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WELCOME

Since you've got the address for this site, there are three possibilities.

One, you're a hacker who was poking around and managed to find this place.

Two, you're with some kind of governmental organization, probably one that wants to shut us down.

Three, you were given this address by someone who knows about it and thinks you might need it.

If it's number one, congratulations. Now get the hell out.

If it's number two, congratulations to you too. And better people than you have tried to take down the *Delta Times* and failed miserably. Take your best shot.

If it's number three, hey, you're the people we're really here for. Come on in.

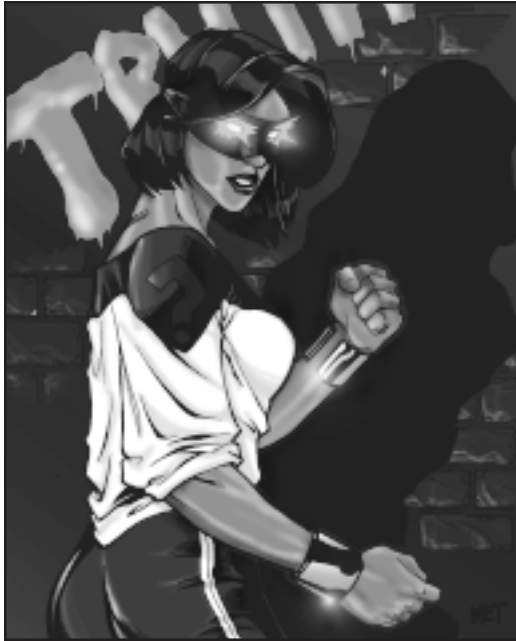
Anyhow, I'm going to assume that you're a member of that third group of people, the one I'm trying to reach. If that doesn't suit you, learn to live with it.

WHAT WE'RE ABOUT

The *Delta Times* is an irregularly published webzine. Our mission is to serve the members of the underground delta community, more loosely known as the Defiance.

To that end, we've got a series of web books that we've written about all sorts of delta-specific concerns. Things like "How to Shut Your Powers Off," "Secret Identities and You," "Life in Crescent City," and so on. These books are constantly being revised and updated with the latest information we can get our little, muckraking hands on.





WHO WE ARE

Sorry, kid, that information's released on a need-to-know basis only. If you think being able to find our website means you've got a "need to know," then I'd like to know what flavor of crack you're smoking.

The *Delta Times* has a pretty small staff, but we're soundly dedicated to the cause. Most of our articles and information comes to us from our readers—fellow deltas, of course—making us the hub in a loose network of underground deltas.

My name's Truth. (No, it's not my real name. Go to the link on secret identities, for chrissake.) Yeah, as in me, Justice, and the American Way. Around here, we think the American Way's taken a forced holiday, and he shanghaied Justice on his way out of town.

These days, the only thing that's left is Truth, and only if you know where to find it. (Here's a hint for you slow types: www.deltatimes.com.)

WHO YOU ARE

You're what's popularly known as a delta. The eggheads use all sorts of terms for it: homo delta, superiors, paranormals, and so on. In the end, it all comes down to the same thing.

You've got powers "far beyond those of mortal men." In the old days, people like you were called superheroes—or supervillains, as often as not—but that's not turn-of-the-millennium enough for most.

Maybe you just got your gifts, or maybe you've been hiding them for years. Hell, you could even be a Delta Primer thinking about working for the other side. If you already know some of what I'm going to cover here, skip over it. I'm writing for the newbies.

WHAT A DELTA IS

I could rattle off all sorts of dry data about who first used the word "delta" to describe people with superhuman powers (it was Dr. Theodore Weiss) and the meaning of the Greek letter from which the term originally comes ("change"), but that's not what you're here for. You can get that kind of information anywhere.

Even so, let's hit the basics first.

A delta is a person who has innate powers that can't be explained by what we currently know as the laws of physics. Maybe they can fly or shoot beams from their eyes or bounce bullets off their skin. Whatever. None of this stuff is what even the dullest knife in the drawer could call normal.

You can tell some deltas from just looking at them. They've got wings or scales, or their skin is blue, or their eyes have no pupils. Most deltas, though, you couldn't pick out in a crowd. They look just like you or me.

Well, like me at least. I can't speak for you.

Most of us have powers of a more subtle nature than what you might see on most TV shows. Those that don't are the kind who get hauled in quickly.

It doesn't take the government goons in Delta Prime much to figure out the nine-foot-tall woman's a delta, and she can't have too many places she can hide. Fortunately, most of us aren't quite so obvious, much to the frustration of even President Kennedy's most experienced goons.

Some deltas can read minds or smell evil or even cast spells like a modern-day Merlin. Me, for instance, I can always tell when someone is telling the truth. It's a handy skill in my line of work, but it's not as infallible as you might think. Still, it means that if you read it here, you know it's true!

DELTA HISTORY

As the saying goes, if you want to know where you're going, you've first got to figure out where you've been. Bear with me here, kid. You may have learned some of this in school, but there's more to the story than you've been told.

