximum amount of misfortune from player mistakes – people's mistakes aren't always incredibly disastrous in the real world — but this time, I decided to make an exception. In the next two scenarios ("A Dirty Trick"), a control freak Gestalt named Trick decided to turn our heroes' lives into a living hell. He framed Gunslinger for drug possession, framed Chunin and Shifty's villain identities for murder, kidnapped American Avenger's brother and mother, persuaded the Leopard to proclaim she's carrying Wild Card's love child, and handed Superego a \$2 million back tax bill from the IRS. To make matters worse, Superego, seeing the bill, decided to attack the IRS agent who presented it to them.

Eventually, the ATF managed to track Trick down to a casino in Atlantic City, where he had hired the Firestarters to protect him. Bad move, Trick. The Firestarters had few defenses against Superego's mental attacks, and the team waded through them easily. Gunslinger accidentally blows off most of American Avenger's brother's hand, performing a trick shot to disarm him when he was about to take his own life (thanks to Trick's psionic command; they were programmed to commit suicide the moment that they saw American Avenger). In the end, Trick was sent to prison.

I finally managed to get back to the campaign outline with the ninth scenario, "The Lamia Lies Down in an Odd Way", the scenario where the PCs had to present the pardon offer to the Night Huntsman. The Night Huntsman refused the pardon, bit Superego, and tried to kill the ATF. The Night Huntsman, out matched, flees. The team did capture the Lamia, who is transformed back into Columbia superheroine Utopia. The Night Huntsman proved to be an entertaining villain, and would be brought back for additional appearances before dying in a memorable run.

Unfortunately for the group, one real world event intervened. Gabe Valencia became a proud papa, and Superego had to bow out of the campaign. Superego may not have been the most heroic member of the team, but Gabe was an entertaining player and Superego was a great foil for other players and his control freak tendencies provided a lot of conflict. A large hole formed in the group, and we missed him for the rest of the campaign.

Since reoccurring villains are a staple of the comics, I decided to deviate again from the Campaign Plan and ran another unplanned episode. In "Set-Up", the Deregulators decided to boost their reputation before the Copenhagen tournament at the PC's expense. They kidnapped Chad Walker and threatened to kill him unless the ATF threw a staged fight at the Washington Monument. Instead, our he-

roes, using investigative skills and ninja sneakiness, tracked the villains down to their HQ, ambushed them at four in the morning, then beat the crap out of them when most of them were still asleep. It was a dirty tactic, but sometimes cheap victories are fun, and I don't believe in derailing a clever PC plan just because it spoils the tactical portion of the scenario. Unfortunately, this didn't help the Deregulators reputation, and they never really recovered their credibility as villains after this fight.

Now we were heading toward the climax of the arc. The Weiss mystery had been put on the backburner, and I had planned a convoluted sequence with the Menagerie as the means to lead up to the revelation. But one of the players gave me a much better way to handle it. The ever suspicious and capable Chunin routinely investigated his teammates and superiors, including Weiss, who began acting suspiciously and had odd holes in his records. Chunin put two and two together and informed the team (a rare event, as Chunin had the annoying habit of keeping information secure, i.e. to himself). The team debated what to do about Weiss.

But the PCs held onto the information, leading to "The Main Event" where Armageddo opened a school for supervillains next to Columbia HQ. The ATF crashed the school in their villain IDs, picked a fight with Armageddo, and threw the loon into a portal to the Gestalt Dimension (Armageddo had constructed the "Dungeon Dimension", a dimensional pocket where he planned to trap Columbia HQ). But Weiss showed up as the Magician, with the Magic Company in tow. In the fight that ensued, the Magician entered the Gestalt, but the ATF beat the Magic Company and persuaded a temporarily sane Armageddo to trap the Magician in his "dungeon dimension". The Magician was beaten. American Avenger's mother took over as team coordinator.

By popular request (or perhaps because we had nothing better to do on a Tuesday night), we continued the campaign for another thirty sessions – up to a climactic fight with the Tyranny League. I did not use an extensive plan for the rest of the campaign, which was much more freeform. Unfortunately, it also tended to be a little more episodic than I'd have liked.

I never got to run several of the originally planned scenarios: the Cirque du Soleil murder mystery, the Thai deathmatch tournament scenario, the Gestalt Club scenario. None of these were bad scenarios; I just never got them to fit. To be honest, both scenarios required tremendous amounts of preparation time; the Cirque du Soleil mystery was a scenario with a lot of NPCs, and would have required as much prep time as "Breaking the Siege", a very labor intensive scenario. I was being lazy, which is a bad sign for a GM.

The Technarch assassination scenario was subsumed into the Olympic scenario, the political dirty tricks scenario was incorporated into a major plotline

involving Frank Saunders' (the decent if radical militia leader from "Breaking The Siege") presidential candidacy. Some of the New Columbians did return (but they weren't shapeshifters), no one is sure how or why, and that's a mystery that will be solved in another campaign. I did run the Team Maverick scenario, which was a success.

The next major arc involved the 1996 presidential election. Frank Saunders was using Keith Willard, a Public Relations Gestalt, to run a campaign on an anti-Gestalt platform. Chunin solved the problem by a blackmail threat to kill Willard's family, forcing him to drop out of the campaign. Once Willard was gone, Saunders sank like a stone; Clinton was reelected. It was fun, but somewhat disconcerting to see how unheroic the PCs were capable of behaving. Shifty's player, frustrated with the mechanics, bored with his character, and unhappy with the tone of the campaign, bowed out.

PART 3: DEVELOPING SUB-PLOTS

A lot of the later plots in the campaign were centered on the characters, and it may prove useful to look what I did with them after the first arc.

American Avenger had a well-stocked staff of NPCs with which to play, including a mother (Agnes Marion, a woman who worked with the Extreme Measures program), a kid brother, and two sisters. I never did quite as much with AA as I would have

liked, although forcing him to confront Liberator's faults, and deal with his sister's decision to have an abortion were two of my favorite subplots in the campaign.

Chunin never really developed many subplots, which suited his player just fine – sub-plots attracted attention. Eventually he achieved his major goal, killing Daimyo, and taking his place as jonin.

Gunslinger's archenemy was the Scarpachi mob family, who had left him for dead, and whose leader was killed when Gunslinger first drew on his Gestalt. Since Gunslinger was amnesiac, this gave me a lot of room to play (much to Brian's dismay). I had Gunslinger's lost love be Anna Scarpachi, now head of the Scarpachi syndicate. Gunslinger was devastated by the death of his close friend Chad Walker, who ran into the middle of the Turkey-Kurdistan War in search for his long missing brother, and was caught in the crossfire.

After a series of adventures in a "Western" town in the Gestalt Dimension, Gunslinger learned that a hypnotism Gestalt hired by Hannibal Poole was responsible for Anna's condition. Scarpachi was freed from his hypnotic hold, and continued to run the Syndicate - but secretly, on the side of the angels.

Shifty bowed out of the campaign, recruited by an angelic Gestalt to track down a conspiracy to rescue the false prophet Archon, a villain that the Hollywood Knights later put into the orbital containment unit.



Gabriel brought Superego back for one more appearance, as the ATF battled their way through a haunted house created by the Blood Red King and foiled Night Huntsman's attempts to unite American vampire Gestalts into the Vampire Nation. Superego murdered Night Huntsman after he was knocked unconscious, in much the same way that Pastor Brown had done to the Viceroy in the Knights' campaign. When the ATF refused to capture Superego, Big Red resigned.

Wild Card never reunited with his wife, although they reached better terms. Stuntman learned Wild Card's secret identity and figured out the dirty trick that he had decided to pull on him, but forgave him. The Leopard continued to pursue Wild Card, but she was stopped by the return of Trick, who hired defense attorney Gestalt Michelle Jackman to get him off; Trick mind controlled her into committing a major crime, then mind controlled the district attorney into asking for the death penalty. That plotline was still unresolved at the end of the campaign.

A pair of new characters joined the campaign. Fletcher, a surly longbowman, joined the ATF and immediately developed hostile feelings toward Gunslinger. Unfortunately, Fletcher's player decided that superhero gaming wasn't to his tastes, and dropped from the campaign in a few sessions. Another character, the teenage speedster Speedstar, took his place and put a lot of energy into the game. He developed a rivalry with Shiva of the Hot Gods, over who would become the spokesman for Mountain Dew.

Another GMPC joined the team to replace Big Red, the Thrillseeker Gestalt "Stuntwoman". She was really working for Hannibal Poole. The PCs uncovered her treachery pretty quickly, but instead of revealing it, they kept tabs on her. This plotline would have tied into the long planned but never implemented Gestalt Club campaign.

LESSONS LEARNED

I'd have to qualify the ATF campaign as one of the most successful games I've ever run. It had a lot of great sessions, a lot of great moments. There are a few conclusions I came to after the campaign that are worth sharing.

- 1) Some players need to know the mechanics of a game to avoid major frustrations. Don't "protect" them from the minutiae of the rules system unless they ask.
- 2) Scenarios are always best when they're tailored to fit the PCs' psychological limitations and backstories. Player interest equals energy equals good times.
- 3) Develop the overstory. Don't leave a campaign stagnant for too long. Evolve things naturally, but keep them moving. (Too much of the middle section of the campaign sagged).
- 4) Be organized, but don't make your scenario plans into a straight jacket.
- 5) Be patient with players' bad habits, but when

they bother you, communicate your concerns honestly.

6) Great campaigns are a combination of good GMing, good players playing characters who have a lot of chemistry, and dumb luck.

7) Combat is more important than storytelling GMs think. A close challenging combat is as memorable as a good plot. Combat is not all-important, but it is as important as plot in ensuring the success of a campaign. RPGs with a heavy tactical component (such as Champions) are a hybrid game. Do not ignore any of the components.

THE GESTALT CLUB

Sometimes you don't get to run the campaigns you want to run. The Gestalt Club was designed as a game for groups that don't like the trappings of the four-color genre, but still want to play in a superhero world. I finally ran this as the background for my Vancouver Champions game in 2004, but the campaign was shelved sooner than I wanted because of some real-world difficulties.

The Gestalt Club is "the other guys" campaign. While superheroes get the limelight, the Gestalt Club is for people who like to hide in the shadows. The players in a Gestalt Club campaign are working stiffs, trying to figure out ways to use their powers to get ahead without attracting too much notice. Of course, they'll probably end up making more enemies than your average supervillain team.

Gestalt Club should feel more like a pulp-era/Noir campaign with treacherous alliances, mysteries and investigations, using the Gestalt Club as a solid home base. A good Gestalt Club campaign should feel like "Justice Inc." with superpowers.

The major conflict in the Gestalt Club campaign involves freedom vs. exploitation. The primary villain of the campaign is media baron Hannibal Allen Poole, an Organization Gestalt who wants to control as many Gestalts as possible and build an empire. He's a ruthless, if somewhat scatterbrained genius who thinks of himself as "the Howard Hughes of Crime" (minus the phobias.) Poole's operatives are everywhere, infiltrating the government, infiltrating organizations like Damm Al Islam and the Dawn Brothers, and subtly manipulating them to his will. Player characters will be fighting against Poole, his criminal and media network, trying to free Gestalts from his control.

In contrast with Poole, the other major villains in the campaign are the Leviathans. Whereas Poole wants to exploit Gestalts, the Leviathans want to kill them; when the PCs take on bodyguard duty, Leviathans make logical opponents. The contrast of their formality and love for ritual will be heightened when pitted against a group of street-smart PCs. Additionally, Jennifer Hunter, the Gestalt singer at the Club, is a natural love interest for one (or more) of the PCs, and the Leviathans tie into her background.

Powerjack is another logical choice for a villain. He could call upon the heroes to frame certain popular superheroes. Technarch is also an excellent choice

(who'd hire the PCs as spies to steal new pieces of technology while keeping his hands clean).

The basic outline for the Gestalt Club campaign is:

AN UGLY BUILDING AND ITS TENANTS

In San Francisco, there is a club built by Alain Duchamps. The Club is called Dickinson's Bar and Grill, an ugly, warehouse-like building located near Fisherman's Wharf. There is a downstairs section where Duchamps has cordoned off and marked "Members Only". This is the Gestalt Club.

At the Gestalt Club, anyone with a superhuman power can meet, talk, and make arrangements. Second, the Club is a place where Gestalts can get together and discuss issues of importance to them. If there's a rumor that someone needs to hear, odds are good that Duchamps will make sure that it eventually gets to the right person (he may also hire club members to check up on the veracity of some of the important ones). The Club is a good place to network, and Duchamps can offer training to young supers who fall into his care. Third, the Club is also a sanctuary. If a Gestalt is being hunted by someone that shouldn't be hunting them (such as Leviathans), the Club will arrange for their protection. Again, club members (i.e. the PCs) are typically the people hired for this bodyguard duty.

The Club is a good place to run a "plain clothes" supers campaign; a campaign of superhumans with no costumes, interacting with (and fighting against) people on a superhuman level who don't wear costumes either. It's a nice place to view some of the weirder places and people in the Gestalt world.

Background: Sometimes described as "Bogart with a French accent", Alain Duchamps is a humanitarian who is trying to do the best he can for Gestalts and turn a profit. Duchamps is a Gestalt of Noir. His gestalt manifests itself as Film Noir tropes and shadow powers, he has good martial arts (savate) training and is handsome in a slightly broken down, Bogart/Harrison Ford sort of way. Duchamps says he's married to his work, but that hasn't stopped him from having a fling or three with some of the female Gestalts that he's known. He doesn't show up on a background check (either from France, Quebec, or the United States), and maintains an aura of mystery.

Alan Duchamps' background is a mystery meant for the GM to develop to serve the needs of the individual campaign. However, there are three distinguishing features about Duchamps that may hint at the larger mystery; he has a limp and a huge (2 foot long) scar on the left side of his body, he has a set of dog tags in his room which read: "HANSEN JASON E. O POS. 768-28-1173, USMC L, PROTESTANT", and he has a collection of three giant eyeballs (real ones, apparently taken from a Leviathan).

ALAIN DUCHAMP

POWER LEVEL 8

"If you want me to listen to your sob story, you need to buy a drink. It's a basic law of commerce."

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+3	+3	+4	+4	+2	+5
16	16	18	18	14	20

Tough	Fort	Reflex	Will
+7/+4*	+8	+6	+7

*Flat-footed

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+5), Bluff 8 (+13), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Disguise 8 (+13), Investigate 6 (+10), Knowledge (streetwise) 14 (+18), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+12), Language 2 (French, Mandarin Chinese), Medicine 2 (+6), Notice 8 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Sleight of Hand 6 (+9), Stealth 8 (+11)

Feats: Benefit 2 (wealth 2), Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Luck 3, Power Attack

Powers: **Teleport 5** (Accurate, Affects Others (2 people); progression 3 [mass]; Limited: only between shadows; **Alternate Powers:** **Concealment 4** [sight, hearing, mental; Affects Others (2 people); Limited: only in shadows], **ESP 6** [hearing and sight; medium: shadows]), **Transform 3** (cheap watered down booze to strong liquor)

Combat: Attack +8, Grapple +11, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -3 (-2 flatfooted), Initiative +7

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Femme Fatale Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2), Vulnerability (light-based Dazzle effects; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 42+ Skills 20 (80 ranks) + Feats 15 + Powers 26 + Combat 32 + Saves 12 – Drawbacks 4 = 143 Total

Background: As with the other Gestalt Club members, Lawson's background is intentionally left mostly as a mystery. He's British (the accent puts him in London's East End), and is known to have trained as a member of a fledgling British SAS superhero team, but quit for reasons no one knows and moved to America. Beyond that, he's a mystery, and he definitely likes it that way.

Lawson's a Brawling Gestalt, a capable judoka and surprisingly agile for someone who's 6'6" and 360 pounds. Lawson says nothing about his past, nor much of anything ("yes, sir" and "get out now" are as chatty as he usually gets). Lawson lives at the Club and is definitely a loner.

Lawson is in his mid-30s, with a powerlifter's thick build, and a twisted, broken nose. He definitely shows a mean streak when he's throwing someone from the Club.

Background: Jennifer Hunter is a dancer and

LAWSON

POWER LEVEL 12

"If I ever see your face in here again, I'll make it unrecognizable."

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
+15	+3	+11	+0	+0	+5
40	16	32	10	11	20

Tough
+15

Fort
+11

Reflex
+6

Will
+5

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+5), Climb 4 (+19), Demolitions 2 (+0), Intimidate 8 (+13), Notice 8 (+8), Sense Motive 8 (+8)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Focus (melee), Attack Specialization (Grapple), Chokehold, Improved Grab, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Stunning Attack

Powers: Protection 4 (Impervious), Super Strength 7 (heavy lift: 400 tons)

Combat: Combat: Attack +9 (melee), +8 (ranged), Grapple+25, Damage +15 (unarmed), Defense +7 (+4 flatfooted), Knockback -10, Initiative +8

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Courage Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -2)

Abilities 69+ Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 8 + Powers 22 + Combat 30 + Saves 8 – Drawbacks 2 = 141 Total

entertainer at the Club, and it's obvious that she's a Gestalt because even the gay patrons of the Club can't take their eyes off her when she's performing. She rarely uses her powers in an offensive manner. Her boyfriend was the San Francisco superhero Storm Warning, who was killed by Leviathans; Jennifer is determined to avenge his death by any means necessary. She wants to destroy the Leviathan race, starting with those who remain in San Francisco.

Jennifer's something of a Starving Artist Gestalt; she came from a very poor background, and was a heavy drug user at one time (she's HIV Positive now, but isn't sure whether she got it from drugs or sex). She comes across as a scatterbrain, but she's highly intelligent and capable when forced to focus. She's a little desperate for love, but she maintains a platonic friendship with Duchamps.

Jennifer is an attractive and petite woman in her early 20s, 4'11" and barely 85 pounds. She has waist length brown hair and green eyes. She often wears hippie clothing, and is very fond of Janis Joplin and Grace Slick. Her vocal range is incredibly wide, and she can belt out a song with a power that's astonishing given her short thin frame.

GESTALT CLUB SCENARIOS

As I did with Extreme Measures, when I started planning the Gestalt Club campaign, I brainstormed scenarios. I never got a chance to run them, but here's what I came up with:

JENNIFER LAWSON

POWER LEVEL 10

"And for my next number... oh, crap, Leviathans!"

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
-1	+2	+3	+0	+2	+3
8	14	16	10	14	16

Tough
+7/+3*

Fort
+5

Reflex
+6

Will
+6

*w/o Force Field

Skills: Diplomacy 4 (+7), Perform (singing) 8 (+11), Profession (musician) 8 (+10), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Benefit (perfect pitch), Dodge Focus 2

Powers: Blast 8 (thundering sound; Burst Area; *Alternate Powers:* **Mind Control 10** [mesmerizing song; burst area; One Command Only: Stand Still and Listen, Sense Dependent: Hearing], **Stun 8** [high-pitched riff; Burst Area]), **Dazzle 8** (Burst Area; linked to Blast or Stun), **Force Field 4** (shield of music; linked to Illusion), **Illusion 10** (hearing; progression 4 [area])

Combat: Attack +4, Grapple +3, Damage +8 (Blast), -1 (unarmed), Defense +6 (+2 flatfooted), Knockback -3 (-2 w/o Force Field), Initiative +2

Drawbacks: Vulnerability (attacks from Authority, Commerce, or Tyranny Gestalts; +50% DC; unc, mod, -6)

Abilities 18 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 68 + Combat 16 + Saves 10 – Drawbacks 6 = 115 Total

1) The city health inspector comes into the Club after a superhuman brawl has taken place there, and discovers numerous violations. He's planning on closing down the club. Duchamps doesn't care, but Lawson does, he figures that subtlety would work better than head-breaking, so he persuades the PCs to use their powers to covertly change the inspector's report. Unfortunately, during the course of the operation, the PCs learn the inspector's dark secret, one which he'd kill to protect.

2) A Gestalt linguist thinks he's discovered a "Gestalt Language", a new language which is more attuned to the way the human brain thinks, and is actually a new leap in human intelligence. Unfortunately, anyone who learns "Gestaltese" not only gains superhuman mental abilities, they go insane. The PCs need to discover what's causing this insanity, capture the victims without exposing their secret to the public, and wipe the language from their brains.

3) A man claiming to be the Gestalt reincarnation of legendary local San Francisco figure Emperor Norton is being threatened by the authorities, who want to commit him. The PCs are recruited by his loved ones to help him avoid this fate, but Hannibal Poole also has plans for this royalty Gestalt, who'd make the perfect commercial shill.

4) The geriatric supernanny Granny has lost

her charge, Aurora, the superpowered two-year-old daughter of Hollywood Knights' Warder. She's baby-sitting for Aurora while the Knights pursue the Blood Red King in the Gestalt Dimension. Unlike most Gestalts, The Warder passed down his superpowers through his DNA to his offspring, which makes Aurora an extremely valuable commodity to anyone pursuing cloning. The PCs need to find Aurora before someone sinister gets his (or her) hands on her.

5) A Monster Hunter Gestalt claims that a recent string of murders in San Francisco were actually caused by a Gestalt monster. But is the Jabberwocky really responsible for these gruesome crimes, or is he an oppressed beast?

6) A man is looking for Gestalt bodyguards to escort him to Washington DC where he plans to turn himself into the Department of Justice with evidence that can put Hannibal Poole away for life. Naturally, Poole is sending every superhuman Gestalt assassin he can get his hands on to stop him. But the PCs patron may have an ulterior motive for hiring the player characters.