The fact is, Kennedy and his cronies in that lousy excuse for a puppet show we call Congress have a vested interest in you not knowing the truth. This is a human story, after all, about living breathing people and the trials of their unusual lives.

Kennedy doesn't want you to think of deltas as humans. To him, we're the "delta menace," the "nation's greatest threat." We're anything but human.

After all, it's not as easy to hate someone you think of as human.



THE FIRST DELTA

You probably know this, but the first confirmed delta was a man named Peter Payne. Old Pete was a soldier in WWI, fighting on the side of the Allies. He was an American, of course, a black man from Detroit who'd volunteered to take up a gun against the Kaiser's men.

Pete rose quickly through the ranks of the enlisted men, and it wasn't long before he made sergeant. He was a good leader, demanding yet always looking out for his men's best interests. While rescuing a fallen soldier in an open stretch of no-man's land, Pete was shot and killed by a German sniper.

Okay, he wasn't exactly killed, but he probably should have been. The bullet that had his name on it punched right between his shoulder blades and lodged near his heart.

Pete lay there in that nameless French field, the life draining out of him, when he suddenly realized the pain had left him.

"I thought for sure I was a goner," Pete told me when I interviewed him about it a few years back. Even at over 90 years old, he was still going strong, looking as fit as a man half his age, the same determined gleam in his eyes.

"But I picked myself up and looked down at the ground, and there was a bullet lying there in a pool of what I guessed was my own blood. I reached down to pick the damned thing up, but my hand passed right through it—just like a ghost."

There's more to the story, of course, but that's for another time and place. Anyhow, that's how the Silver Ghost got his start: on a shot-up field in the heart of Europe.



A STATE SECRET

Pete kept his newfound powers to himself as long as he could. He knew that once the Army brass found out about them they'd haul his ass off the battlefield and stick him in a lab someplace where the eggheads would stick him full of more pins than a porcupine.

Still, given the fact Pete was commanding a platoon of soldiers in the middle of the Great War, there wasn't much chance of him keeping his amazing abilities quiet for long. Within three months, his CO got word of what had happened, and Pete's fears all came true.

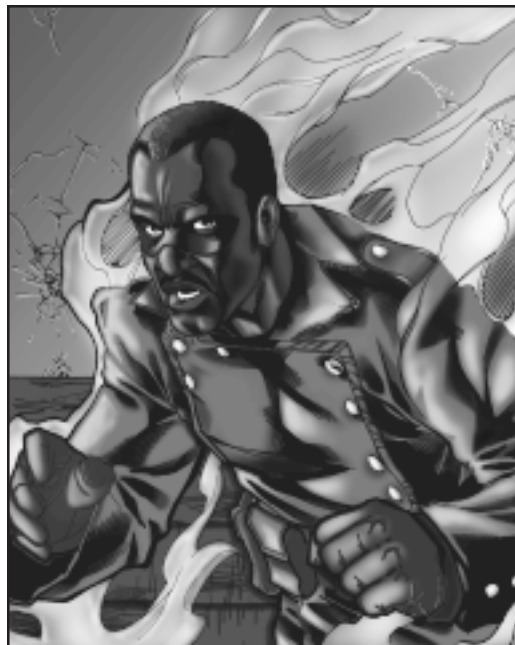
It didn't take the scientists long to get stumped by Pete and his powers. No one had any idea how the man could simply fade in and out of solidness like, well, a ghost. When the brass got the eggheads' report, they made an executive decision.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

A man with Pete's abilities was too incredible to keep holed up in a secret bunker for the length of the conflict. And, hey, the War to End All Wars was on. The US Army quickly put him to use.

Pete spent the final months of the war working as an Allied spy. Able to slip in and out of any building at will, he was literally unstoppable. Estimates at the time were that his presence cut the war short by months.

The fact that Pete even existed was the US Government's most tightly held secret. The Germans had no chance of stopping a man capable of doing the impossible, especially if they wouldn't even have thought of preparing for him.



Once the war was over—and even after other deltas started popping up everywhere—Pete became the Department of War's most successful spy. It wasn't until the '30s that he actually adopted a costumed identity, long after the existence of deltas had become common knowledge.

Pete spent his entire life in service to the government, right up until one of his grandchildren became a delta in her own right. Knowing what the federal government had become like over the course of the century, Pete kidnapped the young lady from her parents and spirited her off to a safehouse he'd set up in a third-world country he knew from his own Delta Prime days.

That's where I caught up with Pete. He was lounging on a beach on an island off the coast of a country whose petty dictator he'd personally helped prop up over two decades earlier. His granddaughter was still with him then. Pete's gone now, and his sweet little girl's all grown up. She's one of us now.

A Defiant.



THE GOLDEN YEARS

From the final days of World War I until the dawn of World War II, it was a good time to be a delta. Throughout the Roaring '20s and even the Great Depression, more and more deltas came to light.

In those idealistic times, most of them were heroes, fighting for the common good, but even then there were villains—evil deltas bent on using their powers to further their own despicable ends. They scared the hell out of people, even back then, but in those nobler times they didn't seem quite as vicious as they do these days.

That's probably just me looking back at a past I never knew through nostalgia-colored lenses. I'm sure that people back then were just as good or evil as those who walk, run, or fly over the streets of America today. Still, there seemed to be a kind of innocence then that we're sorely lacking today.

Back then, if people were afraid, they lived in fear of villains, people who weren't too shy to wear their evilness on their sleeves. They weren't afraid of deltas just because they were deltas.

Of course, it wasn't because people were smarter in those days, or more forgiving. The fact is they just didn't know any better. The dangers were the same. The government hadn't gotten around to "educating" the public about them quite yet.

After all, the movie-house serials of the day showed reel after reel of patriotic American heroes putting down threat after threat to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They were the good guys, and they were on the side of mom and apple pie.

One of the most successful of these heroes was a man known as the Yankee.

THE MAN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

Most of the early, so-called crimefighters were nothing more than superpowered vigilantes, deltas who had been pushed too far by a criminal of some sort and then decided to take matters into their own hands. Their methods of stopping crime were often illegal and occasionally deadly. The masks they wore did as much to hide their guilt as protect their privacy.

The radio dramas lauded them, and people across America thrilled to the tales of their adventures. But deep inside, I think people knew they were rooting for the wrong kind of people.

The Yankee, though, was different. Unlike many other deltas, he had a personal code against killing, and he followed it to a fault. He was also careful to build a case against criminals so they could be tried in a court of law. Contrary to the vigilantes, he actually believed in the Bill of Rights.

The Yankee was deputized by the city of Chicago as a law-enforcement officer, making him the first delta to be openly sanctioned by any American government. He worked alongside Eliot Ness to take down Capone. He put gangster after gangster behind bars, and he always made sure to collect enough evidence to make sure they stayed there.

Of course, this also made the Yankee a target for every power-mad delta to come down the pike. Chicago quickly became a magnet for all sorts of madness, and it wasn't long before the mayor regretted his decision. By that time, though, it was too late. The Yankee played the public like a harp, taking every opportunity he could to show how a good man—a good delta even—could make a difference.

The people loved him.

A LIFE TO LIVE BY

The Yankee became a role model for lots of other deltas—at least the community-minded ones. They dressed like him, gaudy costumes and all. They wore masks like him, even though many of their identities were common knowledge. Best of all, they acted like him, and by all accounts, he was a true gentleman.

Even through the tough times of the Great Depression and the years after, Yankee and his kind never lost hope. They kept fighting on against all comers, and by doing so they gave the rest of us hope as well.

They had a kind of idealism that you only find in very young children these days. From all accounts, they honestly believed that they were fighting the good fight to make the world that much safer for the rest of us.

These days, of course, most of the regs seem to have forgotten that deltas were ever heroes. Sure, we've got the hard-asses at Delta Prime and the occasional prima donna from Triumph, Inc., doing the superhero thing in the bubblegum vein, but the Yankee and his kind were the real thing.

That's something I'm not sure we'll ever see again.

THE LAST GREAT WAR

Nothing lasts forever, of course, and it wasn't long before the Golden Years came to an end. For decades, Americans had ignored what was happening abroad. We were still working our way out of the Great Depression. Worrying about what some little German corporal was doing across the ocean didn't seem all that important.

That didn't last.

America was dragged into the growing conflict in Europe and Asia soon enough by the sneak attack at Pearl Harbor. Dozens of Japanese Zeroes and deltas ambushed the American naval base at dawn, nearly razing it to the ground and decimating the Pacific fleet. Our response was swift. Within the week, we declared war on Japan and the rest of the Axis powers. Our troops were on their way abroad soon after, led by the all-new Delta Squadron.

There are those who claim that FDR knew about the attack coming on Pearl Harbor, but he let it happen to get the American public fully behind the war effort. Even with my powers, I've never been able to verify that theory (FDR's long dead and in no mood to answer my questions), but the very existence of Delta Squadron seems to support it.

SUPER SOLDIERS

Both the Axis and the Allies put a lot of effort into figuring out where deltas come from and how they could make more of them. Both sides' programs had some success at this, but never enough for them to actually produce what they really wanted: an army of super-soldiers.

When the call to arms finally came for the USA, the Army suddenly pulled Delta Squadron out of its five-star hat. Out of nowhere, we had deltas no one had ever heard of pulling together to take the fight to the Nazis. Mixed in among them, though, we had some of the greatest deltas ever known, and Yankee was in the vanguard.

Just because we had ourselves a mess of deltas didn't mean the Germans were just going to turn tail and run back to Berlin. They had plenty of deltas of their own.

For the first time in history, deltas were a major force in a war. While men battled on the battlefields below, deltas fought alongside them and soared overhead. When deltas clashed, the heavens shook with their fury.