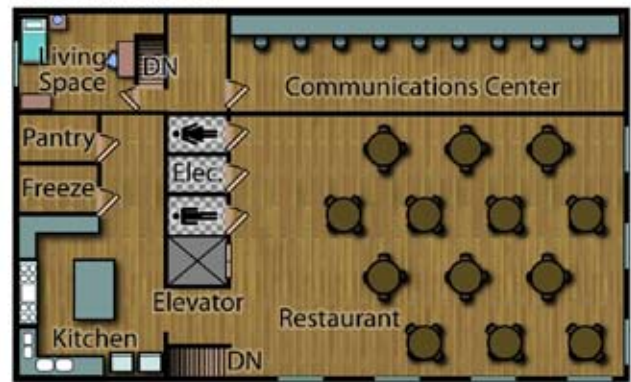
7) A man is looking for people to gather extremely rare supplies (wood from the oldest standing redwood, authentic nails from the cross of Jesus Christ, rose oil from the perfumes of Jackie Kennedy, etc.) and is hiring the PCs to do it. But what happens when people find out that this man is building a door into the Gestalt Dimension?

8) A man escapes from a building site and claims an independent contracting company is enslaving people (many of them immigrant craftsmen) and employs a Gestalt who makes them work twenty times faster than normal – but literally working them to death. Paper trails lead to a dead end. Find out who's responsible and stop them.

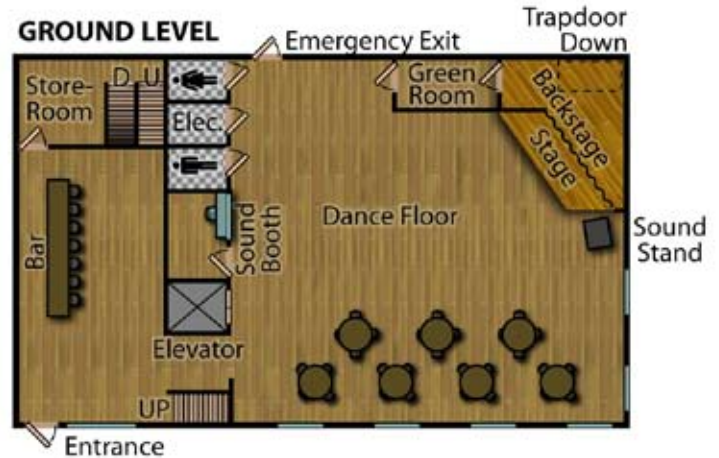
9) There's a Leviathan who calls himself "Armapahwar" and who claims to be innocent of any crimes committed by his people. It isn't the first time this has happened, but it's first time one of them is running for mayor of San Francisco. More odd than this, his most ardent admirer and campaign manager is Jennifer Hunter, the woman who's sworn to bathe in the blood of every last Leviathan. You'd better find out what's going on before all hell breaks loose.

10) A battle between the Titan and an Eiko construct has devastated the area. But what were the Eiko doing around the Gestalt Club? What's in the area that holds their interest – one of the Club members, a hidden guest, or one of Poole's spies? Perhaps the Club was even built on Point Alpha; the place in the real world that corresponds to the sourcepoint of the First Gestalt Wave, a place where a wave might continue to resonate for decades after the event?

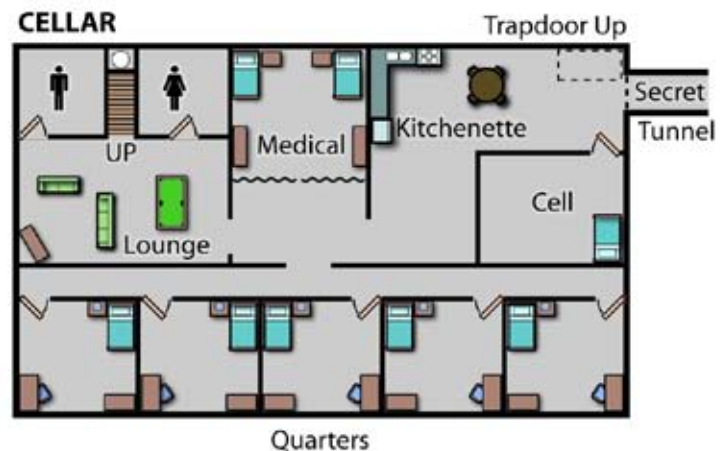
UPPER LEVEL Restaurant/Loft



GROUND LEVEL



CELLAR



Gestalt Club

0 5 10 15
Scale in Meters



XII: ADVENTURES

A MUSE BOX MELODY

THE SCENARIO IN BRIEF

Muse Box Melody is an introductory adventure for the Gestalt-Earth campaign setting. It's a hunt for the "McGuffin" scenario.

In this case, the McGuffin is a weird gestalt phenomena, a wooden box that appears out of nowhere. When it's opened, the box gives the person who opened it a sudden flash of inspiration, and then the box vanishes again: it always turns up elsewhere in a week's time. Inspiration is a very powerful force and; a lot of people are going to want to possess this item, and use it to do horrible things.

One of the people who wants it is Arikvarian, a Leviathan Duke. He's studied reports about the box, and has come to the conclusion that it's attracted to creative geniuses. He believes if he can find a genius of sufficient creative power - a Gestalt of Creativity — the box won't want to leave him! The genius can keep opening the box and receive insight after insight. If the Leviathans link themselves to the genius with telepathy as he's making the discoveries, who knows what they'll uncover?

Perhaps he'll even find a method for Arikvarian to eliminate gestalts, take control of human destiny, and overthrow the Leviathan King...

So the Leviathans have two goals. First, they need to find a way to predict where the box will teleport so they can intercept it. Second, they need to find a Gestalt of Creativity. Once they've found the two and hooked them together, everyone's in trouble. It will be up to the PCs to find the box, discover who's after the box, and prevent the Leviathans from completing their plan.

INSPIRATION BOX

OBJECT

Str 10, TGH +25*, SZ Tiny

Features: **Boost 20** (all Craft, Profession and Perform skills), **Super Senses** (*Flaw* - person must open box). **Super Senses 10** (detect inspired person, analytical, acute, tracking, Extended 4), **Morph 10** (any box), **Telepathy 20** (*Flaw* - Only to discover the identity of the most creative person they know), **Protection 25*** (Impervious), Immunity 60 (all Fortitude and Will saves)

The Box is a cherrywood container, 8" tall by 14" wide by 8" deep, with gold leaf etchings. It was constructed as "an Idea Box" by Dr. George E. Williams, a retired Kentucky Doctor and inventor. Williams wanted a box to put slips of paper with ideas for constructing little knickknacks. The last stroke of varnish was completed on the box at the exact moment of the latest gestalt wave, and then a gestalt, which should have joined Williams, bonded with the box instead in a very odd chain gestalt process. The box registers as a mind, and as a Gestalt.

When the Box is opened, it takes about five minutes to achieve the insight, once they've done so, the box will vanish as soon as no one is observing it.

The Box can communicate; if it wishes to talk, a person can open the box and find that it's left a cassette tape with instructions, or a hand written letter. Placing a letter or a tape with a response into the box is the only way to hold a conversation with it.

The Box can be trapped; it cannot teleport or dimension hop if it's being held in a small container (such as a sack), it needs room before it can teleport.

The Box has no real idea of right or wrong, and no interest in understanding such concepts. It's only goal in life is to make people more creative and to find that perfect creative talent, the person with whom it can become permanently bonded

And now to our story:

I: BARRROOM BLITZ

"Pretty pity-ville.

Heart of hustle

Town like sex on the first date

Running too fast to feed the soul.

Cape-Man cometh

Roof top runner

Holding high his sonic-boom-sword

Into the valley of Death charges

The Enlightened Brigade

Behold the Man of Men!

Muscles which pump good deeds

Almost faster than blood.

Eyes that do not blink

In the hurricane.

Making the Impossible the Inevitable.

*But muscles are not
stronger than sneers.*

*The wings of dragons
are slower than Innuendo.
Capes burn like American flags on foreign
streets,
The heads of the gods are bowing low.
Coyote bellies are bloated, feasting on Glory
Their cries soak the air in triumphant whines.*

And I think it's all my fault.

"Sons of Gestalt"
-- Joey Tallon, (2006)

VERNON'S

Welcome to Vernon's, in one of the better city neighborhoods. It's a sports bar and a gestalt fight bar, with a curious little coffee shop in a small hatch on one side. A curious mix of audiences, the brawny and the avant-garde. Right now, in the coffee bar, it's full of applause. Joe Tallon doesn't like applause. He thinks it's a ritual that lacks the spontaneity that characterizes true art, or at least the art that Joe Tallon likes. It's open mike night, and reluctant people with lack of talent in equal measure to their lack of enthusiasm recite timid verses - or worse, haiku. Not that Joe was happy with what he wrote tonight. It would serve him right, he thought, if a gestalt came running into the shop and clocked him.

Next door, in the sports bar, the verses are ignored. Cole Richmond is drunk, and he's getting loud. Cole is now known to his friends as "Kyle Redmond" and to everyone else as "Adrenaline". He's not in costume here; if it weren't for his recent plastic surgery, most of the people in the bar would recognize him instantly. Something about being number 32 on the FBI's Most Wanted List of Gestalts, the strong man of the Deregulators supervillain team.

They're showing gestalt fights on a big screen television set over the main bar. It's an old battle - Columbia against the Deregulators. And "Kyle Redmond" doesn't like it. He's drunk. Adrenaline shouldn't drink; his physiology is primed for sudden biochemical shocks, not a constant stream of depressants, and he's getting angrier and meaner each minute.

There are two people with Adrenaline, sitting at a table away from the bar. One is a mousy looking man in a leisure suit that looks out of place at a sports bar, drinking diet cola and telling Adrenaline to shut up. He's really Tim Gallagher, a.k.a. the Juror. Then there's a big guy with dyed blond hair, slightly curly and long, who looks like he can bench press a Buick. That's Bruce Scarpachi, also known as Resistor; he's drinking three

times as much beer as anyone in the bar, and holding it better than his comrade. Adrenaline is usually very friendly, and rarely gets drunk; Bruce is enjoying the sight of his comrade getting angrier by the minute, and goading him on with well-timed barbs.

"C'mon! C'mon! Kick Edge's ass!"

"I seem to recall that he gave you the imperial Columbia butt-kicking."

"...psst! Be quiet! We do have secret identities, you know! Or do you want to spend another three weeks recovering from plastic surgery..."

Heads are starting to turn. A couple of people are putting two and two together, but so far, no one's brave enough to risk the wrath of a drunken supervillain by calling the police. Besides, it wouldn't be the first time people acted like they were supervillains when the fights started. But these guys don't look like posers.

One person who hasn't quite noticed the Deregulators is Vance Clark. He's a college football player with a bunch of his fellows. He's always liked Columbia. When the fight footage is over, when the instant replays and the expert analysis has finished, he's going to get to his feet and offer a toast to Columbia "America's Number One Ass-Kickers, the guys who regulated the Deregulators".

At this point, Adrenaline will take his chair, throw it through the big screen television, call Columbia a pack of fascists (probably adding in an obscenity or two) and start screaming at the football players to "bring it on". That's when the fight starts.

WHERE EVERYBODY KICKS YOUR ASS

Vernon's was built in 1985 as a sports bar by Jerry Vernon, a former minor league baseball player, the bar took on a superhero theme in 1996, after Jerry's brother Chris was saved in a car crash in St. Louis by Archa. It's been a superhero/sports bar mix ever since. The coffee bar was built in 1995, and is run by Jerry's sister Doris; who's a Masters student at the local university. It's an eclectic mix, but it works. The coffeehouse closes at 11, right before the heavy drinking in the bar begins.

All furniture in the bar is constructed of heavy wood, and the tables and chairs are likewise of sturdy construction. The glass mugs are heavy and there are plenty of bottles and other breakables on the bar, behind the bar, and on tables. Two waitresses watch the bar; there's a single bartender (Mackenzie Roberts, a normal) who also operates the till. There is no bouncer.

MUNDANE IN THE MEMBRANE

What is there for the PCs to do before the fight? Have the PCs engage in mundane activities. There's a small area showing the latest sports event. There's a dart board (Defense 20) to hit the gold (50 pts), -8 pts per -1 that the roll is missed by (eg. if a player misses by 2, they get 34 points).

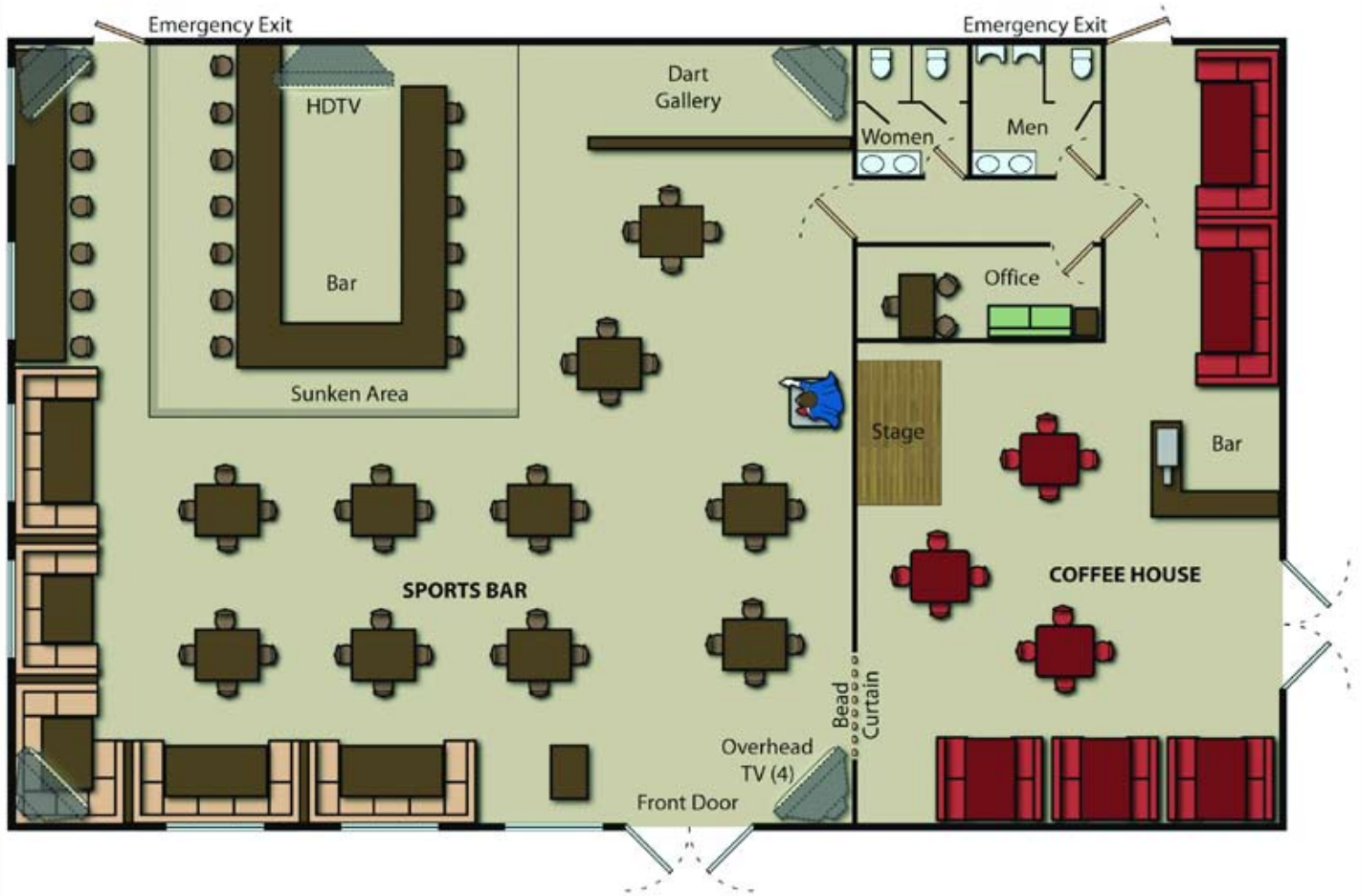
Artistic PCs might try composing and reading poetry at the cafe. This place is popular with the university arts crowd. Artistic players might want to do that too. It's Gestalt Night, poetry with a superhero theme. Rivals might use the opportunity to mock each other.

And then there are the jocks. This is *their* turf, and PCs with an athletic background can come here for a few drinks. Vernon's is a respectable place, and it's a sports bar, which reduces the number of women to pick up, but there are a few here, a few college women who like sports. For female PCs who don't mind spending an evening with a potential troglodyte, it's a place to meet men who are into college and professional sports.

And then there's a trivia game by the bar. If the PCs want to have a contest, go for it. Pick a topic: history, science, sports, movies, and have the characters make dueling Knowledge rolls. Perhaps throw in a few patrons to compete against, someone who's really, really good at a couple of subjects, and make them really obnoxious about it.

There's also a big television showing superfights. Vernon's is a good place for someone who's openly gestalt to sit back, have a beer, and watch gestalts beat each other up. Vernon's suooerfight archive is impressive, which makes the "I went there to study supervillains" excuse a little more credible than usual.

For the truly devoted hero, there could be rumors of criminal activity in the area. A few local poets may have mysteriously vanished, all friends of Joe Tallon. Start the scenario with Joe Tallon's disappearance, or use disappearances of people close to Joe and the local poetry community as the hook to bring them here.



Vernon's Sports Bar and Coffee House

0 1 2 3 4 5
Scale in Meters

By the door and the windows, there are booths instead of tables. Each booth is adjacent to a large picture window. There is a modem hookup at each table, and small depression in the table where a user can plug in a standard-sized laptop so it automatically connects to the Internet. This is more for the working lunch crowd than for the evening crowd.

The bar itself is a one piece horseshoe arrangement. The bar is in a depressed area that's about six inches below the rest of the floor, and the bar is bolted to the floor. There's an HDTV set next to the bar, and old-style low-def television sets in each corner of the room.

There is a lot of memorabilia displayed around the room. There are many prominent newspaper headlines featuring superheroes. There's a rare photograph of Kinestar posing with Bronco the Urban Cowboy, signed by Bronco. There's a signed letter from Liberator to the First Lady (dated 1996), discussing Columbia's possible involvement in a literacy program. There's a program from the Thor vs. Cosmic Man Pay-Per-View fight, and a discarded tire from the Stuntmobile (it's hanging over the

door). The largest object in the bar is a life-sized statue of America Man, his arm pointing and his cape flapping in the wind. The inscription at the bottom reads "in heroism truth, through truth, heroes."

The coffeehouse is separated from the bar by a bead curtain. The decor is a lot cheaper in the coffeehouse; the chairs in the booths are covered with ugly red vinyl, and the tables are particle board covered with an equally ugly enamel. There's a raised area with a microphone on a stand where people recite their poetry. The poetry is piped through some faulty speakers.

There are about 6-8 people in the bar at any given time, double that number between 8-12 in the evening, triple that at noon hour. There are about 6-10 people in the coffeehouse at any given time, closest to the upper left booth. The football players are sitting two tables to their right.

People in the bar and the coffeehouse who might try something interesting include:

Stan Laughlin. Bartender. Caucasian male, 36. Dark hair, clean-shaven, with an athletic build that's

past its prime. Wears a black T-shirt and jeans. Stan has a gregarious personality and has a high tolerance for tomfoolery, which sometimes means that things can get a little out of control on his watch. When the fight starts brewing, Stan will start shouting at people to "keep it down or take it outside". When it becomes clear that supervillains are involved, Stan will duck down, call the police, then call any local superhero who's released their phone number to the general public. He'll then hide for the rest of the fight. Use the Police Officer template (see *M&M*, p. 228) for Stan, minus equipment.

Vance Clark. College QB. Caucasian male, 22. Blond hair, blue eyes, athletic build, wearing jock wear that spells out his love for his college. Vance is loud, very friendly as long as he's in charge of a situation, and now very drunk. He's very quick to take offense, especially when his friends and most cherished beliefs are challenged (such as "superheroes are great"). Vance will be the first to throw a punch, and even when it becomes obvious he's facing gestalts, Vance is either going to have to be knocked out or dragged away from the fight. If he's alive, he'll regret it in the morning. Use the Thug template (see *M&M*, p. 229) for Vance and his friends, minus equipment..

Hubie Gardner. College Offensive Tackle. African-American male, 23. Hubie is bald (shaven head) and is both the tallest and broadest man in the bar (with the possible exception of a PC); he has a powerlifter's build. He wears a black T-shirt and blue jeans. Hubie is Vance's best friend. He shares Vance's love of superheroes (if the heroes win, he'll quietly approach the best known heroes after the fight and ask for their autograph). Hubie has a girlish titter, and he laughs very easily when he's drunk, though he doesn't initiate conversation and rarely cracks a joke.

Greg Zuckerman. Business Student. Caucasian male, 28, brown hair, brown eyes. He's sitting at the table nearest the America Masn statue. He's a big mouth who believes he's an expert in everything. He's a regular playing the trivia game, and has practically memorized the questions. He has a sense of superiority which he likes to lord over people. He's also easily intimidated by physical violence, and when the fight's happening, he'll dive under a table and start repeating "please don't kill me" over and over again. If the table gets knocked over, Greg will try to grab the villain's leg and beg for his life while weeping hysterically. Greg is a Bystander (see *M&M*, p. 226).

Caroline Jefferson. Arts student. Caucasian female, 26, short brown hair, brown eyes, wearing a severe, almost uniform-style dress. She heads the poetry club and is in the coffee shop. She's the organizer of the poetry readings, and tends to view herself as "artistic elite". She's a major control freak who's impatience and temper are legendary. When the fight starts, she'll start to move to the other room to try to tell people to be quiet, then she'll freak out when she realizes what's really happening. Caroline is a Bystander.

Michael Rubin. Literary agent. Caucasian male, 36, short black hair, brown eyes, wearing a suit and tie. He's sitting alone at the table nearest the bead curtain in the coffeehouse. He's waiting to talk to a client, one of the literature professors who's a playwright. Michael is bored, his client's late, and he has a headache. He's a sensible guy who'll hide during the fight, but when it's over, he'll immediately canvass the superheroes and see if any of them are interested in making a book deal. Michael is very insistent and will pester anyone if he's given an opportunity. Michael is a Bystander.

Warren Chow. Biology Student. Asian male, 22, short black hair, slim build, white dress shirt, dress slacks, and an expression that suggests recent heavy use of marijuana. He's in the coffeehouse, sitting alone in the booth closest to the door. He's actually a Leviathan Vassal, a deep cover agent who's been keeping track of Gestalt Studies at the local University, knowing that gestalts are often more willing to trust academics with their personal issues than other scientists.