During World War II, the world changed in many ways. For most deltas, having superpowers was no longer a game. It was deadly serious.

In the end, it was a delta who put an end to the war. Actually, that's not entirely true.

It was the first alpha.

CAPTURED!

The Yankee was right there when it happened. Over the years, he'd had a lot of sidekicks, younger deltas willing to work alongside him for a while. He taught them what he knew about crimefighting, and they watched his back. It was a good arrangement that lots of other deltas mimicked over the years.

In the fall of '43, the Yankee was deep behind enemy lines when he and his then-current sidekick, a young man known as Sparky, were captured by Kapitan Krieg, one of the Nazis' most powerful deltas. Krieg personally flew his defeated foes to Auschwitz, where the Nazis had set up a special concentration camp for their delta prisoners.

Under the watchful eye of the camp commander, the Yankee and Sparky were subjected to horrors beyond imagination. The Nazis were going out of their way to exterminate not only Jews, gypsies, and gays, but also every delta in Europe that wouldn't wear a swastika armband with pride.

Never one to bow to fascist dictators of any stripe, the Yankee quickly organized a revolt against the guards.

ALPHA GENESIS

It was a bloody fight. Only a handful of deltas were strong enough to join the Yankee in his desperate gambit. To make matters worse, the Nazis called in Kapitan Krieg, who was there in a moment. He massacred them all.

Actually, one of the delta rioters survived the attack: Sparky.

At first, it seemed that Sparky was truly dead. The Nazi guards even tossed his lifeless body into one of their massive ovens to destroy any shred of evidence that any of the dead deltas had ever been in their "care."

As the flames consumed the Yankee and the rest of the brave souls that Krieg struck down, Sparky died in that fire alongside them.

Superior woke up in his place, and the world was forever changed.

THE TURNING POINT

Moving almost faster than the eye could follow, Superior zoomed around and killed each and every Nazi in the entire camp.

Some he murdered with his bare hands. Others were incinerated by beams blazing from his eyes. Still others met their end by more creative means.

While being held in the camp, Sparky had thought about killing Nazis for a long, miserable time. Superior finally got to carry those fantasies out, and he did so mercilessly.

Literally within minutes, the young man once known as Sparky had liberated the camp and set the prisoners free. A cheer went up from the P.O.W.s who could scarcely believe their luck.



Moments later, Kapitan Krieg—the Nazis' most powerful delta, the man who was responsible for the deaths of dozens of deltas—flew down into the camp to put down what he thought was another uprising.

He had no idea what he was in for. When he saw the young man who'd been known as Sparky, he laughed at the boy's impudence and promised him a quick death.

Superior tore Krieg limb from limb. He hung his head on the camp's front gate.

Heady with his newfound power, Superior flew directly to Berlin. There, he punched his way straight into Adolf Hitler's bunker. Moments later, Superior emerged with der führer's body.

Before anyone really knew it, the war was over.

THE SUPERIOR AGE

If the rest of us superpowered people are deltas, than Superior was clearly an alpha, a whole new class of delta, a man with powers far beyond anyone on the planet. Of course, while he may have been the first alpha, he certainly wasn't the last.

Soon after the end of WWII, the Russians reported that they had "developed" alphas of their own. None of them were powerful enough to take on Superior on his own, but as a team, they could surely give him a run for his money.

The alpha race was on.

Still, America started in the lead, and because of Superior we never lost it. To this date, there's never been a delta—alpha or otherwise—as powerful as him. Sure, he faced some challenges over the years, but he overcame them all. There was really no stopping him.

The years directly after WWII were a fine time for America. We were *the* superpower in the world, with no one able to seriously challenge us, even the up-and-coming Russians.

In 1949, America—heady with its power—got its first wakeup call. On October 12, the Russians detonated an atomic bomb deep in Siberia. Their test put the world on notice not to mess with the Soviet Union.

Even with all his vaunted powers, Superior couldn't be sure that he would survive a nuclear explosion, and that went double for every other delta in the world. The American nuclear program had been put on the back burner after Superior's arrival. The Department of War had decided that deltas (and especially alphas) were the face of modern warfare. After the Soviet nuclear test, though, development of America's own atomic technology moved right up onto the hot part of the stove again.

THE RED SCARE

The sudden realization that America wasn't alone at the top put the fear of Godless communists into the heart of most every American, and it wasn't long before someone decided to take advantage of that. In 1950, the notorious Senator Joe McCarthy from the fair state of Wisconsin led off a witch hunt to track down and imprison or blackball every "unloyal" American he could get his hands on.

The crux of the matter was that the government needed to know if every US citizen was a loyal American or a Soviet spy—at least that was the way McCarthy put it. His solution to this problem was simple: the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).



With anti-Soviet sentiment at an all-time high, HUAC set to work. They started out going after Hollywood, successfully forcing the entertainment industry to blackball any creative types who even leaned to the left. Heady with their successes in that arena, they set after the deltas.