THE FIGHT

The fight begins when Adrenaline challenges Vance Clark, and Vance accepts. Adrenaline will let Clark tag him until Clark realizes that he's not effective (it will take three punches). Having Vance hurt his hand when it hits Adrenaline's jaw would be a nice touch.

When the color starts to drain from Clark's face, that's when Adrenaline smiles and fights back. If they are not interrupted by PCs, the following events happen:

Hubie Gardner gets to his feet and takes a swing at Adrenaline, Adrenaline swings back. With Vance, expect some badly broken bones. Medical help may not be essential, but it's advisable.

When the football players are unconscious, Resistor gets to his feet and says "let's trash the place". At this point, Resistor and Adrenaline proceed to tear apart Vernon's. They won't deliberately try to hurt people, but the Juror will split into his jury and prevent people from leaving the bar, "so we can show these morons what their heroes really mean". They will take particular glee in dismantling the superhero memorabilia. The Deregulators will save the statue of America Man for last (in campaigns with a more adult tone, Adrenaline might urinate over the statue's mouth to show his contempt). The Deregulators will be trying to cause a lot of property damage in this fight.

The Juror will not have his rifle during this fight, though he might pack a concealed pistol as a precaution.

One of the Jurors will watch the coffeehouse, but they won't enter it until they're interrupted by Caroline Jefferson. (Use some of the events described in the character descriptions to provide appropriate interruptions).

When the people in the coffeehouse realize what's happening, Warren Chow will attempt to waylay Tallon and offer to take him some place safe. Tallon will refuse; he's never been in a superfight before, and he wants to experience one first-hand. At this point, Chow grabs Tallon and teleports away with him.

When the Deregulators have finished doing enough damage, they'll leave, run into a blue van (which they used to arrive at the bar; Resistor is the driver), and try to escape.

If the PCs intervene, the Deregulators will direct their energies to defeating the PCs. Resistor will take the role of battlefield commander and will probably have to spend some effort to convince Adrenaline to take the fight seriously. If the battle goes badly against the Deregulators, Adrenaline will grab one of the unconscious football players, and threaten to snap his neck unless they back off and let them escape.

AFTER THE BRAWL

The police will show up about five minutes after the fight is over; the press shows up shortly after that.

If the Deregulators win, they'll leave the heroes on the floor and get out. They won't try to kill them or take them hostage; they'd only do that if they held a personal grudge against them. It isn't the Deregulators style to execute heroes after a fight, even those who have strong government ties. They might, however, keep beating on them when they're down to give them some serious injuries.

If the PCs win, they can incarcerate the captured villains. They will not willingly give away the whereabouts of the remaining Deregulators, but the PCs might extract that information via telepathy.

The remaining Deregulators (Terror and Freedom) are holed up in the basement (or attic, if basements aren't appropriate to the area) of a house belonging to a local anti-government sympathizer. They will be on the move within an hour of the fight (unless the PCs persuade the press not to break the story, in which case there will be a three hour delay before they realize something's wrong and go to a new safe house - they've done this before).

If the PCs choose not to fight, and try to follow the Deregulators after they've done their business, Adrenaline and the crew will go back to their base, and Freedom will move the team to a new safe house as a precaution.

[GMing Note: If the PCs choose to pursue the Deregulators, it will be up to you to set up the staging for this fight. It shouldn't be too hard to work up plans for a basic living area. If the Deregulators get any opportunity, there will be some booby traps placed at entrances in case they're visited by the police or by local superheroes.]

If the PCs stick around for the police, they'll be interviewed. They may also learn about Tallon's teleportational abduction if they didn't see it first hand..

II: MYSTERY

Once the PCs decide to pursue the Tallon mystery, they'll be led down a long line of facts.

Tallon is a hard kid to pin down. Born locally to upper middle class parents, he is bright but extremely unfocused. His father kicked him out of his home at 17 for drug use. He hasn't been home since, although unbeknownst to his father, his mother sends him money. Joe attended a local college and is an art student, studying painting and superheroes. He rotates between four girlfriends, and sponges off them as best he can. He lives in a small, incredibly messy apartment (it's unsanitary to the point of being dangerous), but rarely visits it. It contains a lot of drawings, including sketches of Carnival in various stages of undress.

For the last two weeks, he spent his time with his girlfriend, Melissa Watts, Caucasian, 23, an education student who's majoring in English. If she's asked if she noticed anything unusual about Tallon, she reports that five days ago, he went into seclusion after receiving a package at her apartment. She's not sure what was in the package, but four days later, he emerged holding a forty page epic poem, "The Diet of Worms", which he planned to submit for publication. Melissa has the poem at the moment. If any PC with a literary background reads it, they'll judge it to be an exceptional work (if strange; it's an epic poem about the journey of intestinal parasites); if compared to Tallon's previous work, they share common stylistic devices, but it's far more accomplished. "I guess he was inspired," Melissa says. "Wish he could have been inspired to help out with rent."

The only people with whom Tallon is close are his other ex- girlfriends: Jasmine Kash (African-American, 24, an arts student at the local college), Sarah Meyers (Caucasian, 22, a waitress at a local restaurant), and Bridget Rose (Caucasian, 20, a telephone canvasser and lead singer in a rock band).

None of them talked to Tallon in the last five days. If the story about the package is mentioned, Jack Bennett, Bridget Rose's current boyfriend, will be reminded of something that happened to him twelve days ago. He was playing at a club and found a box lying backstage. He opened the box and found nothing inside it, but when he checked on the box a few minutes later, it was gone. That was the night he composed his best song, Run Wild, a song that's good enough that they've attracted the interest of a national label.

Bennett barely knew Tallon, although he felt his poetry was really cool, good enough that he tried to persuade Tallon to collaborate with him

on lyrics. Tallon always promised to do it, but kept flaking out on his commitments and Bennett eventually gave up on him. "Too bad," Bennett said. "For raw talent, he's awesome, there's a lot of real potential there."

If he's asked if he knows anyone else who may have had access to a mysterious box, Bennett shakes his head. If asked if anything unusual had happened to anyone he knows, he'll mention that his old high school buddy, a semi-pro athlete Todd Larsen, suddenly started playing a really fantastic game, to the point where other teams forced him to test for having a gestalt. Larsen had always been a player with a lot of potential (at least in Bennett's opinion) but had a history of getting bad breaks. The gestalt test was oddly inconclusive; there was evidence to suggest that he had been touched by a gestalt, but the gestalt had not made any permanent changes. Larsen's "quantum skill jump" occurred nineteen days ago, and while he's no longer playing at that level, he's still substantially better than he was before his "hot streak".

If Larsen is interrogated, he says he doesn't recall opening any box that night, other than the boxes in which his gear is stored. If telepathy or hypnosis is used on Larsen, it will reveal that he opened a box that should have contained uniforms, but it was empty.

If the PCs get this far, they should come to the conclusion that some force is greatly boosting people's skills or creativity, that it often manifests itself as a box of varying shapes that mysteriously appears to people who's creativity is respected by the previous person, and will also use telepathy to determine the next probable target. Then they'll try to keep tabs on them until the box appears or disappears, and its appearance seems to occur at seven day intervals, and that the people who receive it know each other and have high opinions of the talent of the next person who receives it. The fact that Tallon was abducted indicates that someone else knows about the box, and wants it really badly.

If the PCs try to find Tallon, they won't find him without the use of superhuman powers. Unless they manage to track him down within thirty seconds of his abduction, they'll find his dead body; the Leviathans will learn via telepathy that he already opened the box. The Leviathans know that the box goes to someone that Tallon knew. The other mystery that the PCs might investigate is the role that the Deregulators are playing in the pursuit of the box and Tallon's disappearance. (They're actually innocent dupes - their motivation is mentioned in the sidebar). The

PCs will probably want to follow that trail. One area that will probably be investigated is Tallon's possible connections with the Deregulators. Tallon's politics are liberal/apathetic, but his father, Don Tallon, is a radical right winger, is also ex-military, and might be seen as sympathetic to the Deregulators' goals. However, he's never belonged to any militia group and views the Deregulators' terrorist agenda with horror.

SUSPICION

The following individuals are candidates, if the player characters interview Tallon's friends:

Caroline Jefferson. If she survived the fight with the Deregulators, she'll tell the heroes that Tallon always told her that her poetry was the best (an opinion that she obvious views as an understatement). But Jefferson is an extreme egotist whose love of flattery has no limits. Any of Tallon's literary friends know that he thought Jefferson was a poser.

Wayne Chalcot. Tattoo artist, Caucasian male, 26, shaved head, muscle shirt and jeans. Wayne Chalcot is a former anthropology student who specialized in the study of tattoos in native culture; he left school to get work in a tattoo parlor, but that's primarily to provide research for his masters' thesis, which compares modern tattoo culture with the ancient. Wayne's body art is extraordinary; even people who don't like tattoos have to acknowledge his talent. Wayne's a very macho guy, a gym rat who's into weightlifting and bodybuilding, sub-cultures that he's also studying. He's also into the superhero sub-culture, and if he actually gets to meet superheroes, he'll certainly ask embarrassing questions of the relationship of costumes and superhero symbols to human sexuality and sexual dominance in the modern culture (this should be played as a comedic scene; a parody of superheroes and the Academic world; this is most effective with uptight superheroes).

Margot Trembley. Music student. Caucasian female, 22, dark hair, blue eyes. A music student who always refused any of Tallon's advances. Trembley's very antisocial, self-absorbed, and blunt; she believes that social solitude is required in order to prevent the "mundane" from affecting her work - her brother delivers her food and pays her bills while leaving her undisturbed (she is forced to make the occasional appearance in class just to maintain an academic standing). Margot is currently experimenting in "techno-primal" music, a blend of electronic and Persian-

BUT I WANT TO BEAT SOMETHING UP!

Investigative scenarios can be extremely problematic if the PCs are primarily combat machines. How do you keep such PCs involved during a long mystery section?

There are a couple of techniques. The GM can steer them toward a few red herrings to chase down. Combat oriented PCs often like to intimidate people, so give them a chance to do that. A policeman mentions it'd be nice to know who's helping the Deregulators and have the PCs try to infiltrate or break the local militia or right-wing extremists.

Intimidation attempts often turn into comedic scenes, especially when the PC goes into it with too much bluster.

Another way to handle the non-combat PCs is to mix the main plot with personal sub-plots unrelated to the main thread. Have the PC's home life or romantic life come up while other PCs are investigating. Use the characters that matter to them most.

If the existence of the Box is leaked to the general public, what if the Gestalt of Confidence Men starts selling phony boxes?

And, of course, don't forget about Hunteds. Having them appear during "lulls" in the action may be the best time for them.

PLOT THREADS

When the creativity box's communication broadcasts, many will dismiss it as yet another weird gestalt phenomena.

However, major super-teams will certainly have their interest piqued. If the PCs have any sort of a public profile, they can expect to receive a few phone calls from people who have traced the origin of the broadcast to the campaign city and want to know what the hell just happened.

Worse, villains will instruct their operatives in the area to discover what's going on. There are plenty of opportunity for long term plot threads here.

BELLE OF THE BALL

Everyone loves a party, and characters in a superhero RPG should be no exception. Social gatherings provide great opportunities for role-play.

Incidents might include: Gavriel Paris gets drunk, starts hitting on any female who's remotely attractive, and offers to make her "a smart suit" if she'll "let him take measurements"; someone expresses outrageous opinions on superheroes (Lui Xiaofeng wonders if gestalts shouldn't be forced to live "safely among their own kind and away from the masses they might enslave"); someone claims to be an expert in a field that the PC has a keen interest (Guy Patel argues that the most effective superhero movie was an obscure Swedish anti-gestalt film "The Gods Wrecked My Playground"; Gavriel Paris believes that any computer operating system is garbage unless he designed it.)

Start some arguments. Conflict is the jalapeno of life.

Indian music and rhythms, using computer programs to generate the basic rhythms. She's also experimented in Ar'Turodain musical forms. Trembley barely remembers Tallon, and thought of him as an irritant; she never bothered reading any of his poetry. Tallon's friends know he thought extremely highly of her.

Note: Trembley is destined to be the next person to get the box..

III: THE BROADCAST

The box appears on the appointed day, at the exact same time that Tallon received his package. The box appears to be a small box which holds flash drives for Trembley's computer. "So that's where I put that," she'll say, eyeing the box. "One of these days they'll invent a computer with a big enough hard drive that we won't need floppies or stows."

Unless she's told to look inside the box, she'll plug the drive inside the computer without looking at it or even thinking hard about it, and the computer will receive the creativity boost. It takes about two minutes to assimilate what's happened to it (if shut down within those two minutes, nothing will happen). If it is not stopped from processing the data, the machine temporarily becomes an A.I., and experiments with its musical abilities by composing an exquisite melody, a harmony of natural sounds and chanting rhythms during a thunderstorm, which it downloads into the computers of the major radio stations, telecommunications systems and television cable systems across the country. For three minutes, most of the western world loses control of its ability to communicate - a single song dominates all radio, television, and telephone systems. Even phone calls will be interrupted by the song (except in remote rural areas which haven't converted to a cable/digital phone broadcast system).

When the composition is finished, the system loses its A.I. ability, though it's made some interesting adjustments to its code that provides much more interesting and original musical patterns. The box that contained the stow drive vanishes.

There are two possibilities regarding future ownership of the box. One logical presumption is that because the A.I. only knew one person - Trembley - she'll be the person who will get the box again in seven days. There's also a second option that may occur: the box must have downloaded itself into the Internet, into the wild lands of human creativity (and creative dreck). It may well be that the next recipient of the creative boost

will be the collective programs of humanity - a gestalt, if you will, of all human creativity.

Alternatively, the PC might direct Trembley to pay attention to what she's looking at, which will change the whole complexion of the scenario. As soon as Trembley looks inside, she'll freeze, wait for two minutes, and begin to program her computer. If she is allowed to code undisturbed, she'll have turned her computer into an A.I., specializing in music composition.

IV: A BEVY OF GENIUSES

As the Box episode comes to an end, the Leviathans will implement the next stage of their plans. They're using the local college as the site of Inspiration Fest, a conference where the five most creative minds in the world have been invited to talk about human creativity.

The gathering is being sponsored by Dr. Rudy Westfall, an astronomy professor at the local college. If the PCs investigate this, they'll find that Dr. Westfall has been on sabbatical for the last nine months in Europe, and he's organized this entire conference by phone. The last time he was seen in person was over three weeks ago at a conference in Heidelberg. Westfall will be returning for the conference.

Westfall is actually a Leviathan Vassal, disguise as the real professor - the real Westfall was murdered. The conference is a front which will allow the Leviathans to test the geniuses and determine which one is most worthy of opening the box. There will be an "informal gathering" of the five geniuses for the first time at a boat party held on a large yacht on a lake (if the campaign city is landlocked) or an ocean (if the campaign city is coastal).

The boat is the *SS Academia*, a 75' yacht that Dr. Westfall purchased several weeks ago (he claims to have used family fortunes to buy it). Those familiar with the nuances of marine construction (Notice check DC 15) might find it unusually spacious and the decks are unusually tall ("a little awkward," says Westfall. "but it helped drive down the price so it became quite affordable.") The boat was actually built in Malaysia to specifications given for Leviathans.

The creative minds involved in the Conference are:

Gavriel Paris. American computer interface expert and technology researcher. Caucasian male, dark hair, brown eyes, fair skin, tall, handsome, with an athletic build, 26. Intense, somewhat unfocused, whispers to self. Paris like to discuss "dynamics of the

The Importance of Cheap Humor

Few things are funnier than the physical humiliation of a pompous ass, and the marine setting of this part of the scenario allows for sea-sick jokes for various dignitaries, (pompous academics, annoying city councilmen, pushy reporters). Keep it in mind when you're running the party scene.

human-machine interface” and “invisible meta-technological paradigms” and he actually knows what he talks about - it’s the rest of us who are dumb. Paris believes that the desktop is a thing of the past, that one day we’ll all be wearing AIs who will be telling us what to do: (he calls them “mother clothes” or “shallow skins”). He’s a Bystander with elevated skills.

Rosalynn Judson. English geneticist. Caucasian female. Red hair, green eyes, fair skin, short and thickly built, 43. Rosalynn has done more to map the human genetic code than anyone else on the planet (at least until Dr. Power releases her research). Loudly opinionated, contemptuous of all colleagues, loathes the idea of accepting government funding. Nicknamed the “Margaret Thatcher of Genetics”. Hates England. Genius gestalt (of the scientific method) with Scientist stats (see *M&M*, p. 229).

Guy Patel. Indian film director. Caucasian male. Brown skinned, brown eyes, dark skin, average height and build, 33. Guy does some of the most controversial and experimental films in the world, focusing on documentaries. Almost mute, except when in the director’s chair, when he becomes very emotive. Bystander with elevated skills.

Lui Xiaofeng. Chinese painter and poet. Asiatic male. Short, black hair, brown eyes, pale skin, short height and slender build, 62. Lui is a former Chinese bureaucrat who retired from politics to become a painter. Works mostly in pen and ink, but dabbles in other mediums. His style is not easily described; one critic describes it as “patterned calligraphy which blends poetry and textured silhouettes that combine the abstract with the photo-realistic, and combines poetry and painting into a single medium, Bystander with genius intellect.

The fifth spot is reserved for a friend of one of the PCs, or one of the PCs, if they’re that smart. Increase the number of Leviathans in the scenario if they’re going to have to deal with a known gestalt. It’s always good to give the PCs an “in” hook.

Each participant is allowed to have one guest accompany them to this event. Also aboard is the host (Dr. Westfall/Leviathan vassal), a pilot, three university professors (one expert in gestalt research and two department heads), two security guards, a city councilman, a bartender, and a couple of members of the local press. No one will invite any superheroes; Westfall will allow one on board (“more might disturb the guests”) and no known psionics (“the guests might be offended.”) Some people might attend in their secret ID, but snaring this invitation requires a lot of influence with the university, or academic prestige. The main event of the evening is a contest of creativity, as each participant spends an hour on an imagoscopic composer, a device that allows the human mind to directly interact with lines on a screen, generating repeating patterns (like a very elaborate oscilloscope), and a sound generator that allows for the creation of accompanying musical patterns and narrative text.

This is also the method that the Leviathans are

using to measure the creativity of the five geniuses. The device contains sensors that measure the creativity centers of various portions of the human brain, the energy that is released when they are stimulated, and they will use that data to determine who needs to be kidnapped. As soon as the Leviathans are sure who their target must be, they will attempt to intoxicate the target and lure him down to the hold, where the Leviathans will quietly kidnap him and take him to their base. If this effort is opposed, they immediately attack.

It is up to the GM to determine who will win the contest.

THE S.S. ACADEMIA

The S.S. Academia is a 78’ yacht. Use the stats for a Yacht (see *M&M*, p. 144).

The Academia is moored out in the harbor, and a skiff is required to bring the guests aboard. One security guard is stationed in the wheelhouse, the other is stationed on the second deck. Neither of these guards nor the pilot knows Westfall’s true identity.

The gathering will run between 7 pm and 2 am, with sleeping quarters available on the middle deck for those who wish to spend the night.

Aside from a few heated arguments, and the attempt at a kidnapping, noting noteworthy happens that evening.

UPPER DECK

The upper deck of the Academia contains the wheelhouse (closest to the bow), with a small bar and entertainment area closer to the stern. At least one of the guests will be here at a time, and probably most of the dignitaries would rather stay close to the bar and sample the night air than remain below in the more claustrophobic confines of the middle deck.

The cabin has an 8’ ceiling. There is a small staircase that leads down to the Middle Deck.

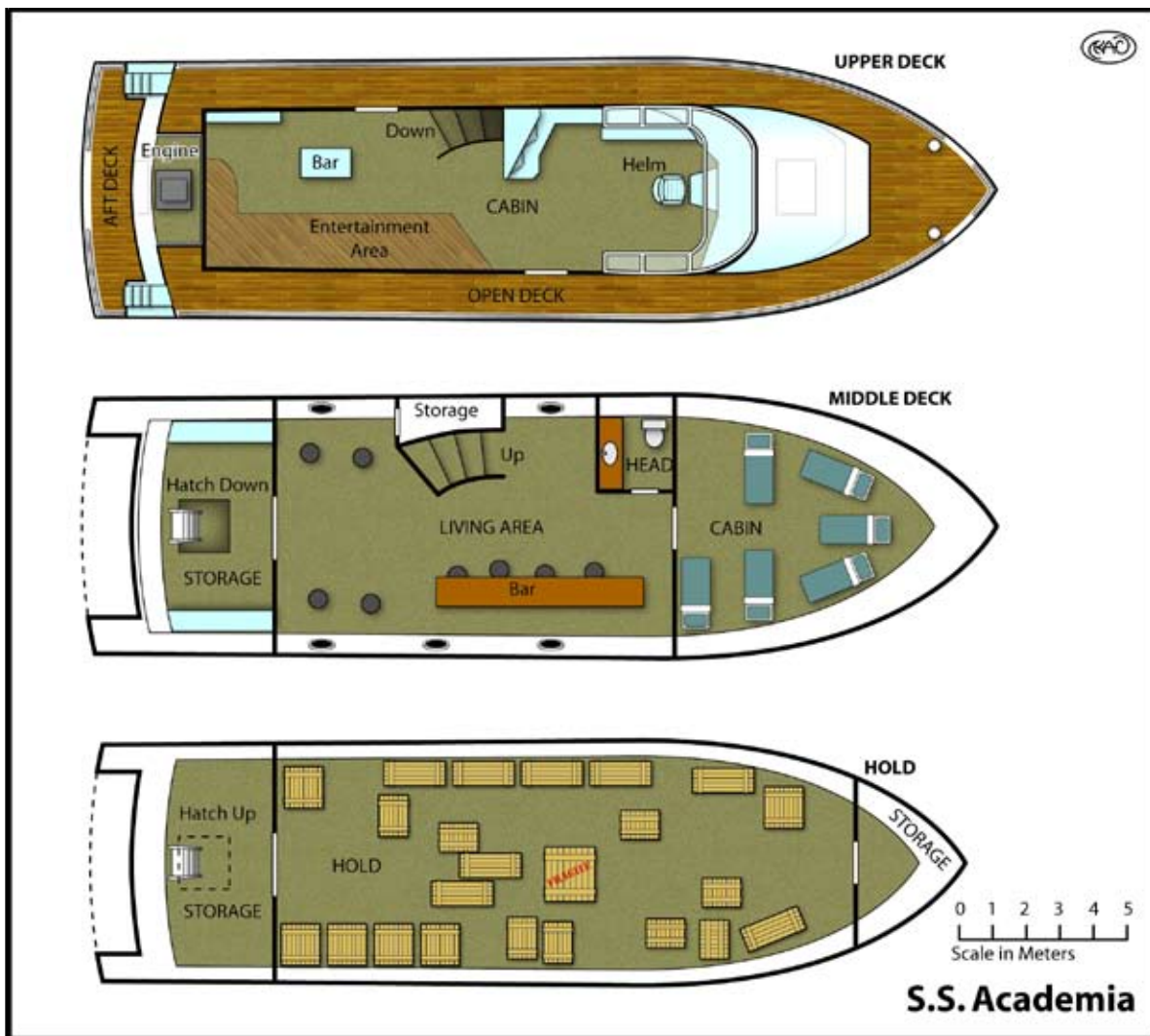
MIDDLE DECK

The Middle Deck of the Academia is where the test is occurring. Most of the guests will be spending most of their time here, except for those who like to visit the bar (Gavriel Paris) or chain smokers (Lui Xiaofeng).