Declaring that a criminal like the Red Reaper was a commie was a no-brainer. Hell, the man wore a hammer and sickle on his chest and spouted revolutionary jargon as he “alleviated capitalist pigs of their tools of oppression.” (Roughly translated: He robbed the rich and gave to himself.)

A lot of innocents got caught up in the inquisition. Even a few members of the Delta Squadron were called on to testify against themselves or their fellows. With one exception, they uniformly refused.

Some, like the Good Knight, actually served time for contempt of Congress. Others, like the Samurai, left the country as soon as he received his summons.

Apparently there was even talk of hauling in Superior before HUAC, but no one had the balls to actually send him a summons. His approval ratings were running higher than President Truman’s, and any representative who tried anything against Superior knew he could kiss his seat good-bye come the next election.

Still, that didn’t stop them from bringing in Patriot in late ’53. Patriot, though, knew his rights and wasn’t afraid to talk about them—eloquently and at length. At the end of his opening speech, nearly all of the HUAC members were hanging their heads in shame.



In 1954, HUAC was disbanded. The country finally got its collective head back together—helped along by the announcement that America finally had a working nuclear weapons program of its own. Still, the fear of unrestrained deltas within our midst never really faded, and McCarthy remained a figure of some power in the Senate, still railing against the threat that deltas posed to our national security.

THE GREAT TRAGEDY

McCarthy's campaign against the deltas waxed and waned over the years, but it all came to a head on November 22, 1963.

You know the story, I'm sure. President Kennedy, the First Lady, and the governor of Texas were riding in a motorcade through the streets of Dallas, Texas, when a squad of the Devastator's Dreadnauts came zooming in over the horizon and blasted the President's car straight to hell.

Superior was on the scene in mere moments, and he made quick work of the Dreadnauts. When it was all over, the First Lady and the governor were dead, but the President was still breathing. Superior lifted the President in his arms and whisked him away to Walter Reed Memorial Hospital in DC, where he could be treated by the top delta healers in the nation.

The President lay in a coma for three days before he awoke. When he did, life was about to change for every delta in America.

With the disaster in Dallas still fresh in Kennedy's mind, he zapped a bill down to Congress. An emergency session ratified it in days, and the President signed it into law within the week. It was the Delta Registration Act.

THE DELTA REGISTRATION ACT

Like most laws, the DRA's complex enough to have lawyers arguing over it for decades (as they are to this day), but the heart of it's simple enough. Anyone with superpowers of any kind must register with the Federal government so that his or her movements can be traced at all times.

You don't need the ACLU to tell you this is a blatant violation of the Bill of Rights, but when people are scared, they do strange things, and dear God were they scared.

Just because you're a delta doesn't mean you're on the side of angels. We're people like anyone else—with the exception of our unearthly powers, of course. If you prick us (well, if you can manage it with some of us), we bleed. Some of us dedicate our lives to helping those who need it. Others use their abilities to take what the world doesn't want to roll over and give them.

The point is that for every crimefighting, world-helping delta out there, there was at least one other clown causing problems: robbing the wealthy, knocking over banks, and killing innocent people. This scared the hell out of regular folks, who weren't really able to defend themselves against these superpowered threats.

The incident in Dallas just brought all of that into sharp focus.

I mean, when you saw the pictures of John-John saluting his mother's casket, how could you help but feel for the entire Kennedy clan? When the DRA came down the pike, Congress passed it almost unanimously.

It went into effect immediately.

Superior was the first delta to register, and lots of others followed his lead.

All known deltas were immediately tracked down by the government and asked to register. Those who refused were tossed into jail. Of course, not all of them went quietly.

DELTA PRIME

That's where Delta Prime came in. Kennedy knew the DRA was going to see some resistance, so he tapped Superior himself to found a new organization dedicated to policing America's delta population. It was pretty obvious the regular cops weren't going to be up to the job. With a lot of the vigilantes refusing to register, the government needed to have some way to enforce the DRA.

To that end, Superior created a new bureau of the Justice Department, and he called it Delta Prime. The first Primers, as they're called, included a number of the members of the old Delta Squadron, plus any other deltas whose loyalty was theoretically beyond reproach. Their first directive was (and still is) to arrest every unregistered delta.

DP's second directive is to support any Federal law enforcement agency in any matters in which delta involvement is suspected. As you might see, this is an extremely broad-based mandate. As such, it's entirely open to abuse, which is exactly what happened.

THE WITCH HUNT BEGINS

Sure, the people who refused to register were lawbreakers, but this was honestly just a tool. What the Justice Department operatives really wanted (and got) was an excuse to lock up any unregistered they could find, just for being a delta.



So what if the feds didn't actually have any proof that the man in question had committed a real crime? Just being unregistered was crime enough.

As the saying goes, "When you make superhuman powers illegal, only outlaws will have superhuman powers." Of course, not everyone refused to sign. Some of those deltas became some of the most zealous and capable hunters around.