There’s a passenger compartment with six double beds near the bow. There’s a small bathroom (toilet, washbasins, but no shower) adjacent to the passenger compartment. The central compartment is a large living area with a large bar, on which the imagoscopes have been set. This is where most of the gathering is taking place.

In the aft section, there’s a locked compartment containing an empty storage closet and a ladder leading into the hold.

All compartments on this deck have an 8’ ceil-



ing.

THE HOLD

The hold is a large open area with a lot of crates (mostly containing electronic supplies and food goods). One crate contains a large (300 cm) diameter concave mirror for an observatory telescope, which is going to be shipped to the Leviathans' central HQ (Westfall is not expecting his cover to be blown in this operation). The box containing the mirror is marked "Very Fragile".

This is where the Leviathans and their agents are hiding during this operation. There is a 12' ceiling (barely comfortable for the three eyed squad).

Unlike the other two decks, damage to the side of the Hold will cause the ship to start leaking. This is one time when the GM should pay attention to collateral damage.

The Leviathans' plan is to lure the winner of the creativity contest into the hold; once there, the Leviathans will quietly subdue him. Westfall will teleport away with him to a waiting rowboat located about two hundred meters from the yacht.

The Leviathans really do want to fight in the Hold, where they won't be bumping their heads on

the ceiling. That's annoying, even for someone with the PD of a Leviathan!

THOSE STUBBORN, STUBBORN CONSEQUENCES

There are a lot of possible outcomes to this fight:

(1) *The Leviathans have the box and their target.*

Let's start that master plan! The Leviathans will gather a force at their hideout and begin leeching the creative breakthroughs made by the genius as he gazes into the box. Eventually (over the course of weeks), he thinks of a way to manufacture "psionite." Psionite is a mineral that's mildly radioactive and dangerous in the long term towards humans, but which causes psychic feedback in the gestalt brain. It affects the gestalt link between Earth and the Gestalt Dimension, inflicting intense short-term damage to any gestalt who's exposed to it (make a Fort Save DC 15, once per day or Drain 2 to all saves, recoverable only by spending a week away from exposure).

Psionite might require unusual components to manufacture (glands from a psionic's brain, a nuclear accelerator - you decide). Even if the Leviathans figure out how to make psionite, the PCs could investigate a rash of unusual thefts and stop it before

It's manufactured.

(2) *The Leviathans have their target, but no box.*

The Leviathans really want that box. They'll continue to look for it. If it's all feasible, they may kidnap the last known person to have opened the box. Then they will telepathically interrogate him, kill all but one of his most creative friends, kidnap the one they've left alive, and hope the box shows up.

(3) *The Leviathans have the box, but the genius has escaped*

The Leviathans have a zero tolerance policy for failure. They'll throw as many resources at acquiring their target that they can, not stopping until they've got him, or Duke Arikvarian is put out of business. They'll gladly employ any sort of trickery they can get away with to bring him out into the open.

(4) *The Leviathans didn't get the box or the genius.*

The Leviathans are really unhappy about this. They will make retrieving the box their highest priority, as that's the more difficult of the two "components" to obtain.

They're also probably really annoyed at the PCs by now, and will almost certainly recruit some muscle on a mission of retaliation.

(5) *The Leviathans Beat The PCs Badly*

It's possible that the PCs will lose the fight with the Leviathans badly. Leviathans do kill gestalts, and should make a serious effort to do so if they get the chance, the Leviathans will take heavy weights, wrap them around the PCs, and throw them overboard.

The GM should make sure that at least one PC is in shape to rescue his or her comrades. If a PC is known to be a water-breather, the Leviathans will try a different execution method; Tossing a PC into the waiting blades of a big ship is another fine maritime tradition. Use this as a cliffhanger, not as an execution. Give the PCs one chance to escape before the Leviathans get mad enough to try to slit their throats.

(6) *The Genius Is Killed*

In this case, the Leviathans will attempt to kidnap the next genius on the pecking order. If all the geniuses are killed, the search will resume as it did before.

(7) *Leviathans or Security Guards Are Captured*

The Leviathans will not talk. The rent-a-thugs swear they don't know anything about the Leviathans; they didn't know that they were working for the Leviathans, but they knew they were up to something criminal. They were hired by Dr. Westfall, their contact, whom they contacted at a restaurant near the college campus. They had one other partner, but he tried to blackmail Westfall. As a warning, Westfall showed the dismembered corpse of the would-be extortionist to the thugs; after his boss (whom he

called "Eric Burian") got through with him.

Anyone who makes a Knowledge (Current events) check D C 25 and has experience with Leviathans will recognize "Eric Burian" as a possible pseudonym for Arikvarian, a Leviathan Duke who is one of the most vicious of all known Leviathans Dukes. Aside from his propensity toward gruesome torture, Arikvarian is known for interest in the physical sciences, engineering, and astronomy - which certainly could connect him to the original Dr. Westfall.

Captured Leviathans will rather take their own lives than be accused of betrayal by Arikvarian, who terrifies them (good villains do that sort of thing).

V: IN DISTRESS

Following the fight with the Leviathans, there's another incident at City Hall. A man in a disheveled business suit, obviously drunk, has decided to stand on the steps of City Hall and is screaming at the top of his lungs: "I want my box! Give me back my box!"

The man is George E. Williams, the man who made the Muse Box in the first place. Williams is being treated like a nuisance by the police. Williams is hysterical; when the box left him, all his creativity left him. Williams is barely able to put together a coherent thought, and he's been unable to dream at nights. He must have his box back at all costs.

Williams is over-the-edge. He's a drooling, screaming wildman prone to extreme shifts of anger and despair.

If the PCs can calm him down, Williams will become capable of putting together lucid thoughts. He has a vague idea where the box is headed, and he's attuned to the box so that if he were within two miles of it, he'd be able to tell. That's about all that his ability to sense the box can do (i.e. it could be of minor help to the PCs, but it shouldn't hand them the detective portion of the scenario on a silver platter).

One thing Williams will do in any event - he wants his box back, and he vows that no force on Earth will keep him from it.

CLUES

There are a number of clues that should point the heroes in the direction of the Leviathans' HQ). If the PCs find the telescope mirror in the ship, the trail will lead to Wolcott Observatory, an astronomical observatory built in 1919. It's located about forty miles outside town, in a heavily wooded area, on a hill clearing. The Observatory was used by the local college until 1997, when a new Observatory was built some distance away. The Wolcott Observatory was abandoned, receiving occasional maintenance while the university debated what to do with the aging facility.

Locals have reported seeing a lot of recent activity at the Observatory, but they've assumed the College is just bringing the facility back into working order, and paying it no mind. There have, however,

AND NOW FOR THE MAIN EVENT

Okay. You've got the Leviathans present, and you want this to be a really tough fight. How many Leviathans do you use?

This fight should be tougher than the previous battle. Use the first fight with Leviathans as a gauge. For a brutal encounter, one Leviathan Duke equals two PCs, and one Leviathan Knight equals one-and-one quarter PCs. Thus seven PCs facing Leviathans would face one Duke and four Knights, or two Dukes and two Knights (the latter if the Knights' attacks weren't very effective against a PC in the previous battle.

You might scatter the forces and increase their number. Place the main force in the Observatory, but place a Knight in the Transmit Room and one in the central station. Place two normals as lookouts at each entrance, and one on the roof.

The Leviathans should again be employing agents, use Thugs. They'll be armed with rifles, but their primary purpose will be watching for intruders. They'll wear the uniforms of a (bogus) security firm, "Kampus Kops, Incorporated".

been two deaths in the region. Marks on the body suggests a cougar, but it's unusual for a cougar to attack adults. It is a wilderness area, and has been used by fugitives before.

A lot of the most recent criminal activity has centered around the college; Westfall was a professor of astronomy. Tracking Westfall's movements will find that he's spent some time in the vicinity of the Observatory, and there are thirteen phone calls from Westfall's home to the Observatory, whose telephone line was reconnected about a month ago.

VI. THE OBSERVATORY

The Wolcott Observatory has been one of the most prominent landmarks in this part of the country for many years. It has been regularly maintained since the College moved their research to the larger Shaw Observatory, which is located twenty miles away from the old Wolcott facility.

The place is now occupied by Leviathans, Leviathan sympathizers, and mercenaries. (Arikvarius likes using non-gestalt humans as lookouts and added muscle more than most Leviathan dukes). The observatory is set upon a hill, and about about 20' stairs are needed to reach the building. There are two entrances; one near the rear of the facility, the second near the Observatory room. Two agents are stationed at each entrance, inside the building, and one is stationed on the roof. All agents have assault rifles, a headset/communicator, a panic button hidden on their belt, IR goggles, and light body armor (treat as Dawn Brothers

All rooms except the Observatory have a 15' (4") ceiling. The roof is 40' above ground.

The Transmit Room: This room contains radio equipment that allows for short wave broadcast between.

Toilet. Not gender specific. Rather grungy. Just a toilet, a small faded mirror, a pair of sinks, an empty dispenser of towelettes, and an old garbage can.

Lecture Hall. This large hall has been converted into barracks for the Leviathans. The windows have been boarded, and crude beds have been made from mattresses stacked on secured desks and placed together (Leviathans don't need sleep, but they occasionally feel a need to rest).

Library. A small library with three large bookshelves filled with astronomy text books. There are two large reading tables; a pair of text books have been put on a lectern and raised to an eye level comfortable for Leviathans. The books shelves weigh 1000 lbs.. fully loaded.

Comp Lab: Just a room with computers

in them.

Office: This office has been vacated, except for a desk with a phone on it. The west side of the room has been transformed into barracks.

Bedroom: The bedroom is filled with a large mattress for Arikvarian, a camera with a videotape of the Leviathans torturing and murdering several intruders, with Arikvarian giving instructions and clearly enjoying it. There's an adjacent bath, but it's too small for a Leviathan to use.

Observatory: This large chamber is 40' in height. The observatory dome is made from cast steel, and its movements are controlled by a mechanism that's across from the telescope. The telescope is a reflecting telescope in a large case. There is a staircase leading to a catwalk, 6' above the floor, where the controls for the telescope and the camera system are located.,

If the Leviathans have kidnapped the genius or stolen the box, both will be located here. This is where the Leviathans will make their stand.

This is also where George E. Williams might go to reclaim his property. If the box is present here, and you want a bit of tragedy, have him take a shot at Arikvarian with a double barreled shotgun, and then let him get cut down by a Leviathan. This might upset the box greatly; the box might teleport to any PC psionic in the room, and if the PC opens the box, they can very creative and learn instantly the art of revenge psi, enabling them to perform a Mind Blast (lethal), only against Leviathans, for 4 rounds (then the power is lost).

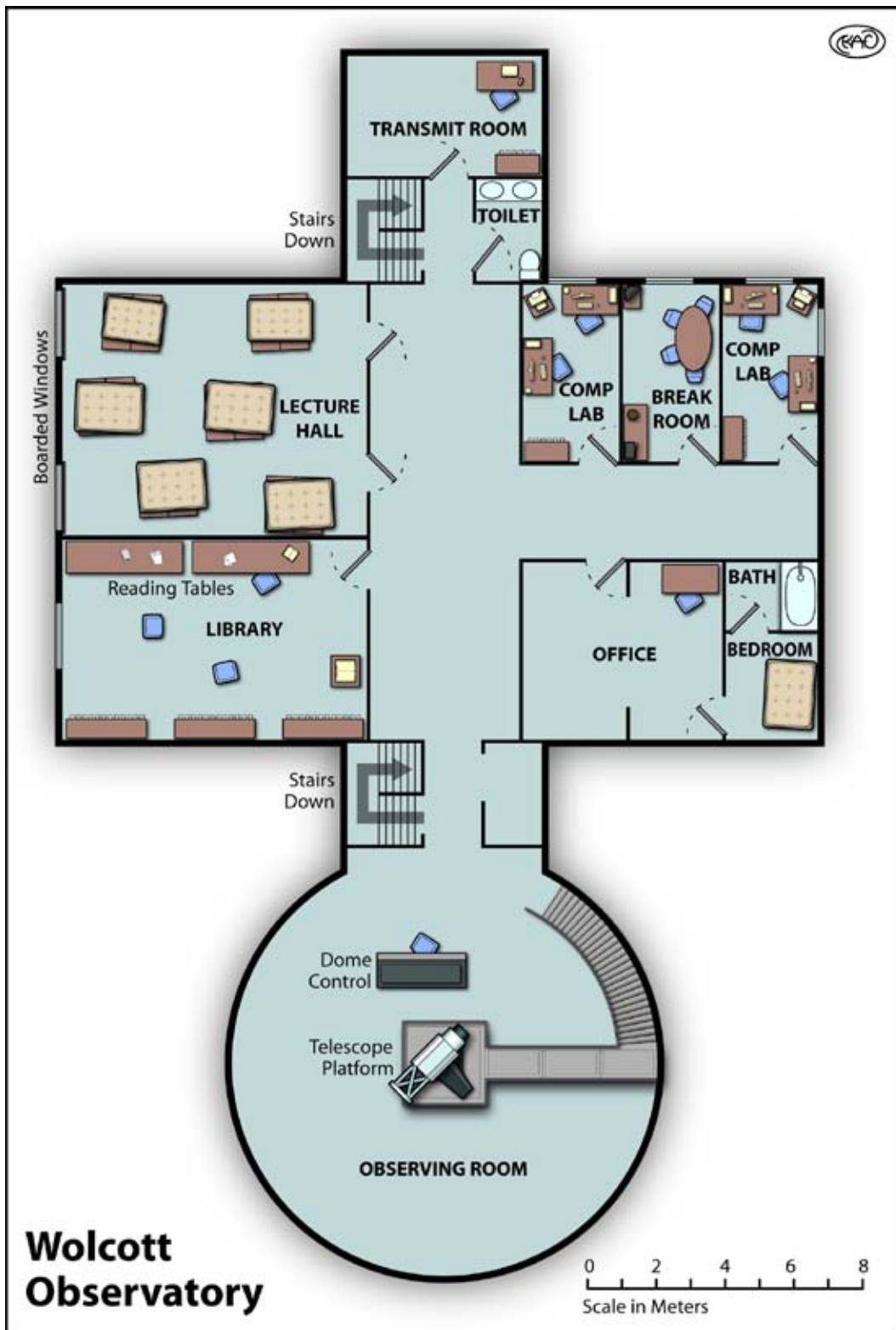
SPEAK THE (LONG) SPEECH I PRAY YOU...

When the PCs confront Arikvarian (if you wish to maintain a four-color feel) Arikvarian should give a speech to establish his character and fill any gaps in the exposition. The PCs may interrupt the soliloquy at any time to launch an attack, but unless they had surprise before the soliloquy, they won't have it now (having him give a long speech shouldn't be an opportunity for a surprise attack).

When Arikvarian sees the PCs, his third eye glows red for an instant, and he nods. His manner is a little less formal than many Leviathans, and his speech is more colloquial than most of his kind.

"I suppose now that you've entered my home, I should offer you a suitable greeting. Welcome. Tonight, you die under the stars."

"This place is devoted to understanding the cosmos, to observing cataclysms of such magnitude that they stagger the limited imaginations of humanity. But when I am finished,



Wolcott Observatory

our imaginations will be more capable of understanding its glories."

"I am not certain that gestalts are as evil as my King says. Even vermin has its place in the world. The techniques that we will develop to exterminate them may have very practical applications. Applications that will take humanity..." The Duke smiles and points skyward. "There."

"There are those that believe the human mind is the ultimate frontier. But I say the human

mind is a little thing, the gestalt is a little thing, and that human creativity and intellect must grow before we become worthy of the stars."

The outcomes of this fight should provide a climax for the scenario, with a few possible dangling threads. A few possibilities include:

(1) The Leviathans win.

SO YOU'VE GOTTEN A THIRTEEN FOOT TALL PSIONIC HOMICIDAL MANIAC REALLY MAD AT YOU. WHAT NEXT?

Okay, the Leviathans want your blood. Big deal. You're a superhero. Enemies are like badges. You collect them all the time.

But what can Leviathans do to make a PC's life miserable? What sort of payback would they try?

The Leviathans have two operating modes: brute force, or treachery (committed by operatives). What they'll likely do, if a direct assault against the PCs proves untenable, is find a non-gestalt enemy of the PC, promise them great power or wealth if they do a dirty deed against the PCs (drug an ally, infiltrate their defenses and lower them at an inopportune moment, find out a PC secret that allows them to be blackmailed).

Brute force is fun, but treachery is even more fun, especially if it leaves the PCs wondering who's really behind their torment?

BEYOND THE ADVENTURE

The radio is set to a frequency where Arikvarian can reach other Leviathans, or a cell of Leviathan sympathizers. You may use this as a hook into other Leviathan related adventures.

"WE ARE THE LEVIATHANS - WE LIVE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE, AND WHEN WE SURFACE, TERROR FOLLOWS..."

Leviathans are tough especially for novice heroes. How many opponents should be facing the PCs in this fight?

For a fight which the PCs have a good chance of winning as a beginning character group at the Experienced power level, have one Leviathan Duke equal two-and-a-half PCs, and one Leviathan Knight or Vassal equal two PCs, with perhaps one Competent normal (a mind controlled or sympathetic security guard or mercenary) accompanying them bad guys. Thus if there are five PCs, there should be 1-2 Knights, one Vassal, and five agents.

(Note: because we're saving the Duke for the climactic fight, there should be no Dukes now, just Knights and a single Vassal.)

For a tougher fight: one Leviathan Duke equals two and a half PC, and one-and a half Knights and Vassals equals one PC, and one and a half Competent agents equal one PC. Thus if there are five PCs and you want a tougher battle, there should be one vassal, two Knights (three if you really want to make them sweat), and eight agents.

Since the Vassal will probably teleport away immediately, consider adding another Knight.

Oops! In this case, they'd realistically execute the heroes and end the campaign. If this sort of realism repulses you, have the heroes locked away for awhile, allow the Leviathans to develop psionite, and then give the PCs a chance to escape. Have the Leviathans move their base of operations, leaving a cold trail, and give the PCs some time to anticipate the rematch.

(2) *Arikvarian escapes, the plan is foiled*

Give Arikvarian some time to hatch a new scheme and develop himself as a major enemy for the PCs. Play on his love of torture and his interest in technology; perhaps next time, he'll come back at the PCs with some technological augmentations of his powers. Again, give the players some time between his defeat and his reappearance.

(3) *Arikvarian is captured.*

If the Leviathan leader is defeated - unless he made a big impression on the players - keep him in prison for the rest of the campaign. Defeat puts him into the "one-shot" villain category. This doesn't mean that a rival Leviathan Duke might not relish the challenge of defeating the ones who bested one of the more honored Dukes of Leviathan-kind.

(4) *Box is destroyed.*

Same consequences as earlier.

CODA

It should be up to the players to evaluate the impact of the scenario, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to leave them with a few questions, put to them by a member of the press or the police:

If a single gestalt powered item has the potential to cause as much trouble - and glory - as the box of muses, what about all the other items that are out there? What else IS out there? And what next?

First, let them have a chance to breathe. Allow them to explore the Observatory fully. Give them a chance to find the videotape and solve the murders.

And if Williams was present, let them try to rush him to a hospital.

One obvious loose end is the fate of the box. If they keep it, the heroes may find it a valuable - if annoying - tool. (The GM may find it even more annoying). Let them use it once, then teleport it away. The box can reappear later in the campaign, but come up with a good story for it - it's good to address dangling plot threads, but make sure you've got an interesting story in mind, not a rehash, and be sure your players want to revisit it.

Next, determine if the press shows up. If they do, decide what angle they'll use to cover the story: "heroes defeat the Leviathans", "a break in the tragic bushland murder case" or "superhero battle damages historical landmark".

Try to figure out where the heroes stand after the scenario. Have they improved their reputation with local authorities and the press? Have they increased exposure? Have they made new enemies? Has any player shown interest in a sub-plot or bonded with any NPC? Mark it down.

And finally, give the players what they really want. Experience points!

RETURN OF THE HERO

Return of the Hero is an extended encounter for a Gestalt campaign. It can be customized for any US-based campaign.

THE SCENARIO IN BRIEF

A young local gestalt is returning from the war in Kurdistan. Matt Glenn, a war hero, is being honored at City Hall. Unfortunately, the rally is a trap by the Dawn Brothers to kill Glenn, and the Anti-American will also show up along with protesters. Furthermore, Matt lost his powers after the attack, so he'll need protection — perhaps even from himself.