Now, most people don't have much of a problem with locking up people like the Mass Murderer or the Dreadnauts for any reason, proof or not, but it's still a matter of civil rights. This became totally apparent when the Primers went after a number of crimefighters who, for reasons of their own, absolutely and openly refused to register.

IDENTITY CRISIS

So, if you've got nothing to hide, why not register? That's the question most Americans ask when they hear about some delta being hauled in for violating the DRA.

For one, it's a violation of basic privacy rights. Two, there's a reason a lot of crimefighters (and criminals) wear masks. Here's a clue: They don't want people to know who they are.

There are lots of reasons for this. Most often it's that the hero wants to lead a normal life when he's not in his union suit. Deltas who don't lead double lives have to worry about things like old enemies, paparazzi, and even just curious neighbors bothering not only them but those they love. When you work behind a mask, none of that stuff is a problem.

Of course, there's the fact that most delta crimefighters are simply vigilantes, unsanctioned by any government. Sometimes they bend laws to get the job done. Keeping an identity secret prevents them from having to answer for that—right or wrong.

Also masked deltas can't ever appear in court. The Constitution gives every person the right to face her accuser, and a person in a mask doesn't count.

Sometimes this can prove to be more of a hindrance than a relief. Sure, nobody likes having to appear in court, but without eyewitness testimony, lots of criminal deltas go free—or at least they did back then.

In those rough-and-tumble days, more than one delta crimefighter made up for that problem by skipping right past the theoretical judge and jury, appointing themselves the executioners. They carried the sentence out right there on the spot, and more than one criminal counted himself lucky to even be able to walk away from his so-called just desserts.

THE DEFIANCE MOVEMENT

There were a number of legitimate deltas who had a real beef with the DRA, and rather than sign up, they went underground. Some of them continued to operate the way they always had, taking down the criminals while avoiding the Primers and the police. Others simply hung up their masks and vowed never to use their powers again.

More than a few deltas, though, decided to fight the whole thing. They went underground and formed a loose organization called the Defiance. (I guess they thought it was catchy. There's no accounting for taste.)

Despite what the feds might want you to believe, and no matter what you might see on TV or in the movies, the Defiance isn't really all that together. We'd like to be the efficient espionage and subversion machine we're popularly made out to be, but it just isn't so.

Sure, there's a cadre of hardcore members who make a lot of noise every so often—enough to get on the evening news—but most of us are simply deltas who want to get by without anyone knowing who we are. We're not so different from the regs, after all.

Most Defiants don't know more than a few other members. In the old days, they all communicated through an underground newspaper called *The Delta Times*. It was sent to P.O. boxes and to general delivery addresses across the country. It was pretty crude, but it worked.

These days, we use the worldwide web to get people connected. We shuttle around from server to server, all of which are located far beyond the long arm of Delta Prime. Being who they are, Primers don't usually let things like pursuing stalwart webmasters like myself across international borders give them more than a moment's pause. Still, they haven't caught me yet.

More than one of my predecessors as publisher of this fine periodical is spending his days watching the world from a cage, but they haven't caught me yet. I'm hoping to someday even top the record-setting run of the paper's founder, the Yellow Journalist. Wish me luck.

And if you're feeling nostalgic, drop YJ a line. He's doing his time in New Alcatraz, right in the heart of Chicago Bay. He's always glad to hear from new Defiants.

DEFIANT BEHAVIOR

Despite the fact that most of the Defiants are good people, that's not true of all of us. Dozens of delta criminals fought tooth and nail against the newly formed Delta Prime. Battles broke out all across the nation in nearly every major city.

No one fought more viciously than the Devastator himself. Delta Prime cornered him and his Dreadnauts in his underground lair deep beneath New York City. Just when it looked like they were finally going to bring the bastard to justice, he set off a self-destruct device that brought down the roof on his den. It destroyed every shred of evidence in the place, along with four city blocks.

This all happened in the middle of the day, and the office skyscrapers above the Devastator's headquarters were packed full of people. The death toll numbered in the thousands.

MARTIAL LAW

When he learned of the incident in Manhattan, President Kennedy declared martial law across the entire country. From then on, only his word was law, although he promised to listen to the words of Congress and the Supreme Court on an advisory basis. Eventually he ignored that and simply appointed his own handpicked toadies to fill these posts, all the way from the federal government on down.

To this day, Kennedy rules our fair nation by decree. Over the years, his power base has solidified to the point that most people figure that the only way Kennedy's ever going to leave office is feet first. At a spry 82, Kennedy looks like he's not planning on leaving us any time soon.

Now I'm not one to advocate murder—even assassination—but there have been others who have tried to finish the job that incarnation of the Dreadnauts started in Dallas in '63. In those early days, most of them were put down by Superior. A special Secret Service detachment of Delta Prime took care of the rest.

Anyhow, Kennedy started out ruling with an iron fist, and he hasn't mellowed much over the years. If anything, matters have gotten worse.

Life as an American delta was pretty tough in the '60s and mid-'70s. With the support of a terrified American public behind him, Kennedy launched a witch hunt for unregistered deltas that made HUAC look like a Girl Scout meeting. FBI agents knocked down the doors of any suspected deltas and hauled them off to jail in the middle of the night. The concept of due process went right out the window, and soon the prisons were jammed with superpowered inmates.

Lots of deltas were killed while "resisting arrest." In truth, the Primers had simply decided that some deltas were just too dangerous to risk another encounter like the Manhattan Incident. Rather than chance it, they simply chose to save the country the bother of having to feed, clothe, and house the deltas, much less the expense of keeping watch over them until they died in prison.

You'd think the American public wouldn't have put up with that sort of crap. After all, millions of Americans have put their lives on the line to protect things like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Instead, John Q. Public rolled over and exposed his throat to the Primers.

Some Defiants take this as a reason to hold a lot of anger for ordinary

people—the “regs” as they call them (rhymes with “dregs”), but I don’t agree. I don’t hate regular folks. I pity them.

Figure this: These people are scared out of their wits. Even most deltas are scared. The world’s changing overnight, people with superhuman powers are walking the earth, and lots of innocent people are dying.

Aren’t you scared too? I know I am.

Hell, before you found out you’re a delta, you might have felt the same way. Your friends and family probably still do, especially if you haven’t told them anything yet.

Kennedy didn’t take control of the country so much as we gave it to him. We’ve only got ourselves to blame.

Anyhow, delta or not, life during those days was pretty damn awful.

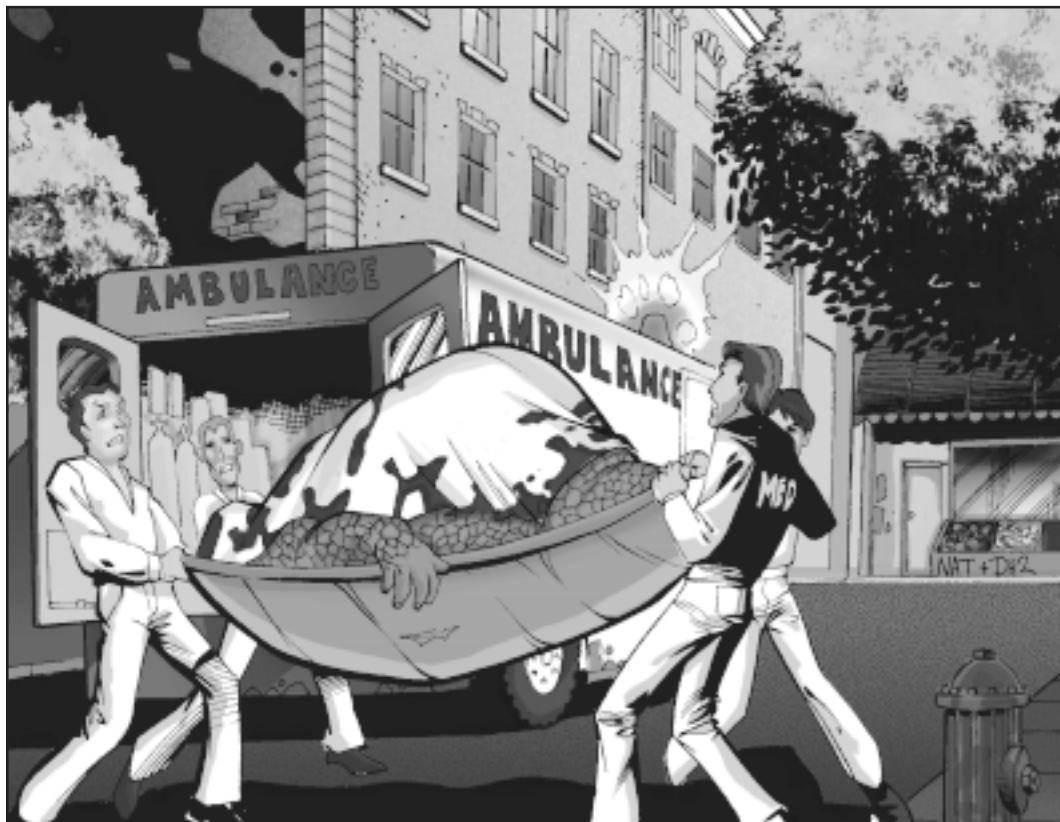
It got worse.

THE FORTRESS

With all the deltas being brought in by Delta Prime, the US government needed a place to hold them. Traditional prisons weren’t much use against people who could walk through walls or simply blast them down. Kennedy’s answer? The Fortress.

The Fortress is a massive, maximum security prison specially outfitted with state-of-the-art restraint devices. The place is staffed by registered deltas of all stripes, all working in concert to keep the bad guys locked up, making the world safe for decent, God-fearing folks.

Forgive my sarcasm. Sure, some of the Fortress’ inmates are murderous scum who need to be locked up—permanently—but there are a lot of



political prisoners in there as well, people whose only crime was failing to register with the feds. Friends.