HERO OF THE HOUR

"Now here's a real hero!" trumpets the local papers and talk radio shows. "Young, handsome, never hiding his identity behind a mask, no span-dex or silly codenames, willing to put his body on the line for his country..." one editorial says. "Why can't more heroes be like him?"

Matt Glenn, 22, is an army reservist, who was stationed with his unit in Kurdistan, where NATO and Turkish troops are battling Kurd insurgents. Glenn was stationed in a NATO base, two months ago and used his powers to save the lives of hundreds of his fellow American soldiers. Three weeks ago, a Kurd gestalt, a Gesalt of Falling Stars, managed to summon a swarm of meteors and directed them at Glenn's base. Glenn bounded away to battle him. After a short, vicious battle, Glenn killed the insurgent gestalt, which stopped the meteor shower and saved the troops. Wounded in the attack, Glenn was transferred to an army hospital in Germany, then shipped Stateside. Naturally the locals want to honor him.

That's the official story. The truth about his heroism is a little more complicated. Matt Glenn did engage in single combat against *Akanyýldýz*, the Gestalt of Falling Stars. Glenn's a Confidence Gestalt, and this was his first real battle against someone on a similar power level. When he kept hitting *Akanyýldýz* with enough force to stop a freight train—and the Kurd just refused to quit and kept coming at him—Glenn's confidence was completely shaken, and thereby lost his powers. He would have died, if it had not been for the unexpected arrival of a squad of Italian soldiers who mortally wounded the Shooting Star gestalt.

Glenn is currently wrestling with the morality of his actions. Yes, saving his fellow troops was *absolutely* the right thing to do; but he questions the morality of the enterprise. He wonders what the difference is between the Kurds and the patriots who founded the United States. And he wonders why America should be involved in a war just because Turkey made a good ally against the Soviets decades ago. He is not, however, willing to take a public stand on his beliefs yet.

No one knows about his inner struggle except his older sister, Chelsea. The city sees Matt as a golden boy, and is going to hold a parade and award him the key to the city, which (for the sake of his parents and his reserve unit) he's reluctantly accepting.

NASTIES AMOK!

A high profile gestalt appearance has brought out two sets of enemies.

The Dawn Brothers are sending a small

unit of Grey Army personnel to assassinate Matt Glenn. They realize that murdering a servicemen will not generate favorable press, but it will send a "message" to gestalts that no good reputation or good deed will protect them. They have rooftop assassins in position to shoot Glenn as soon as he receives the key to the city.

The Anti-American sees this as an opportunity to murder an upcoming American hero in the bud. He's going to be more open in his attack, and won't care in the slightest about the Grey Army; he just wants to publicly break the spirit of a war hero.

GETTING THE PCs ON THE SCENE

A GM should never assume that just because he's running a social event, the player characters will attend.

Vigilante characters can hear rumors of government assassins moving into town. Perhaps they've infiltrated a Dawn Brothers cell and been asked to take part in their operation, being given full details only when they're in position. Perhaps they've even been given a brainwashing treatment to get them to their pre-determined position (which they shake off just before the time comes to take the shot).

More accepted superheroes will be invited to honor one of their own. Give them a chance to socialize (if so inclined) with the young hero before the event. Matt Glenn is friendly to other gestalts, if distant. He may react with shameful hostility toward Confidence or Pride Gestalts.

YOU CAN'T FIGHT AT CITY HALL

There are a number of interesting props and useful staging options for this fight sequence:

(1) *Manhole*. The manhole leads into the sewers.

(2) *Street Lamp*.

(3) *Fountain*.

(4) *Flagpole*. The Star-Spangled Banner flies proudly over City Hall. It weighs 400 kg.

(5) *Statue*. This is a statue of a city founder or prominent war hero (or deceased superhero, if appropriate). It's attached to alt concrete slab.

(6) *Tree*. There are several big trees here (use a tree appropriate to the geographic region of the campaign).

(7) *Police*. There are several police cars and (six officers) on the scene. The officers will be stationed next to the podium. Two of the officers are actually Dawn Brothers moles.

(8) *Fred's Gestaltabilia Wagon*. If the PCs are publicly known, and a crowd is present, expect

THE THREE STRIKES RULE REVISITED

Earlier, a three strikes rule was mentioned for the use of supervillains; A villain or villain team shouldn't directly confront the heroes more than three times in a campaign unless they're critical to the story.

This rule is even more important for plot devices and McGuffins. These things are **never** as effective the second time around unless they have a twist or advance the plot in an unexpected new direction. If you plan to use such a plot device more than twice, be really sure that your players want to deal with it again, especially if it looks like they achieved closure with the object on its previous appearance. If the players moan: "but we destroyed it last time!" they want it to stay dead. Bringing it back robs them of a sense of accomplishment. Don't do this. It's bad GMing

IS THE KURDISTAN CONFLICT AN ANALOG FOR AMERICA'S INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ?

The answer is no, or at least not intentionally. This diversion in the timeline was set up in the actual campaign when it was run in the 1990s, long before the real world conflict took place.

The US's involvement in Kurdistan is mostly about fulfilling NATO commitments to Turkey, and containing the influence of Iran in the region. There's a lot of behind the scenes diplomacy being attempted, but with little success. Even the State Department openly acknowledges it's an unpopular war.

The anti-war movement is very pronounced on Gestalt-Earth. A GM could certainly employ it as an analog to Iraq, but the themes of the two wars are very different; the Kurdistan conflict is about honoring national obligations and realpolitik.

The details of the war have been left vague; if a GM wants a war analog, then they can establish similar patterns (terrorist bombings, problems in occupied territories, etc.). In any case, try to treat all sides with respect: the Kurds nationalist aspirations, and the desire of Turks to hold their nation together in this fictional conflict are both understandable aspirations. It's the actions of individuals—on both sides—that draws a line between good guys and bad guys in Kurdistan.

Fred Wilkins, AKA the Huckster (a middle aged man in a badly fitting superhero costume), to be present on the scene with a wagon full of over-priced souvenirs and patriotic regalia. Two Dawn Brothers strike team members, posing as employees, will use the wagon as a base of operations; just as the speech is about to begin and people (including Wilkins) are turning their attention to the ceremony, they'll get into their body armor and prepare for the signal to fire.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The events will roughly go as follows:

10:20-10:40 am: Everyone arrives. Cameras are already set up on the steps. At about 10:35 city officials arrive and sit in chairs

10:40 am: A local high school band (stationed at the fountain) gives a short concert.

10:50 am: Local dignitaries are introduced and thanked.

10:53 am: The Mayor introduces Glenn, presents the key to the city. The Anti-American teleports next to the mayor. The flag on the flagpole suddenly bursts into flame.

Once the Anti-American arrives on the scene, he senses Glenn's unease, and taunts him. He begins to give a big speech about America's bullying ways. He demands that Glenn stop being a hypocrite and agree with him.

If the PCs don't intervene, Glenn will eventually stammer. Unless the PCs bolster his faith, Glenn will give in to his doubts. However, just as he's about to give his answer, one of the planted "cops" will shout: "He's in league with the supervillain!" and fire on him. Use Grey Army operatives for all Dawn Brothers agents, though

the cops will be armed with ordinary guns. When the heroes get involved, a van will break through a blockade in front of city hall and unload a squad of Grey Army operatives. There should be two Dawn Brothers per PC in the scenario, including those already in place.

The other (confused) cops will fire on the Anti-American. The snipers in the merchandising wagon will target Glenn. When Glenn is downed, they'll start targeting visible PCs, and the Anti-American, in that order.

When the Anti-American starts to feel threatened (when he's been tagged four or five times, he'll try to teleport away. If he's not injured, he may, heal up a bit, teleport back, and take Glenn as a hostage, otherwise he'll live to fight

another day.

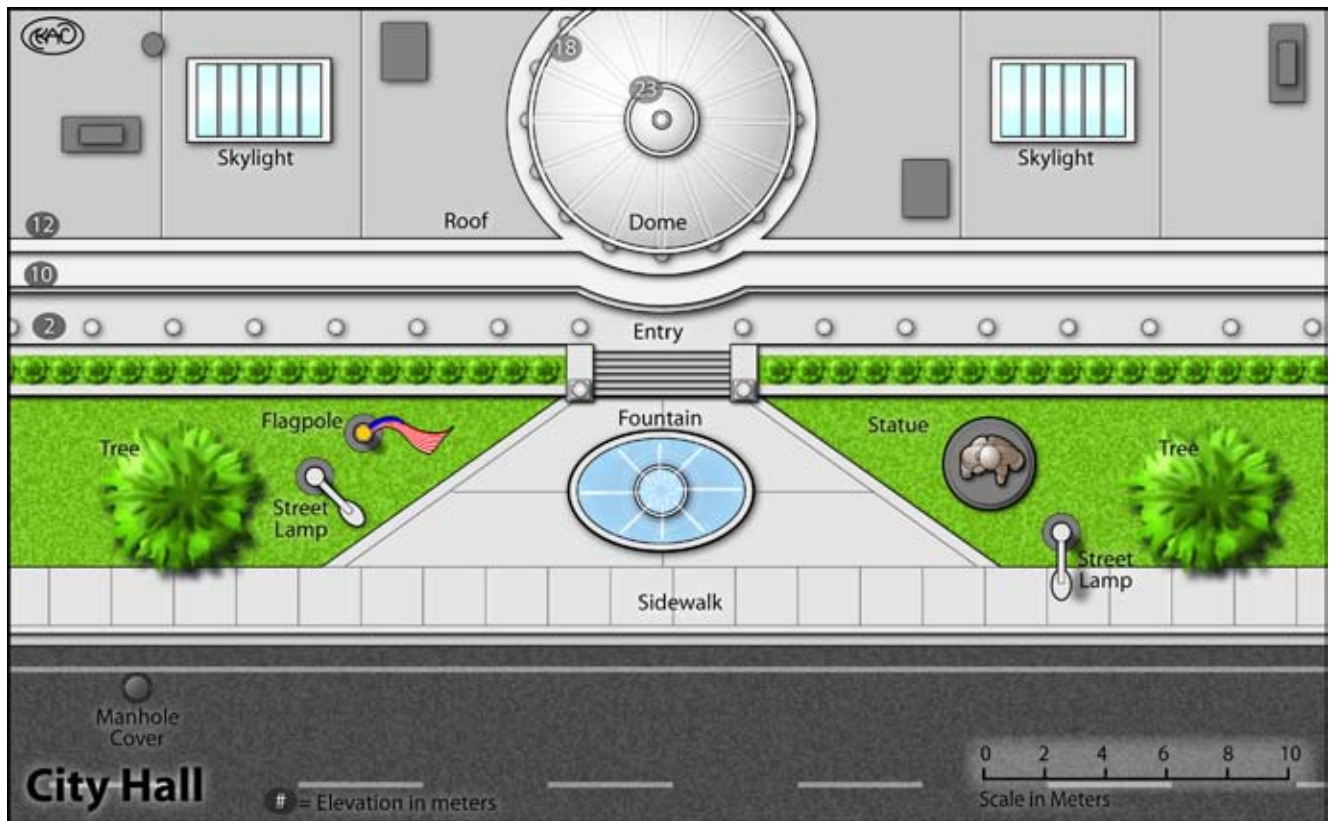
The Dawn Brothers will attempt to eliminate all gestalts, then return to their vehicle (or a back-up vehicle if that's destroyed) and drive away.

AFTERMATH

If the Dawn Brothers successfully kill Glenn (or innocent bystanders are badly hurt), then eliminating the local Dawn Brothers cell will probably become a priority. Otherwise, use this as a character and a thematic study on Glenn in particular and the war in general. He should have some sort of emotional breakdown, and the PCs should be there (and those with suitable gestalts (Regional Protectors, Comfort. Psychology) should get involved in his cure.

You might also want to send the heroes to Kurdistan after this adventure, and use Glenn's experiences as foreshadowing.





WHAT ABOUT GLENN?

Matt's game stats are left for the GM to determine. Unless you're putting a PC in the role, he should be no match for the Dawn Brothers weaponry. Make the first shot hurt him enough to badly wound him, and make it obvious that the PCs need to protect him or he'll die.

If the PCs bolster Glenn's confidence, he gets back into fighting shape. Either custom design him, or use Adrenaline's stats as a rough basis for the character.

YOUR OPTION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT THIS...

This scenario can be run with a PC (or all of the PCs) in Matt Glenn's place. It would be ideal if the PCs were reservists who served in the Kurdistan conflict, but not compulsory. Any patriotic reason to honor the PCs will do.

This is also a good scenario in which to introduce a new PC into the group, provided they're willing to take on a military reservist's role. Let the PCs help to save him, and let them bond from there.

XIII: SCENARIO SEEDS

TEN SET-UPS FOR GESTALT CAMPAIGNS

1. The New Guard: Ten knights from legendary Camelot are reborn at the ruins of the Round Table in Cadbury Hill in England. The Lady of the Lake appears and tells them each to pick a knightly virtue. This virtue will be the character's gestalt. Once the virtue is chosen, the Lady says:

"The Holy Grail is once again in play. Whoever finds the grail will find eternal life, for themselves and a chosen few. Any who schemes against a fellow knight will bear wrath when it is least expected. Go forth in fellowship, and test your ideals in this new world."

Somewhere out there is the Holy Grail, but this is Gestalt-Earth, where there are plenty of villains and modern-day dragons and black knights.

2. Living on Borrowed Power: During the middle of a superfight between Columbia and the Tyranny League, something unexpected happens. Lightning bolts fly out from the Columbia members, and they become normal human beings—while their powers are passed to a PC. He doesn't seem to be as capable and adept as them, and while the situation's confused enough that the originals managed to escape without loss of life, without their powers they're clearly a target for the League.

3. You're In the Super Army Now: The PCs are all soldiers, fighting in a heated battle in Kurdistan, when suddenly a gestalt wave occurs, and their powers are immediately manifested. After the battle, they're brought to their commander and inducted into a new Special Forces unit.

After several operations, there's a truce in Kurdistan, and political pressure to disband gestalt special force units (except for the Vanguard) causes the army to send them Stateside on reserve status. So will these old war buddies stick together when they get back to home soil?

4. "Turn This Ship Around Now!": The PCs thought this whole Gestalt thing was a joke... until they ended up being captured by aliens who want them to fight to the death on some planet for their amusement. Fortunately, the PCs find a way to escape from their bonds and take control of the ship. Unfortunately, no one knows how to fly the blasted thing, and they're stuck hundreds of parsecs from your solar system!

5. Powers and Principalities: Every day at noon, for three hours only, statues of angels that adorn a church roof come to life. Even when the statues are

away from the church (or destroyed), at the end of an hour, they return to their places as medieval art. Even if someone destroys the statue, they're reborn.

Are the PCs angels? Do they hear the voice of God in song? What happens when agents of God only get three hours to work His will each day? And what of those demon statues that come alive at midnight?

6. The Local Chamber of Commerce: A major American city has just had its superheroes wiped out by a supervillain team. They're willing to spend big bucks for a reliable team of local heroes to carry the fight to these villains and keep the town safe. Once novices who fought petty crime in dingy back alleys, the PCs have finally made the big time!

Is this too good to be true? Is there a force behind the villain incursions with a deeper, more sinister agenda?

7. The Road to Hell?: A dying billionaire wants to leave a legacy behind for future generations and he's hired the PC's to make it happen. They live in one of America's worst urban centers. Their job is to use powers and money (although it's use is monitored by a board of directors, you have access to a billion dollar trust fund to assist their efforts) to clean up the city.

Unfortunately, as the press (and supervillains) mock the "poor little rich heroes", the PC's left to wonder if they've got a point: are money and superpowers really the answer to the problems of America's urban centers?

Set-Up: At least one of the PCs should play a Regional Protector Gestalt for the city; it'd be even more interesting if the players would play Regional Protector Gestalts for sections of the city that are often rivals, coming together for their common benefit—but with a lot of old rivalry and baggage behind them.

8. Aftershock: There's been a major disaster in the campaign city—flood, major earthquake, tsunami, alien invasion—and the place needs heroes to save lives and protect the city from supervillains who see superlooting as a great way to make quick cash.

After the clean-up, the local authorities would like the PCs to stay around and protect the city. Perhaps they can make arrangements with the government to free up enough funds to hire them full time.

9. The Bar With No Name (Redux): Some say that every good RPG campaign begins at a tavern. Some

say that every bad RPG campaign begins at a tavern. Good or bad, that's irrelevant. The tavern the PCs are trapped in is the "Barroom Brawl of Doom" (see page 139), only everyone's trapped, including superheroes and supervillains like you. No one can find an exit, and whoever starts fighting, gets carried away in the contagion of violence.

Can the PC and the other heroes team up to escape? And once they do, why does fate seem determined to keep trapping them together?

10. We Are The Champions: All of the PCs are members of a sports team which won their league championship at the moment of a gestalt wave. Everyone who was on the team at the time of the victory gets powers, but their powers only work if they're within 100 yards of the championship trophy.

FIVE CONFLICTS FOR ARTISTIC/ARTFORM STYLE GESTALTS

1. The Gift: An ambassador from the Ar'Sarashar, who are not known to have visited earth before, visits a PC whose archetype represents an artform or a philosophy (or a practitioner of that artform/profession). In exchange for telepathic contact with the practitioner while in the height of his performance, the Ar'Sarashar offers a gift box.

Is he really the Ar'Sarashar ambassador? Why would the Ar'Sarashar want telepathic contact with the hero so badly that he's willing to openly reveal himself to humans? What's in the box?

2. Performance Anxiety: The PC is invited to perform at an official state function for the president (or some other head of state). This would be nerve-racking enough, but things get really hairy when the PC overhears a pair of secret service agents talking about a threat to the head of state's life during the performance...

3. A Life Of Its Own: A work of art created by a gestalt produces more than he bargained for. It's a masterpiece: a painting or a statue comes alive, a song wafts into the air and refuses to die, and those who behold it are forced —like all good art—to confront their own inner nature. Unfortunately, it's affecting people on a primal level, and some of the people who witness it can't take it. They're going catatonic —or embracing their inner madness by going on psychotic rampages.

The PC needs to find some way to constrain his art; but art must live, and the death of art might break an artist's heart.

4. Art vs. Destruction: Someone who claims to be a performance art gestalt has announced that the destruction of art is the greatest artistic statement of all, and he wants to destroy *the PC's* art and ruin his

performances. This villain needs to be stopped, on both a physical and a philosophical level.

5. Obsession: An artistic (either a PC who cooperates with the scenario, or a friendly NPC) gestalt is becoming obsessed with the completion of a project, to the extent where he refuses to eat, sleep, socialize or do anything except to work on the project.

FOUR SCENARIOS INVOLVING GESTALT TWINS

1. This Gestalt Isn't Big Enough For The Two of Us! There's nothing more vicious than a local turf war. A PC who represents a particularly obscure gestalt archetype discovers that against all odds, he has a gestalt twin, an angry annoying man who wants to be the sole champion of the archetype.

While you're trying to do your job, your bitter rival is trying to stir up trouble with the press and the people you've sworn to protect. Finally, he says that he knows a way for the two of you to get into the Gestalt Dimension and engage in a battle of wills: the loser loses his gestalt forever! But can he be trusted to fight fair—and should he trust you?

Complication: The hero loses. What next?

2. The Merge: A gestalt twin decides that in order to be more effective, he has to physically merge with an identical gestalt. He turns to a gestalt expert who's built an experimental machine that physically integrates gestalts: but the machine doesn't quite work as planned; the left half of the newly created character is the PC and right half is the NPC.

How does the PC get himself out of this mess?

3. The Suicide: A gestalt twin of one of the PCs gives into despair and is about to commit suicide. Can the PC stop him? If he fails, what effect will it have on the PC?

4. Prodigoal: A PC discovers that one of his gestalt twins has turned his back on his archetype. Why did he do it? How can he be persuaded to return to his role?

TWENTY SCENARIOS INVOLVING ODD GESTALTS

1. My Little Friend: Okay, you're a bonded gestalt. You're supposed to have complete and sole control over your powers. Then why are you suddenly seeing the embodiment of your gestalt, standing beside you in the heat of the moment, chiding you for being a poor exemplar of your archetype? Is this a telepath playing tricks on your mind, are you going insane, or is something strange going on with your gestalt?

2. Gestalt of Power: A pure gestalt who claims to be the Gestalt of Raw Power announces that he's going to fade from existence, but before he goes, he's go-

A Recommendation

Select a PC who enjoys role-playing a drunken wild man for this scenario. If possible, tell him what will happen before hand and let him prepare for it.

ing to transfer his power to someone who finds him and claims it.

When word hits the gestalt community about this “giveaway”, everyone wants a piece of it. Who’s going to end up with “the power” and how is it going to be manifested?

3. Let’s Make A Deal: A gestalt claims to have uncovered the secret of eternal youth – which he can bestow on one person only, and is willing to auction it off to the highest bidder. Naturally, this auction attracts a lot of attention, and the PCs are called in (either as security, or as representatives of an interested third party).

4. In The Air Tonight: A gestalt with the power to make people fly is charging \$100/day to anyone who wants the gift of flight. This may sound like an innocent enterprise, but some of his customers are members of a street gang who are using the powers he’s giving them to commit crimes. When he’s confronted, the Gestalts says that the heroes should harass the customers, not him — and he’s retained a lawyer who’s already managed gotten a similar case thrown out of court. Resolve the situation.

5. With A Little Luck: Cameron Mills, the world’s unluckiest man, has made a deal with a villain with gestalt transference abilities to permanently transfer his misfortune into someone else. The evil gestalt thinks that a PC would make the perfect vessel. Foil his plan.

6. Not The Mind Control Rock Concert Plot Again! After reading a role-playing game module, a Rock n’Roll Gestalt changes his band’s name to “Roadthrill” and decides to hold a rock concert where he’ll order everyone to hand over their possessions. Stop them.

7. Who Needs Relations?: A monument to a fallen superhero is on prime commercial property — and a developer wants it bad, so bad that he’s hired a Public Relations gestalt to smear the dead hero’s reputation and make people want to tear down the memorial. Stop him.

8. Path of Destruction: A veteran’s favorite meeting place was destroyed in a recent battle between the PCs and a team of supervillains, and the man — a Gestalt of Veterans who’s confined to a wheelchair — isn’t going to take it. He’s decided that he’ll retaliate by destroying the PCs’ homes and killing the villains. Can you pacify the anger of a soldier who’s gone on the warpath?

9. Cretaceous Park: To assist in scientific research, a Paleontology Gestalt is being hired to transport dinosaurs ahead in time. But what happens when the meteor that’s meant to wipe out their species comes ahead in time too?

10. The Fine Print: On the mortgage for a PC’s most prized possession (home, team HQ, etc.) he finds an

extremely odd clause – unless he performs “three different and extremely evil public acts”, he’ll lose everything. And he’s agreed to let a camera crew film the rest of his day! Can he fulfill the terms of his contract and still keep his pride, dignity, and reputation intact?

11. “God Himself Could Not Destroy This New Building!”: The mayor has a big mouth. Now that he’s offended Destruction, Humility, Religious, and Natural Disaster Gestalts, prevent “Perfect Towers” from being destroyed. Will the wrathful gestalts compete to destroy the building, or will they team up to do the dirty deed?

12. Perfection: A Food Gestalt claims he’s close to finding the recipe for “the perfect food”. But just what would be the perfect food? Would it be so nutritious that it gives people perfect health? Would it give people superhuman abilities? Would it recreate the legendary ambrosia of the gods? Would it be so delicious that it kills with pleasure? Determine if the Food Gestalt is about to create a piece of heaven, or unleash hell.

13. A Cancer In Our Midst: A man who claims to be able to cure cancer comes to town and works with terminally ill children. His claims are bogus, but he does bring hope to the dying kids and alleviates their suffering. Do you expose him as a fraud?

14. The Secret Language of the Soul: A Gestalt claims to have discovered a gestalt-empowered superlanguage, universally understood symbols that resonate telepathically. But is teaching the world to communicate telepathically a good thing, or has some force (gestalt or metagestalt) imprinted subconsciousness commands into the language that they can use to control the reader?

15. What’s My Motivation?: A creepy gestalt of some ludicrously happy archetype (Laughter, Clowns, or Joy) is being accused of madness by his family, who want to have him committed. The defense calls the PCs to testify as expert witnesses that Gestalts aren’t madness. But as the PCs get to know the defendant, they start getting clues that the gestalt wants to be convicted – so he can take control of the asylum, and use it as a base for a criminal empire.

16. You Gotta Know When To Fold ‘Em: A very high stakes poker game is being held to determine the fate of a mysterious gestalt artifact. A crime boss who’s under the thumb of a major Crime Gestalt is bringing in a Gambling Gestalt to fix the game. Find your own Luck or Cardshark Gestalt and win access to the artifact.

17. The Machines Stop: All over the city, Mechanical organs (artificial hearts, pacemakers, etc.) suddenly stop working. This lasts for ten minutes – save as many people as possible.

Once you’ve resolved the crisis, track down the

source of the phenomena. An exhibit of bizarre gestalt technology has opened at a local museum. But which artifact is responsible, and who activated it?

18. Still No Cure For Cancer: A dying third world dictator has kidnapped six medical doctor gestalts to cure a (rare) painful but non-fatal condition. He's threatening to execute one doctor each month until a cure is found. He's a thug, but he's sitting on a lot of oil, and the State Department wants him treated with kid gloves. He's also persecuting an ethnic group, religion or profession that's directly associated with one of the PCs' archetypes. Save them.

19. Midnight For the Cowboy: The gaudy but likeable Bronco the Urban Cowboy, was framed for murder and is currently serving time in a maximum-security prison. Kinestar or some other Detective/Justice gestalt is gathering evidence to clear his name, but she's become aware that some Gestalts have been sent to infiltrate the prison population and kill him. She wants to plant the PCs in the prison to protect him while she works to clear his name (or at least get him transferred to another prison).

20. How Awesome Is the Lord Most High: A pure gestalt with healing powers and a humble demeanor wonders a disturbing question: is he just another gestalt, or is he the second coming of Jesus Christ? He figures that the best people to answer that question would be other gestalts, so he asks the PCs to devise a set of tests to determine the truth.

TEN EASY EXCUSES FOR GESTALTS TO FIGHT

1. My name Is Gladiat... Hey! Why Am I Speaking Such A Barbaric Tongue?: A Gladiator Gestalt appears out of nowhere at a local boxing tournament, obviously disoriented. He decides that the ring is an arena, and he's been called on to impress the crowd – so he puts on his cestus (the Roman version of brass knuckles, but more brutal) and attacks the pugilists. He has to be stopped – unfortunately he's never been defeated and has immense powers in a gladiatorial arena.

2. Talk To The Hand: A Schizophrenia or Weirdness Magnet gestalt starts hearing people's hands communicating their unconscious thoughts. He responds by grabbing a machete and threatening to cut off people's talking hands. — including one of the PCs' closest friends.

3. Crown of the Sun: An NPC Sun Gestalt becomes convinced he's a god, and that by stealing Aztec artifacts associated with their sun god Huitzilopochtli, he can obtain supreme power. It's a race against time to prevent him from getting them – and to prevent him from conducting Huitzilopochtli's favorite wor-

ship activity, human sacrifice.

Kukulcan of the Hot Gods, though nominally a villain, is actually Huitzilopochtli's brother Quetzecoatl, and would be very motivated to stop this plot. If you have his write-up (which will be included in Gestalt: Hate and Harm) available, he might make a valuable ally in this quest.

4. Opposites Repel?: A crime boss, tired of the PCs, recruits a team whose members' archetypes are the polar opposites of the PC. But just because their archetypes are the opposite of the PCs, it doesn't mean there'll be a big, bloody fight, right?

5. Fighting Club: There's an illegal underground gestalt fighting club somewhere in the campaign city, and foolish young gestalts are being hurt while greedy promoters make a mint from their blood, sweat, and compound fractures! Violence is a terrible, awful, and horrible thing! Isn't it shameful that the PCs will have to commit many acts of amounts of bone-crunching carnage, all filmed and replayed in loving slow-motion, in order to stop the brutal (and not-at-all heart-pounding) entertainment that is the Fighting Club? Won't they just hate every single minute of it?

6. Dowry: A very confused but mighty pure gestalt warrior has fallen in love with a supervillainess, one of your archenemies, who's decided that as a wedding gift, she wants your head on a pike. Of course, the first thing the doofus does is go around, waving a big sword, challenging the PCs to mortal combat. Regardless of whether he wins, she has no intention of marrying the fool, but she hopes he'll do her dirty work.

7. Gestalted Away: A Sailing Gestalt has found a passage that leads into the seas beyond the world – the Gestalt Dimension. A lot of people are going to want the charts he's made that shows the route (maybe even the PCs!), and they all show up at the sailor's house at the same time.

8. City of Violence: A Mayhem Gestalt has managed to envelop the entire city in a gestalt phenomena that has a devastating effect — anyone in the city who doesn't get into a knockdown, drag 'em out brawl within 24 hours will receive calamitous misfortune, perhaps even death. The PCs need to find someone to fight, soon. They also have to find a way to deal with a city who's suddenly reverted to the law of the jungle, (and simultaneously persuade the city's pacifist community to put up their dukes).

9. Brick-a-Brac: A sleazy promoter is putting up posters for "Slamdance", which he claims will be a gathering of the most physically powerful local superheroes, supervillains, and other titans from the immediate area, in an out of control brawl for the title of the "King of Combat". No one knows who this

guy is, or how he's going to attract his fighters, but everyone's curious. And what if the Ar'Kayadin or a Fighting Metagestalt gets involved?

10. Welcome to the Monstergon: A force field goes up around the city, and giant kaiju (Japanese movie monsters) appear out of nowhere and attack buildings and each other, leaving a trail of devastation in their wake. It's up to the PCs to battle them and discover who erected the "Monstergon" around the city.

FIVE SCENARIOS TO RECONCILE INTER-GESTALT CONFLICTS BETWEEN PCs

1. Reconciliation or Bust!: Word leaks out that the PCs are at each others' throats. A Friendship Gestalt offers to bring them into therapy to reconcile themselves with each other. The PCs are subject to mental conditioning that causes them to experience pain if they confront each other in an angry or violent manner. Unfortunately, the telepathic treatment also affects the minds of the people around them, causing chaos and pain.

Will it work? And is this a Friendship Gestalt, a Tough Love Gestalt, or worse?

2. Deception: When a serious breach occurs between two PCs, the leader of the team receives a vision that the two PCs must reconcile, or there'll be massive destruction. Soon afterwards, a mysterious figure approaches the leader; he says that he'll claim that he used mind control to set the PCs against each other if the leader backs him up. To what lengths will the leader go to keep his team together?

3. Fight!: Two quarrelling PCs are captured by the Ar'Kayadin, who plan to set them against each other in a gladiatorial contest to the finish. Furthermore, they intend to broadcast the fight back to Earth to demonstrate how divided Earth is as a culture. When the PCs discover how they're being used, will they still fight, or will they join forces to escape?

4. The Hit: Shortly after the PCs are seen having a very public argument with each other, one of the PCs is seen standing over the other PC's dead body—and the press captures the shocking discovery on film. In actual fact, the body's a fake, and the other PC has been lured into a deadly force field prison, but as far as the world's concerned, one PC's dead, and the other's a deadly gestalt wacko. But who set up the frame?

5. It's A Super-Wonderful Life: When a quarrel between two PCs threaten to tear their team apart, they experience hallucinations of what the world would be like had the other PC never existed. Unfortunately, they're not very favorable glimpses, because they're the work of Maligno!

The PCs will need to find some way to compare notes, realize they've been conned, and band together. Hopefully, in defeating Maligno, they'll get a chance to reflect on what the other PC really does in a more honest, less saccharine way.

FOUR SCENARIOS TO INTRODUCE NEW GESTALT PCs INTO THE CAMPAIGN

1. Prison: While working in a Third World country ruled by a dictator, a PC ends up in a cell with a rebel or a mercenary who's also a gestalt (and a potential PC). Via some means (drugs or a hostile gestalt) they've managed to reduce both of their powers, so they need to work together to escape.

2. Ward of the State: A delinquent teenage gestalt has been found guilty of assault and vandalism. The courts require a superhero to serve as his guardian and mentor—and you're elected. Okay, the PCs are willing to face the Blood Red King, sure, no problem, but can they handle one out-of-control teenaged boy and raise him to adulthood, especially if he's practically programmed for adolescent rebellion (such as the Gestalt of Teenagers)? And what happens if he starts to get older (or doesn't)?

3. Gestalt Wave: An ancient Egyptian sarcophagus or other ancient burial object suddenly appears on the PCs' doorstep. A gestalt wave has just happened. Something inside the sarcophagus is banging and trying to get out. The person inside is a PC with an ancient world motif.

4. We're Not Demanding. Just Making A Suggestion: A delegation from a woman's group or an ethnic community approaches the team and requests that the team expand their membership to include someone from their group. The delegation's polite, but if the PCs refuse to be pressured, they spawn a backlash from a more opportunistic person who sees a way to drum up publicity. Taking in the new PC (who belongs to that group) is a way to mollify the controversy, but it may cause some tension within the team.

XIV: AFTERWORD

THE TRUE ORIGIN OF GESTALT-EARTH

That's it. That's the world for you. It's yours now.

The genesis of Gestalt-Earth is inspired by the use of archetypes in the comics, but evolved over a long period of time. In 1989, I played *Crucible*, defender of Canada, in a DC Heroes PBM run by Tori Bergquist; this was the first examination of the Gestalt concept. *Crucible* was the first exploration of the question: what was it like to play someone who was hardwired to a purpose? A superhuman whose archetype was its purpose.

Crucible's archenemy Dr. Power was created for that game. I also created the Spartan (here he's called the Titan, to avoid confusion with the popular Wildstorm Comics character) and the Tyranny League for that campaign.

The idea of a campaign where supers directly represented archetypes continued to percolate in my mind, and so in 1993, when I ran the New Columbians campaign at work (for 31 sessions), I took the Gestalt concept and ran with it. The resulting

campaign was fun enough that I ran the Hollywood Knights campaign (58 sessions with friends in Wayne Shaw's playing group) in the same universe, did so again at work in the ATF campaign (for another 43 sessions), and 8 sessions of the Vancouver game (which crashed due to personal commitments).

So the world has the virtue of being thoroughly playtested.

I wanted to publish this campaign almost from the start, so this book has been over eleven years in the making. I owe a lot to my players.

This was originally scheduled to be published by Hero Games as part of their Hero Plus .pdf line, but poorer than expected sales made that impractical.

Some of this material was published a long time ago on Bob Quinlan's Red October BBS, and those files are still out on the web. The material's out of date, but some of it is adaptable to the material here, so it may be worth seeking out, particularly the campaign write-ups, which are not likely to ever be published in any other form.

The most unfortunate change (for me at least) is the loss of two of the players in the Hollywood Knights campaign, Elizabeth Wolcott (whose character, Doc Toon, is depicted on this page) and Jeff Stitt, who passed away several years ago. Both were very dear friends, and their memory has spurred me to try to get this publication into print. This work is dedicated to them: Rick, Doc, I miss you guys.

There's one other bizarre tale to tell about this book - it probably saved my life. Several years ago, I elected to forsake a friend's Friday night *Chivalry and Sorcery* campaign until I'd finished one of my early drafts - and on one of the Fridays I missed, my friend's car was rear-ended by a drunk who slammed into it at 110 mph. My friends escaped (though one still has serious back injuries). And if I'd been in that car, I'd have been riding in the back seat. Let's just say that's not the way I want to go. So without Gestalt, (and, of course, my parents and the Almighty, without whom I wouldn't be on Earth in the first place) I wouldn't be alive today to put this book in your hot little hands.

(By the way, the drunk got off with a slap on the wrists by the authorities. It's enough to turn somebody into a Vengeance Gestalt. Grr...)

An-yway, I hope you've enjoyed this taste of Gestalt, and that enough people will like it to allow us to publish the follow-up, *Gestalt: Hate and Harm*, and maybe even a *Gestalt Adventures* book.

Scott Bennie



INDEX

- A**
- Aandhi 102
- Abdul Al-Duwaar.
 See Al-Duwaar,
 Sheik Abdul
- Abiray-Lev 100
- Abu Sayf 34
- Accurse 70
- Ackerman, Colin 170
- Acordar! 94
- ActionAmerica 287, 289
- Adams, Dr. Roland 177
- Adams, Randolph
 (Randy) 34, 63,
 138
- Addebabaye, Kore 106
- Adderlee, Dr. Robert 15,
 30, 31, 32, 33
- Adoração Luzente 87,
 187
- Adrenaline 4, 53, 137,
 226, 227, 231
- Aellopos 95
- Agenda X 69, 70, 144
- Aggadi 151, 152
- Aijrushi 105
- Airman, The 91, 119
- Aisha, Ali-Abu 187
- Akanyıldız 325
- Al-Duwaar, Sheik Abdul
 98
- Al-Jazzar 102
- Al-Kaf 98
- Alan Throne. *See* Throne,
 Alan
- Alchemist 1
- All-Stone, The 72
- Alpha-Man 287
- Altmeister 90
- Ambassador, the 91
- Ambrotos 95
- America Man 30, 31, 32,
 34, 36, 38, 47, 48,
 57, 62, 84, 109,
 110, 144, 196, 197,
 199, 205, 253,
 254, 258, 267,
 287, 289, 301
- America Man II 287
- American Avenger 1, 4,
 57, 229, 298, 299,
 301, 302, 303, 304,
 305, 306, 307
- American Task Force.
 See ATF
- Ametralladora 87
- Ammei 104
- Amnesty 34, 58, 84, 85,
 121
- Angel Azul 84
- Animales, Los 62, 68, 87,
 119, 168, 246
- Anti-American, The 4,
 33, 47, 57, 111,
 144, 194, 253, 254,
 301, 324, 326
- Anti-Crime Man 107
- Anti-Crime Squad 58,
 61, 64, 186, 305
- ANZAC Warrior 107
- Apep 289
- Apollo 49, 50, 52, 65, 87,
 93, 94, 95, 187,
 212, 213, 224,
 225, 277
- Apparition 4, 10, 53,
 240, 244, 248, 252
- Ar'Kayadin 4, 48, 61,
 74, 76, 78, 104,
 109, 181, 183, 189,
 254, 255, 256,
 298, 300, 306
- Ar, The 20, 28, 39, 42,
 44, 146, 147, 148,
 149, 150, 151, 152,
 148, 153, 147, 151,
 153, 147, 148, 149,
 214, 286, 289, 148,
 215, 274, 151, 152,
 153, 154, 155, 156,
 157, 165, 183, 186,
 187, 188, 211, 215,
 273, 274, 275, 286,
 289, 290, 293
- Ar-Eiko War 147
- Ar'aax 152, 215, 225,
 268
- Ar'Amaga 183
- Ar'Ceejol'Sigat 155
- Ar'Esnat'Sigat 155
- Ar'Gilada'Sigat (Dark
 Ar) 155
- Ar'hul 148
- Ar'Huriti 146, 147, 148,
 154, 156, 157,
 215, 274
- Ar'Ikanthre'Sigat (Elec-
 tric Ar) 155
- Ar'Kayadu Nom , 273
- Ar'Sarashar 2, 147, 148,
 149, 151, 152,
 153, 289, 329
- Ar'Turodain 2, 24, 30,
 38, 39, 48, 62, 75,
 146, 147, 148, 149,
 150, 151, 152, 153,
 154, 156, 157, 165,
 183, 187, 188,
 190, 211, 214, 215,
 224, 225, 274,
 286, 289, 300
- Ar'Wonola'Sigat (Aquat-
 ic Ar) 156
- Araña 86
- Archivist, the 91
- Arctic 82
- Ares 49
- Argamassa 87, 110, 135
- Argent 65
- Argenta 38
- Argyle 92
- Armageddo 4, 48, 61, 74,
 76, 78, 104, 109,
 111, 181, 183, 189,
 254, 255, 256,
 298, 300, 306
- Armsmaster 42
- Arrocho 87, 188
- Ascensión 42, 84, 193
- Ashanti Alliance, The
 106
- Ashbury, Kent 108
- Askari 107, 111
- Assembly, The 193
- Astra, Dr. 33, 39, 47,
 52, 109, 146, 166,
 174, 175, 177,
 178, 180, 181
- Astra-One 181
- Astra-Volt 174
- Astrada, Amelie 180
- Astrada, Dr. Emilio 174,
 180
- Astrada, Rocket 180
- Aswad Sikkiyn 100
- Atemi. *See* Chunin
- ATF 4, 24, 57, 58, 73,
 170, 171, 227, 296,
 264, 35, 297, 229,
 264, 289, 292, 296,
 297, 298, 299, 301,
 302, 303, 304, 305,
 306, 308, 333
- Athena 3, 49, 60, 61, 94,
 187, 212, 213, 110,
 213, 215, 217
- Atomic Clansman, The
 92
- Atomic Terror. *See* Ar-
 mageddo
- Atomkraft 91
- Atrocity 68
- Attila the Hun 55
- Auric I 38
- Author, The 68
- Aztech 174
- B**
- B.C. Bud 83
- Babaylan 103
- Babel 92
- Bachelor, The 65
- Badr Brigade 100
- Badr Brigade, The 100
- Bakuchiku 104
- Ballbuster 81, 82
- Banajiumu-jin 104
- Bandalag 93
- Bar Kochva 100
- Barrowman, Dr. Cyrus
 175, 196, 197
- Bastard, The 72
- Bastion, Ben 71
- Battleship 303
- Baumeister, Jürgen 89
- Bearface Thompson 72,
 110, 135
- Beau Homme 89
- Beau Maxwell 82
- Beauty 73
- Belette 84
- Bellisarius 91
- Bellweather 42, 82, 83,
 141, 193
- Bengal Tiger 50
- Berani 103, 115
- Berkov, "The Genius"
 Dr. 176, 222, 286
- Berserker 33, 36, 38, 45,
 46, 110, 135, 224
- Big Bang 34, 35, 290
- Bigg Byrd 108
- Big One, The 67
- Big Red 57, 119, 298,
 299, 308
- Biomechanos 94
- Birzeeq 98
- Black, Ian 108
- Black Agnes 93
- Blackmark 172
- Black Slasher 256
- Blacksmith, The 81, 82
- Blackwood 82
- Blake Portent. *See* Por-
 tent, Blake
- Blaylock, Amanda 186
- Blitz 72
- Bloodkite 39, 47, 181,
 190
- Blood of Islam 74, 235
- Blood Red King 4, 7, 14,
 24, 25, 32, 34, 36,
 38, 43, 44, 45, 48,

51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 68, 70, 73, 89, 92, 95, 96, 105, 111, 112, 125, 132, 171, 181, 186, 188, 190, 193, 194, 196, 199, 211, 213, 219, 226, 240, 244, 248, 252, 254, 258, 259, 286, 291, 292, 294, 297, 300, 308, 311	224, 291	Clark, Jonathan 34, 35, 62, 63, 64, 110, 134, 170, 197	4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 53, 240, 242, 246, 248, 250, 252
Blossom 59, 68, 193, 287	C	Clavius 65	Crioelectricidad 93
Blue Jet 107	Caballero 93	Clay Man, The 108	Cromwell, Arthur. <i>See</i> Paladin
Blue Lightning 71	Caber 91, 92, 110, 135	Clipper 41, 64, 109, 121	Cross, Dr. Glenn 197
Blutkönigen 89. <i>See</i> <i>also</i> Blood Red King, The	Calaca 85	Cocaina 87	Cross, Glenn 197
Bombard 37, 59, 193	Caldwell, Samantha 92	Cohete 86, 111	Crucible 37, 44, 81, 144, 333
Bombast 52, 268	Call of the Wild 72	Colin 91	Cuchilla 88
Bomber. <i>See</i> Yanquista	Campbell, Harry 76	Columbia 3, 11, 14, 15, 24, 25, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 62, 63, 65, 67, 68, 73, 74, 76, 79, 82, 84, 86, 87, 137, 146, 160, 168, 170, 172, 173, 175, 177, 181, 182, 184, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 213, 221, 224, 225, 227, 229, 231, 237, 240, 254, 261, 274, 281, 287, 288, 290, 291, 293, 297, 298, 299, 303, 305, 306	Curry, Gerald 170
Bonne Homme 88, 110	Campeones, Los 84	Combat Knights, The 301	Cycle Psycho. <i>See</i> Quig- ley, Gill
Boshuku Bara 104	Canadian Crusader 82	Commandante, El 85	Cygnus 24, 38, 48, 49, 54, 59, 147, 153, 181, 184, 215, 224
Boss Strong 65, 135	Canadian Shield 1, 37, 82	Concurrent 83	Cyr, Louis 31
Boston Gestalt 182	Cannon Fodder 34, 35	Condor 88	D
Boudoricco 79	Cape Gossip 184	Connoisseur, Le 89	Dachao-jia 101, 110
Bowman, Christopher 63, 110	Capitan Voladura, El 85	Connor. <i>See</i> McEwan, Connor	Daemon, The 74, 298, 301
Boy Scout, The 16, 57, 58, 71, 121	Captain Astra 181	Coordinator, The 64, 302	Daimyo 39, 40, 46, 47, 58, 70, 110, 298, 303, 307
Braçal 87	Carcass Jones 91, 115	Copenhagen tourna- ment 39, 46, 50, 54, 103, 169, 170, 185, 189, 191, 277, 297, 306	Dallion the Beautiful 153
Brain 73	Carnival 58, 79, 82, 87, 146, 184, 189, 193, 194, 197, 203, 211	Corazon 88, 144, 188	Damm Al-Islam. <i>See</i> Blood of Islam
Brakeet 99, 100	Carsstairs, Rick "The Trick" 131	Corbin, Gary. <i>See</i> Phy- sique, The	Dämonen, Die 89, 90
Brand 1	Catarata 85	Cormorant 65, 188	Dao-yo 101, 136
Brassman, The 92	Catnap 68	Cornerstone 82, 187	Darfor 147, 156
Bravura 67, 110, 111, 135	Cauldron 92	Coroner, the 92	Dark, The 92, 95, 111
Brawl 69	Cazador 85, 110	Corrigan, Petra 181	Das Geisterschiff. <i>See</i> Geisterschiff, Das
Brawn 73	CCD-018 221	Cortez the Conqueror 68	Das Geschoss. <i>See</i> Ge- schoss, Das
Breakout. <i>See</i> Quaid, Val "The Hammer"	Ceejol 149, 155	Cosmic Man 54, 69, 110, 184	Dashan 101
Brian 91	Celesto 70	Cougar 67, 93	Dassogirya 48, 215
Bricoleur 88	Ceramica 86	Council of the Mind 35, 39, 45, 209	Dawn Brothers 4, 24, 38, 74, 75, 168, 196, 211, 237, 280, 305, 308, 324, 326
Bridgewell, Johnny 83	Cerebral 84, 124	CounterMeasures 30, 34, 35, 71, 75, 170, 171, 197, 199, 280	Day of Monsters 42, 67, 291
Bright Dragon 101, 110, 188	Chama! 87, 119	Coursier, Le 83, 111	Day of Weapons 42
Brilliance 81	Chamaran 102	Crane, Dr. Quentin 40	Dead As A Doornail Comics 181
Bronco the Urban Cow- boy 69, 70, 170	Chambers, Carl 171	Crimson Brigade, The 153, 289	Dead Columbians 181
Bronx Guard 37, 39, 47, 70	Chambers, Malachi 31, 170, 171	Crimson Commander	Dead Columbians, The 181
Bronze Talisman, The 107	Champion, Der. <i>See</i> Scharping, Karsten		Death Colors 240, 246
Brown, Pastor William	Champion, Gord 91		Death Machine 67
Phillip 55, 61, 171, 187, 240, 244, 308	Channel 91, 183, 189		Declaration of Souls 32, 93, 186
Bruit 88	Chant 67		Deep End of the Poole 268, 277
Brûlure 83	Chantclair 22		Defiance 68
Brutal Youth 70	Charlottesville Veracity 301		Delphi 82
Brutus 92	Charodey 96, 97, 98, 127		Demencia 93
Bryce, Nigel 69	Chernobog 97, 111, 226. <i>See also</i> Polnoch		Demogorgon 91
Buck, Brad 68	Chess, Ted 177		Denshi 104, 188
Buddy 68, 237	Chesterton, Heather 178		Department G 171
Bull Braxton 66	Chheh An Deykha 103		Der Champion. <i>See</i> Scharping,
Bunny 69	Chirovopasi, Skebios 76		
Bu Shao 109	Chorus, The 72		
Byzantine, The 52, 111,	Christmasland 78, 160, 163, 166		
	Chunin 1, 35, 57, 58, 298, 302, 303, 304, 306, 307		
	Chun Tzu 101		
	Churchill, Jack 64		
	Chyestnost 96		
	Circe 55, 94, 127, 277		
	Circuit, The 72		
	City of Creches 214, 215		
	Clarence, Tom. <i>See</i> Red Dog		

Karsten	Die Jenseitigen. <i>See</i> Jen-	150, 151, 152, 153,	Fade 289
Deregulators 4, 14, 52,	seitigen. Die	154, 155, 156, 157,	Fannon, Julius 177
53, 57, 226, 227,	Die Leitung. <i>See</i> Leitung,	165, 180, 181, 183,	Fantasia 48
228, 229, 230, 231,	Die	187, 215, 225,	Fantasyscape 78, 79, 92,
232, 234, 235,	Dieppe 83	268, 284, 286,	160, 163, 164, 167
236, 237, 238,	Dimension 182	289, 290, 291,	Farmer Ray 191
239, 297, 299,	Dim Jung. <i>See</i> Arma-	292, 298, 300	Fatemaster 291, 297
301, 305, 306	geddo	Dissector 284	Faucon Rouge 89
Der Entfessler. <i>See</i> Ent-	Dinamita. <i>See</i> Marza,	Neutralizer 284	Fay Wanderer 91
fessler, Der	Alberto	Transmitter 284	Felakat 100, 134
der Ewige Krieg.	Directors, The 152, 289	Eisley, Craig 82	Felicidad 86
<i>See</i> Ewige Krieg,	Directrice 84	Eismann, Victor 38, 39,	Ferguson, Tom 79
Der	DirectVu 183	80, 93, 160, 185,	Fiel 85
Der Hammer. <i>See</i> Ham-	Dirt. <i>See</i> Morgan, Simon	186, 213, 291	Fighting Fortress 287
mer, Der	Displacer 1, 60	Ejecutante 86	Fighting Gestalt Journal
Der Herausforderer.	Dissenter 4, 9, 10, 53, 72,	El Capitan Voladura.	110, 184
<i>See</i> Herausfor-	240, 242, 244, 246,	<i>See</i> Capitan Vola-	Finesse 84
derer, Der	248, 250, 252	dura, El	Firbolg 91
Der Himmelsstürmer.	Dissonance 89	El Cid. <i>See</i> Cid, El	Fire, The 47
<i>See</i> Him-	Distorter 73	El Commandante.	Firestarters 4, 9, 10, 13,
melsstürmer, Der	Doa 147	<i>See</i> Commandan-	53, 68, 216, 217,
Der Jäger. <i>See</i> Jäger, Der	Doc Toon 1, 60, 68, 110	te, El	240, 241, 242, 243,
Der Kolloss. <i>See</i> Kolloss,	Doctor Nox 72	Elegba 106, 110	244, 245, 246, 247,
Der	Doctor Veritas 72, 140	Elemental Woman 73,	248, 249, 250,
Der Rote Ritter. <i>See</i> Rote	Dokter Tukang 103, 111	305	251, 252, 306
Ritter, Der	Dominator 51	El Exilado. <i>See</i> Exilado,	First Nation, The 59
Der Schrafrichter.	Donanma 102	El	Flameheart 73
<i>See</i> Schrafrichter,	Dong-Moo 105	El Khider. <i>See</i> Khider, El	Fleeters 161, 162
Der	Doppler 73, 111	El Lobo Grande. <i>See</i> Lo-	Fletcher 1, 308
Der Schwarze Rabe.	Dornan, Perry 76	bo Grande, El	Fndnti 2, 147, 153, 156,
<i>See</i> Schwarze	Douglas Fir 76, 118	El Milagro. <i>See</i> Milagro,	187
Rabe, Der	Dr. A 170	El	Focus 108
Der Vollender. <i>See</i> Vol-	Dr. Axiom 65	ELOC. <i>See also</i> Ecu-	Fog of War 108
lender, Der	Dr. Canus 50, 105, 301	dorian Low Orbit	Foke, Alan 107
Der Waffenmeister.	Dr. Isosceles 72	Cannon	Ford, Dr. Shannon 173
<i>See</i> Waffenmeis-	Dr. Life-Healer-Man 107	El Patron. <i>See</i> Patron, El	Ford, Ted 13, 216, 217
ter, Der	Dr. Megalon. <i>See</i> Arma-	El Viejo Grande 174	Forrester, Major Cynthia
Der Widder. <i>See</i> Widder,	geddo	Emblazon 119	197
Der	Dr. Millennium 70	eMedia 65	Forsprakki 93
Der Würger. <i>See</i> Würger,	Dr. Solio 70, 136	Endeavor 56, 66, 272	Forzudo 87, 135
Der	Dragon, The 221	Energy Master 40, 47,	Foster, Braeden 170
Der Zerstörer. <i>See</i> Zer-	Dragon of the Woods,	205, 264, 47	Foster, Kyle 69
störer, Der	The 83	Engine 68	Founding Father, The 74
Desafiar 86	Dragonslayer 72	Enterprise 71, 114	Freedom Industries 176
Desconhecido 94	Dreammaker 72	Entfessler, Der 90	Friendly Ed 135
Desert Storm. <i>See</i> Clark,	Dreamtime 108	Envergadura 93	Fuga 86, 111, 119
Jonathan	Dublin Hammer, The 92	Eratis, Kosmas 94	Fulcrum 70
Desordre 89	Duchamps, Alain 4, 72,	Erickson, Foster 60, 213	Full Moon Slayer, The
Despot 39, 40, 46, 264,	73, 277, 309, 310	Ermine 45	71
39, 40, 46, 47	Dynamo Jack 67, 90,	Esclave du Mode 89	G
Destellar 86	184, 189	Escorpion 87	G-Cop 182
Destination 71	Dynatos 95, 111	Escudo 94	G-World 184
Destino 94, 116	E	Eshet Chayil 100	Gajah 103
Destiny's Krew 168	Eagle 287	Esnat 149, 155, 215	Gale 64
Destructeur 83, 117	Ecuadorian Low Orbit	Estaban, Paolo 76	Gamayun 96
Destruction Society, The	Cannon 178	Estatua 93	Gambler. <i>See</i> Picardo,
47, 91	Edge 11, 39, 40, 44, 46,	Eternity Guard, The 65	Donnie
Deuce Goose 70	47, 49, 59, 62, 68,	Eve of Destruction.	Ganges Saand 102, 141
Deviant 22	74, 75, 83, 109,	<i>See</i> Long, Evelyn	Garde National 88
Devil May Care 68	146, 168, 169,	S.	Garrote 54
Dharaba-al-Maghreb	181, 189, 190,	Everman, The 153	Garuda 24, 58, 101, 102,
34, 99	191, 193, 194,	Ewige Krieg, Der 89	103
Dharma Bill 53	205, 211, 259	Exilado, El 68	Gaverick, Lily 79
Diablillo 93	Eichenherz 89	Extreme 73	Geisterschiff 90
Diamant 107	Eiikos 147	F	Geisterschiff, Das 90
Die Dämonen. <i>See</i> Dä-	Eiko 2, 4, 14, 15, 30, 42,	Faasiq 103	Gel D'hiver 84, 143
monen, Die	44, 126, 147, 149,	Fabulo 69	Gelure 88
Die Hexe. <i>See</i> Hexe, Die			

Genejack 268	wave 6, 16, 44, 49, 58,	GTV 7, 25, 80, 109, 174,	175, 178, 182, 184,
Genshiun 104	60, 67, 71, 72, 73,	183, 258	188, 194, 212, 213,
Genshuin 111	78, 83, 87, 88, 90,	Guardia Blanca 93	225, 240, 246, 258,
George, Ann 71	95, 96, 100, 107,	Gunka 104, 111, 289	286, 292, 294, 296,
Georgios Pilotos. <i>See</i> Pi- lotos, Georgios	154, 160, 164, 213, 235, 239, 242, 250,	Gunner. <i>See</i> Ametralla- dora	297, 298, 301, 308, 311, 333
Geschoss, Das 89	262, 277, 281,	Gunslinger 1, 58, 122, 289, 298, 302,	Holtzkamp, Heinrich Von 89
gestalt	289, 290, 293	303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308	Honor. <i>See</i> Torrence, Phil
bonded	Gestalt Club 1, 4, 14, 72, 77, 300, 306, 308, 309, 310	Gurlemek 102	Honosusori 104
definition of 15	Gestalt Dimension 311	Guuthi 103	Hooker Phoenix 69
chain	Gestalt Science 16	Guy Fawkes 79, 91	Horizon 82
definition of 16	Ghast, The 170	Guy In Tights 1	Horus 49, 289
definition of 15	Ghast, The Grim 72	Gyrfalcon 44, 113	Hot Gods, The 24, 49, 50, 52, 58, 65, 79, 95, 289, 308, 331
detector 16, 44, 184	Ghost Patriots 196	H	Hotshot. <i>See</i> Sinclair, Ray
Dimension 6, 16, 44,	Gilada 48, 155, 214, 215	Ha-Penini 100	Howitzer 68
49, 58, 60, 67, 71, 72, 73, 78, 83, 87, 88, 90, 95, 96, 100, 107, 154, 160, 164, 213, 235, 239, 242, 250, 262, 277, 281, 289, 290, 293	Gimokud 103	Habilidad 86	Hruza 95
origin of the term 32	Ginga 106	Hæder 93	Huitzilopochtli 331
pure	Give Me Liberty 182	Hagelstorm 92, 141	Human Tornado, The 141
definition of 15	Glenn, Matt 324, 325, 326, 327	Hakushiki 104	Hunter, Jennifer 4, 308, 310, 311
sample archetype	glider ball 64, 185	Hammer, Der 90	Hunting Stewart 92
Athletics 113	Gloriana 92	Hancer 102	Huzn al-Qurmzi 99
Beauty 113	Gobugson 105, 121, 188	Handler, The. <i>See</i> Maver- ick Man	Hydrogene 89
Commerce 114	God Is With Me 106, 111	Hand of Chaos, The 45, 46, 47, 49, 290, 303	Hydroplane 82
Courage 115	Golden Angel 1, 60	Hanshan Lung 101	Hypnotist 289
Death 115	Golden Gladiator 31, 32, 35, 38, 57, 254	Hanuman 102, 110, 188	I
Destiny 116	Golden Serpent 54, 65, 110, 123	Hardcore 73	I Am Not Hendrix 183
Destruction 117	Golden Staff 106	Hardliner, The 67, 77	Ian Black. <i>See</i> Black, Ian
Dream 117	Goliath 90	Harvester 55	Ibn al-Fahd 99
Environmentalism 118	Goodfellow, Smiles 121	Hasuni 289	Icarus 95, 119
Fire 118	Good Men, The 82	Hatsuentou 104	Igneous 72
Food 120	Gora 95	Havoc, Major 107, 170	Igor Mironov. <i>See</i> Vlas- titel
Guilt 121	Gord Champion. <i>See</i> Champion, Gord	Head, The 76	Igreja 87
Gun 122	Gordion 4, 10, 53, 54, 240, 246, 248, 250, 252	Headless Man, The 224, 257	Ikanthre 187
Hope 122	Gorgeous. <i>See</i> George, Ann	Headmaster, The 272	Imag'Hurtig 153
Language 125	Gothingham 79	Hearne 92	Imago Dei 129
Laughter 125	Gouden Fantoom 78, 92, 144	Heartless 34	Imperator 36, 44, 45, 46, 47, 39, 194, 166, 226, 264, 291, 42, 40, 39, 264, 248, 264
Luck 126	Grandeza 86, 110, 135	Heath, Ted 32	Incendio 93, 111
Machines 126	Grandfather Tree 118	Heavy Mountain 274	Inci i Kedi 100
Magic 127	Grandy Nanny 85	Heihu 101	Independence 40, 107
Medical Doctor 128	Granny 71, 311	Heikens, Captain Robert 176	Inertia 302, 304
Mirrors 129	Grave 47	Hel 4, 49, 260, 261, 262, 263	Infalible 87
Mythic Warrior 129	Greer, Dr. Richard 33, 174, 288	Heliotopia 79	Infernals, The 132
Night 131	Gregory, Christine 197	Hemelbaas 107, 111	Infierno Del Luna Nueva 86
Persuasion 131	Grey Army, The 280	Hengeyokai 105	Influence 31, 45, 59, 108, 160, 209, 264, 209, 111, 291, 40, 39, 38, 35, 281, 263, 264, 268, 281
Rock N'Roll 132	Griffin, Trevor. <i>See</i> Titan, The	Hephaestus I Platform 38	Insecte 89
Stone 134	Griffinitäy. <i>See</i> Titan, The	Herausforderer 89	Insight 35, 68, 116, 286
Strongman 135	Grigory Sidorov. <i>See</i> Sidorov, Grigory	Heritage 83	Inteligência 94
S			

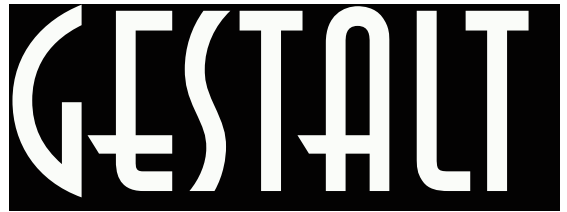
- Invincibles, The 182
Invisible Six. *See* Chheh An Deykha
Ion 65
Iron Gauntlet 298
Ironjack 70, 71
Iskari, Consul 39, 151
Island of the Gods 166
It's Gestalt Stupid 182
- J**
- Jackman 77
Jackman, Michelle 76
Jackson, Wally 169
Jai Ren Li Zhen 50
Jalaal 103
James, Antonia 203
Jannisary 302, 304
Jenseitigen, Die 89
Jensen, Dani 169
Jericho Bronze 45, 264, 46, 47, 92, 111
Jersey 91
Jinete 85, 86, 109
Johnny Steel 287
Joiallier 84
Journeyman, The 56, 61, 84, 266, 298
Juche 105
Juror, The 4, 53, 226, 227, 235, 239
Justicia 86, 123
Juunt 88, 110
- K**
- Kachina 60, 139
Kaharaman 102
Kahraba 98
Kalari 102, 110
Kali 102, 117
Kalkin Khan 103
Kan Dokmek 102
Kápatíran 103
Karetaka 70, 74
Katayitha, Stratis 94, 141
Kavalerist 96, 97, 98, 136, 144, 288, 289
Kaymite Sun 215
Keikogeishi 104
Kenkyo No Gundan 104
Kent, Archibald 197
Kent Ashbury. *See* Ashbury, Kent
Kente 106
Kettenhund 90
Kharlimov, Alexi 77
Khider, El 98
Kid Mercury 37, 40, 47, 59, 111, 146, 191, 193, 194, 207
Kieferbrecher 89
Kilpannen 149
Kinestar 32, 38, 47, 51, 54, 59, 68, 69, 70, 80, 109, 123, 171, 193, 197, 225, 261
- Kingdom of the Id 166
King Kronos. *See* Armageddo
Kinzhal 98, 110
Kisei 104
Kishou 104, 126
Kivoilen 149
Klansman, The 64, 289
Knobelbecher 90
Kokkinos Floga 95
Kolloss, Der 90
Komitet Zlodej 95
Komono 274
Konde 105
Korgun 4, 151, 214, 215
Korogi 104
Kosmas Eratis. *See* Eratis, Kosmos
Kosucu 93, 113
Kovvakh, Ar'Kayadin 3
Kraftværk 93
Krush 68
Kubwa Watu 105
Kuguar 93
Kukulkan 49, 50, 331
Kumundan 102
Kunterbunter Jung 90
Kurdistan 2, 33, 34, 41, 75, 82, 100, 102, 134, 307, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328
Kuumahali 79, 106, 107, 218, 219, 289
- L**
- L'Agitateur 89
Labyrinth 11, 12, 13, 35, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 47, 59, 78, 146, 160, 166, 170, 193, 194, 199, 207, 209, 211, 298
LaCourt 91
Lacrosse 82, 142
La Directrice. *See* Directrice, La
Laidley Institute 186, 272, 277
Lament 4, 5, 20, 217
Lamia, The 55, 59, 193, 297, 306
Lamont, Rose 92
Lamprey 68
Landers, Vaughn 86
Langdon, Derek 74
Lao-Shi Khan 38, 50, 68, 110
Lao Gui 101
Laoqiang, Major 101
Larocca, Karla 54
Lashkar-e-Jihad 34
Lathe 65
Lau 102
Laura Zakoji. *See* Zakoji, Laura
Lawine 91
Lawson 4, 135, 309, 310
Le Connoisseur. *See* Con-
- noisseur, Le
Le Coursier. *See* Coursier, Le
Leech Lad 48
Legion of Super Models, The 69
Leikultu. *See* Eiko Dissector
Leinwand 90, 91
Leitung, Die 91
Lendermain 88
Leonine 82
Leopard, The 54, 99, 305, 306, 308
Leper, The 103
Le Quebecker. *See* Quebecker, Le
Les Protecteurs. *See* Protecteurs, Le
Lethe 45
Lever 88
Leviathan 2, 4, 20, 30, 51, 73, 101, 160, 281, 282, 288, 290, 291, 309, 310, 311
Chancellor 282
Duke 51, 282
King 73, 160, 281, 282, 290, 291
Knight 73, 101, 282, 288
Prince 101, 282
Leviathan King, The 73, 160, 281, 282, 290, 291
Lewis, Reg 77
Liberator 11, 13, 15, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47, 53, 57, 58, 59, 62, 109, 110, 146, 169, 182, 189, 191, 193, 194, 196, 197, 199, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211, 229, 254, 274, 293, 298, 299, 307
Lighthouse, The 65
Lily Bug 108
Ling-Lung 109
Lion, the 83
Lioness, the 105
Living Gun, The 4, 49, 260, 261, 262, 263
Li Xingyi Yang 101
Lobo Grande, El 86
Lokomotywa 95
Lone Star Rangers, The 66
Long, Evelyn S. 73
Longshadow 83
Longshoreman 54, 65
Longstreet, Mary 302
Lord, Justine 60, 68
Los Animales. *See* Animales, Los
Los Campeones. *See* Campeones,
- Los
Los Protectores. *See* Protectores, Los
Lost Race of Shelme 274
Los Vecinos. *See* Vecinos, Los
Lover's Lane 92
Lulu' al-Islam 98
Lurker 91
Lustra 67, 75
Luvix 149
Luzente 87, 136, 187
- M**
- Mad Mark 71
Madreperla 86
Maestra 93
Magadarr 153
Magician 57, 69, 264, 292, 297, 300, 301, 302, 304, 306
Magnetron 193
Mahout 102
Maid of the Mist 72
Maid of the Mists 144
Major Rudri 102, 119
Maligno 4, 54, 135, 139, 140, 168, 265, 266
Malkov, Vasily 97
Mama Lyubov 95, 96
Mandos 86, 111
Manifesto 82
Manning, Terry 81
Marion, Agnes 302
Maroon 85
Martha 196, 197
Martillo 86, 134
Marza, Alberto 88
Mask 72 69
Maskrobat 96, 97, 136, 288, 289
Massaker 89
Mattson 197
Mattson, Andre 197
Maverick Man, The 66, 138, 289
Maximo 88
MC-89 70
McEwen, Connor 68
McMullen, Sean 92, 138
Measurer 32, 54, 80, 124, 184, 209
Measuring Sticks, The 54
Meathook 302, 304
Mechta 96, 133
Medved 96, 110, 135
Megaddon 167
Memory Sharers 3, 161, 162
Memory World 162
Menagerie 50, 51, 88, 98, 105, 298, 301, 306
Meramera No Maizuru 105
Mercenario 87, 134
Merc Six 82
Mesías. *See* Landers,

- Vaughn
Metagestalt 163, 164, 186, 288
Michelle 69
Migdal 99, 100
Milagro, El 31, 84
Milkman, The 77
Mills, Cameron 126, 330
Mind Spikes 3, 161, 162
Minesweeper. *See* Adams, Randolph (Randy)
Mironov, Igor. *See* Vlas-titel
Misericordia 84
Mister Freedom 4, 52, 53, 176, 226, 227, 229, 231, 235, 237, 239, 299, 301, 305
Mistral 32, 70
Miyamoto. *See* Mush-ashugyo, Musashi
Mohammed, Ali Ahmed 77
Molecula 65, 170
Monarque 89
MONDO 178
Moniba, Martin 106
Montoya, Celia 197
Moran 107
Mordred 55
Morgan, Simon 63, 64
Mosca, Tamara 237
Motalepula 107, 141
mpulsif 89
Mr. Addiction. *See* Lewis, Reg
Mr. Australia 107, 188
Mr. Insidion. *See* Armageddo
Mr. Liberty 72
Mr. Monkey 50
Mr. Remarkable 108
Mr. Tick-Tock 108
Mt. Olympus 163
Mtungi 106
Mudang Choon-yei 105
Muerte 85
Mulstead, Luke 80
Mundane Alliance 30, 38
Mundane World 163
Munter 93
Muscle Master 301
Mushashugyo 104, 130
Mustang 67
Muteki 104, 110
Muustomerka 149
Muzikant 96
- N
N-Thewz 74
Naalah 103
Nanonium 165
Narodniy Vybor 96
National, The 66, 67
Naum 98, 133
Navigateur 83, 119
Navigateur II 83
Ndoto Mlima 105, 106
Netz 100
Neuros 86
New Electric 33, 174
New Luddites, The 75, 286
New Plastic 33, 174
Nie Wieder 90
Night Huntsman 43, 55, 59, 111, 131, 226, 258, 286, 297, 298, 300, 306, 308
Night Rat Killer, The 102
Ninjonin 22
Nom , 273, 70
Noroc 95
Norrsken 93
Nova Guard. *See* New Luddites, The
Nox 131
Nuclear 65
Nyamuk 103
Nyoka Uchawi 105
- O
O'Connor, Manny 34, 64
O'Neill, Bernie 83
Octavian 70
Oddat, Ar'Kayadin 3, 105
Old Carver 55
Old Fool, The 71
Olympian, The 40, 109
Olympus, Mr. 65
Omega-Gestalt 290
Ominous 51, 73, 282
Omnibus 67
Ookpik 83
Operation Blowtorch 178
Operation Grey Army 280
Operation Strongbox 57, 171, 297, 302
Orange Crush 68
Orbit City 79, 178, 180, 286
Orbitmen, the 109
Orc, The 108
Orso 92
Os Mensageiros 87
Osprey, The 54
Overcorp 64, 75, 76
Overdrive 74
Overking 64, 75, 286
- P
Padastro 87
painiskelenen 152
Pakastaluu. *See* Eiko, Neutralizer
Paladin 61, 68, 110
Paradigm City 166
Paralyzer, Eiko 4
Parayma 38, 149
Partizan, the 96
Party Animal 111
Pastor 86
Pathfinder 287
Patnaik, Deepak 103
Patroller, The 66
Patron, El 87
Pax Warrior 82, 187
Peacekeeper 1, 61, 82, 110
Peerless I 47, 91
Peerless II 91, 110, 130
Pegador 84, 289
Pegasus, The 107
Pembantu 103
Penumbra 107, 153
Penumbra the Living Darkness 153
Perceptor 45
Perfect, Jim 109
Perfects, The 109
Pernicious League, The 55
Pero 96
Persecutor 65, 170
Peter Wild 107
Petrificador 87
Philosopher, The 14, 260, 261, 262, 263
Physique, The 33, 36, 48, 62, 67, 110, 135, 254
Picardo, Donne 63, 126
Pilotos, Georgios 94
Pinache 88
Pirata del Cielo 85
Pirouette 65, 305
Pit Bull. *See* O'Connor, Manny
Piwon 105, 111
Plague-Burner 106, 107
Plazmova Solntze 97, 111
Pobornik 95, 96
Polnoch 97
Poltergeist 47, 303
Poole, Hannibal 4, 221, 226, 237, 268, 272, 276, 277, 278, 279, 289, 291, 307, 308, 311
Porlock, The Man From 55
Portal 196, 291
Portent, Blake 92
Possessor, The 70
Powell, Thomas 63
Power, Dr. Matthias 34, 37, 81, 286, 290
Power, Dr. Theresa 37, 42, 44, 45, 59, 61, 73, 76, 80, 83, 111, 160, 165, 172, 175, 176, 190, 194, 196, 209, 224, 226, 286, 290, 291, 294, 333
Powerjack 4, 36, 46, 48, 62, 68, 110, 221, 224, 268, 277
Praia 87, 113
Pratapvant 101, 102, 110, 111
Precaution 281
Pregonar 86
Preihera 93
Presidium 39, 150
Pria Rimba 103
Price, Dr. Walter 33
Pride 81
Pride, Dr. 286
Prince of Colors, The 77
Proagonistes 94
Probability Lords 24, 126, 147, 148, 154, 164, 165
Prodigal, The 55, 62, 224, 286, 329
Proiettile 93
Project Capricorn 39, 41, 64
Project Electra 171
Project X 180
Projekt: Eisenherz 89, 90
Protectores, Los 69, 85, 86
Protectorix 91
Provokers 3, 161, 162
Psilence 51
Psionic Seven, The 36, 45, 51, 53, 73, 75, 169, 226, 235, 237, 240, 282
Psychic Threads 3, 161, 162
Psycho-American 51
Pugile 93
Puissance 88, 110
Puncher 108
Pure Gestalt 184
Purya 103
Puuhelka. *See* Eiko, Transmitter
Puzzlewillow 91
Pygmalion 65
- Q
Qasees al-Harb 99
Qasr 98, 144
Quadrant 174
Quaid, Val "The Hammer" 184
Quantum King. *See* Landers, Vaughn
Quebecker 83
Questioner, The 4, 55, 56, 61, 140, 270, 295
Quigley, Gill 69
Quinnville, Jeff 74
- R
Raaz 103

- Radaa 215, 300
 Räddning 93
 Rage 48
 Railgun 80, 289
 Railplane 92
 Rajeunir 89
 Rajl al-Assad 99
 Ramjet 25
 Randall, S.P. 75, 76
 Rappaport, Jack 85
 Raskanyanie 98
 Ravanna 55, 102
 Raw. *See* Blaisdale, Tim
 Razon 86
 Reactor 34, 35, 39, 58, 59, 188, 190, 193, 194, 205, 211
 Real Life of Jesus Christ, The 182
 Reaver 301
 Rebellion, The 92
 Reckoning, The 65
 Red August 30, 38, 48, 57, 254
 Red Chain, The 173
 Red Dog 69, 113, 184
 Redhawk 67
 Red Morgan 83
 Red Plague 30, 35, 58, 101, 102, 173
 Refrigerator 3, 8, 57, 90, 171, 177, 272
 Regard 22
 Regeneran 3, 27, 33, 172
 Reinkultur 90
 Resistance 73
 Resistor 4, 53, 226, 227, 237, 305
 Reverbant 88
 Revolucion 85
 Rex 37, 39, 59, 190, 191, 193, 194, 205, 254, 266
 Rhinoceros 50, 117
 Ribbon, The 107
 Ricaner 89
 Rick Thunder 4, 56, 272
 Ricochet 1, 60, 61, 68, 75, 85, 109, 111
 Rifleman, The 226, 227, 229
 Rigaletto 126
 Ringtail 71, 137
 Riordan, Dr. Ray 74, 75, 80
 Risala 102
 Rising Flame 64
 Roadthrill 330
 Roar 93
 Robber 57
 Robin Hood 130
 Robotnik 95
 Roca 93
 Rogers Project 62
 Rose Lamont. *See* Lamont, Rose
 Rosen, Dr. Beatrice 224
 Rosquilla 86
 Rote Ritter 89
 Rote Ritter, Der 89
 Rotkäppchen 90
 Roughneck 66, 67
 Royal. *See* Churchill, Jack
 Roykok 2, 147, 153, 156
 Rudolf 90
 Rugged 65, 170
 Rukovodstvo 96
 Ruskii Znak 96, 188
 Rustbucket, The 67
 S
 Sabio 86
 Saga! 1, 61, 184
 Sakai, Hiroyuki 120
 Sangue 92
 Santa Claus 78, 160, 163
 San You Lou 101. *See also* Leviathans
 Satan 89, 100
 Saturday Knight 70
 Saunders, Frank 35, 305, 307
 Sawbones. *See* Powell, Thomas
 Sayri 88
 Scabbard 82
 Scarpachi, Anna 236
 Scarpachi Sr., Angelo “Big Angie” 236
 Scenario 74
 Schande 90
 Scharping, Karsten 90
 Schloss Schreckenstein 89, 90
 Schoepfergeist 90, 124
 Schrafrichter 89, 90
 Schrafrichter, Der 89
 Schwarze Rabe 89, 111
 Scott A. Riggs 175
 Seattle Challengers, The 73
 Secret Storm, The Society of the 141
 Serhildan 102
 Severnik 96
 Shadowmark 47
 Shaw, Tim. *See* Dublin Hammer, The
 Shelme 274
 Sheltie 82, 289
 Shifty 1, 58, 298, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307
 Shinhwa 105
 Shishou No Kaigi 104
 Shiva 50, 58, 103, 117, 308
 Shiv Sena 103
 Shore, Willie “Ageless Wonder” 76
 Showman 91
 Shugosha 104
 Sichou 101
 Sickoland 190
 Sidorov, Grigory 97
 Silach 98, 135
 Silverfist 44, 46, 82, 110, 137, 224
 Silver Star 287
 Simba Moto 105
 Sinclair, Ray 197, 203
 Singa Bulan 103, 110
 Singh, Rukvinder (Rick) 63
 Sinistrado 45, 87, 111
 Six Mysteries 21
 Sixworld 167
 Ski Bunny 48
 Skitatsya 98, 117
 Skylight 75, 82
 Skyscraper 70
 Slab 51
 Slammer 69
 Slapshot 1, 300
 Slugger Pete 74
 Smalchak 96, 115
 Smith, Dr. Vera 224
 Smokescreen 72
 Snafu. *See* Singh, Rukvinder (Rick)
 Snow Queen 143
 Snowstorm 143, 302, 304
 Sócio Tambor 87
 Soka 93
 Solar E 68, 136
 Solar Knight 67
 Soleil 88
 Sombra 87, 131
 Son of the Green Star 153
 Sontag 109
 Sorres, Anna 94
 Soulkeeper 4, 76, 105, 106, 107, 109, 188, 219
 Souveraineté 83
 Spaga 95
 Spectator, The 65
 Speed Freak 85, 111, 188
 Speedstar 1, 58, 111, 308
 Spider, The 72, 86, 277
 Spire 68
 Spiritwalker 73
 Springbok 105, 111
 Stallion 70
 Stampede, The 81
 Staples, Kathy 302
 Starfinder 32, 34, 56, 61, 74, 96
 Star Shield 51
 Statuette of Liberty 69
 Steam 65
 Steelsman, The 82
 Sterling 70, 130
 Stitcher 107
 Stormcrow, the 92
 Storm Warning 72, 141, 277, 310
 Storyteller, The 167
 Stratis Katayitha. *See* Katayitha, Stratis
 Strauss, Gunther 61
 Streethawk 68, 170, 181, 240, 246
 Street Legal 47
 Street Legal Comics 181
 Strong Man, The 35
 Stuntman 58, 61, 64, 65, 68, 138, 170, 268, 303, 304, 138, 305, 304, 41, 182, 186, 298, 301, 305, 308
 Stuntwoman 4, 137, 278, 279, 308
 Stürmer 90, 138
 Styles, Malcolm 78
 Subterfugio 86
 Sugar Sugar 72
 Sultan, The 68
 SunShadow 1, 300
 Superbat. *See* Bowman, Christopher
 Superego 1, 58, 298, 304, 306, 308
 Super Gorilla 51
 Supremo Lutador 87, 110
 Surfer Joe 1, 61, 141
 Surfer K 68
 Svalovy 95, 121
 Svikiro 107
 Szzataivos 147
 T
 T’ien Ming 45, 100
 Taaleb al-Qamar 98
 Tabula Rasa 125
 Taesong 105
 Tai Bang Le Lung 50
 Tamadas 95
 Tangent, The 68
 Tapestry 302, 304
 Taqiyyeh 100
 Tarradan 4, 146, 152, 268, 273, 274, 275
 Tchotchke 22
 Team Maverick 289, 298, 300, 307
 Technarch 4, 45, 71, 126, 188, 221, 222, 277, 286, 300, 306
 Telamon 72
 Temple, Dr. Steven 172
 Ténacité 83
 Terebi Shikaku 105
 Terror, The 4, 53, 226, 227, 239
 Tesseract 65
 Tetsubo 104
 Teyatemma 149
 the Five 45, 291
 Thirst, The 22
 Thompson, Jon-Alan 182
 Thor 50, 52, 110, 185
 Thorvaldson, Karl 137
 Thrasher 51
 Thrillseeker 34, 37, 58, 59, 137, 193, 207,

293, 308	240, 246, 248,	Wackoland 190	Bryon
Throne, Alan 82	264, 279, 286	Waffenmeister, Der 90	Yanquista 69, 121
Thunder Rock 107		Wainwright (Tank) 176	Yarost 98, 115
Titan, The 4, 8, 15, 17,	U	Wakajishi Saikyou 104	Yiyuan 101, 141
24, 36, 38, 42, 44,	Umbra 107	Wakinyan 60, 138	Yrikar 152
46, 48, 50, 52, 55,	Umeme 105, 141	Walker, Chad 298	Yudachi 104
62, 67, 97, 100,	Umsipha 105, 110, 290	Walking Woman 60	Yupanqui 88
102, 105, 108, 109,	Undertow 1	Wallace, Calvin. <i>See</i> AN-	Yuuki No Shima 104
110, 111, 137, 146,	Ungeheuer 89	ZAC Warrior	
147, 152, 153, 166,	Uniques Europa 89	Wallace, Robert 62	Z
168, 177, 178, 181,	Unniarcha 102	Wandelaar 92	Z 74
184, 188, 190, 194,	Uoderbaron 109	Wang Hao-Quan 101,	Zaijak 98, 134
196, 199, 215, 221,	Uoovervindelig 93	110	Zakoji, Laura 108
224, 225, 254,	USMC Vanguard 24,	War-Widow 51	Zamaganie 95
259, 268, 277,	33, 34, 38, 48, 58,	Warder, The 1, 42, 61,	Zavtra 98
287, 293, 333	62, 63, 75, 80, 99,	62, 71, 100, 111,	Zelazo 95
Today in the Gestalt	100, 101, 102,	188, 311	Zenith, Dr. 34, 35, 37,
Dimension 183	197, 286	Warhead 34, 35	59, 193
Todestoss 91	Utopia 55, 59, 105, 106,	Warlock 300	Zerstörer, Der 91
Tombaugh Space Tele-	107, 160, 188,	Warmaker 52, 67	Zhengcorp 176, 268, 277
scope 178	190, 193, 205, 211,	Warmington, Colonel	Zhengmart 10
Topcu 102	218, 219, 306	Winslow T., 80	Zhengnaut 183
Torhane 73, 282, 288	Ututu 106	Warp Pod, Ar 3	
Toro 93	Uveir 93	Watchman, The 1	
Torrance, Phil 34, 64,	V	Wazo 105	
115	Valiente 85	Weaponsmith 51, 52, 53,	
Torrent 88	Valószínűtlen 95, 188	67, 68, 111, 167,	
Tower of Power, The 47	Vandal, The 34, 35, 36,	176, 226, 250,	
Townsend, Jade 182	110	277, 286	
Transmitter, Eiko 4, 284	Vanderhagen, Anna 78	Webster, Diane 78	
Transport Ship, Eiko 4	Vanvid 93	Weiß Rose 90	
Tribune, The 71	Värdighet 93	Weltraumfarer 95	
Trick. <i>See</i> Carstars, Rick	Varonil 86	Weng Chiang 83, 101,	
"The Trick"	Vasily Malkov. <i>See</i> Mal-	110, 111, 301	
Triomphe 88	kov, Vasily	Whitehawk 227, 239	
Triple Alliance 91	Vaultsmith, the 107	White Lark 64	
Trojan 82, 110	Vchera 98	Widder, Der 89	
True North 82	Vecinos, Los 34, 87, 88,	Wild, Peter. <i>See</i> iPeter	
Trulich 98	194	Wild	
Tugay Insanustu 102	Veldtenue 92	Wild Card 1, 58, 126,	
Turgeon, Chris 36, 171,	Venus 49, 50, 113, 202	297, 298, 302, 304,	
172, 185, 191,	Vestnik 96	305, 306, 308	
196, 199, 211	Vettar 87, 151, 152, 274	Willard, Keith 35	
Turgeon Foundation 172	Vibrato 91, 111	Williams, Bryon 63, 125	
Turnabout 82	Viceroy, The 43, 61, 308	Wilson, Miles 184	
Turoda 146, 147, 149,	Victor V. 90	Wirbelwind 89, 111	
151, 165	Vier Vereint 90	Wisdom, Clint 170	
Typhus, Dr. 35, 173	Vigil 108	Witness, The 72	
Tyranny League, The	Virgin Twenty, The 180	Wormhole 290	
24, 33, 35, 36, 42,	Visaufian 149	Wormwood 4, 10, 54,	
44, 45, 46, 47, 49,	Vlastitel 95, 96, 97, 170,	240, 248, 252	
51, 53, 58, 59, 61,	286, 288, 289	Wu'hsien 100	
64, 70, 73, 74, 76,	Vodyanoi 96	Würger 89	
77, 78, 79, 80, 89,	Void (of the Gestalt	Wystad 147, 149, 153,	
91, 133, 160, 166,	Dimension), The	289, 290	
168, 169, 171, 177,	160, 161, 162,		
180, 181, 183,	165, 281	X	
185, 104, 47, 169,	Volk 96	X-Brigade 180	
211, 288, 290, 291,	Vollender, Der 91	X-Suit 180, 181	
292, 293, 264, 297,	Volonte 88	Xenira 109	
298, 300, 301, 302,	Voluntad 86	Xenon 65	
303, 287, 303,	Vontade 94	XTZ 72	
302, 303, 306,	Vorovka 96	Y	
333, 294, 41, 40,	Vozian 153, 289	Yakhbasta 102, 143	
39, 37, 303, 188,	Vulpe 95, 139	Yamabushi 104	
190, 192, 194, 196,	W	Yankee. <i>See</i> Williams,	
199, 221, 224,			
226, 227, 229,			

Type: _____ **Wave:** _____



Levels: _____

Power Level: _____

Hero Points: ____ **Init:** ____

Base Attack: ____ **Melee Attack:** ____ **Range Attack:** ____ **Defense:** ____ **Flatfooted:** ____

Feats	Powers	Rank

[illegible]

Drawbacks

Skills

Val	Flaw

Complications

[illegible]

Goal: _____

Abil Cost + **Powers Cost** + **Skills Cost** = **Total Cost**

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