Either way, no one's been able to break out of the Fortress to date. Its walls are reinforced with all the means that science and (I'm told) magic can offer.

The place has been so successful over the years that it's been duplicated in country after country across the world. These days, the place is packed solid, so much so that the feds built New Alcatraz just to hold the overflow.

The exact location of the Fortress is a closely guarded secret. All I can tell you is that it's located somewhere in Nebraska, in the heart of the National Grasslands. I've been out that way before, and even in the places where they've got roads, there's a whole lot of space between towns.

THE BICENTENNIAL BATTLE

You've probably heard this story before, but maybe from a different point of view—say through the government-controlled media. Either way, it's worth repeating, so bear with me.

It was July 4, 1976. The Devastator, along with the latest incarnation of his Dreadnauts, made his last stand on the top of the Sears Tower in downtown Chicago. He just happened to be standing on top of a doomsday bomb as well, and he threatened to set it off unless Superior surrendered to him once and for all.

Of course, Superior wasn't going to go quietly. He brought every alpha in Delta Prime along with him to the Windy City, and they took the fight straight to the Dreadnauts.



Delta Prime cleaned the sides of the Sears Tower with the Dreadnaughts, and it wasn't long before Superior confronted the criminal mastermind atop the world's tallest building. Of course, it was then that the Devastator set his bomb off.

Eyewitnesses report that there was a brilliant flash of white light, and then the city of Chicago just disappeared.

That's right. Into nothing.

THE AFTERMATH

That wasn't the end of it, of course. In fact, everything within 25 miles of the Sears Tower just disintegrated. According to the teams of scientists who scoured the area in the months after the disappearance, there was nothing left behind—not even a whole lot of dust.

Airplanes that were above the radius of destruction disappeared too, as did the soil for about half a mile down. The nearby coastal waters of Lake Michigan left with it.

If nature abhors a vacuum, Mother Earth had never seen something so abhorrent. The rest of Lake Michigan rolled into the perfectly round-shaped hole, and the resulting tidal wave wiped out every building within a mile of the shore of what would thereafter be known as Chicago Bay. Floods destroyed everything within another mile or so of that, and the resulting tornadoes from the air sweeping in from all directions extended the radius of destruction even further.

The property damage was incalculable. The loss of life was staggering. Literally millions of people died, and many more were hurt. Since the Devastator disappeared along with everyone else, it seems like we may never know how or why.

THE VANISHING

At exactly the moment of the destruction of Chicago, every free alpha in the world vanished. No one realized this at first. There wasn't any kind of announcement about it. The people simply disappeared.

Some of the missing alphas were missed right away, especially those who were busy saving lives when they went missing. The lack of some others wasn't felt for days, particularly if they were in hiding in the first place. Eventually the world put it all together, and the shock rang through the globe like an earthquake.

No one can say how a bomb set off in Chicago could affect people all around the world, but it did. The Devastator was known to be a master of the occult as well as science. Perhaps his doomsday device combined the two in a way that traditional science could never hope to explain.

Most people didn't know how to react. On one hand, they'd finally gotten rid of all those dangerous alphas. On the other hand, all the "good" alphas were gone too, Superior—the mightiest of them all—among them.

The worst part was that only the free alphas disappeared. All those in the maximum-security, delta-only prisons still remained. Apparently the devices that keep the deltas in also kept the effects of the Devastator's bomb out.

There haven't been many alphas cropping up since then either. Deltas still get into the same kinds of crunches as before, but there's no magic "have another chance" card out there anymore.

If you're a delta and it looks like the end is here, well, it probably is. Life's hard like that.

THE DELTA WARS

With the alphas gone, you might have thought things would get better. You know: fewer deltas, fewer problems. At least with the alphas gone you'd expect to have smaller problems. But that's not really what happened. Actually it was the exact opposite.

You can say lots of things about Superior (fascist pig, tool of the state, whatever), but the man kept the world together. While he was around, no one was going to try anything crazy, like launching a nuclear attack. First of all, he might have been able to stop it before it started. Second, he'd promised to kill the leaders of any country that started a nuclear exchange.

It wasn't an idle threat. Just ask the Germans.

Sure, we had all sorts of little brushfire wars over the years, and sometimes Superior would let nations duke it out as long as American interests weren't threatened. But nothing major.

Hell, he even put an early end to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

Without Superior's calming (read: oppressive) influence, all hell broke loose.

POST-SUPERIOR LIFE

In the last 20-odd years, this planet's been ravaged from one end to the other. Deltas of all stripes battle in the streets, and armies of deltas struggle on battlefields across the world.

To see what this means to the average American, all you've got to do is look at any major city. Tops of buildings stand razed off, with new girders stretching toward the sky like bones in a regenerating limb. Windows stand boarded up where they've been

shattered by explosions or having the odd delta knocked clean through the building. Monuments lay in ruins. Wrecked cars litter the place.

In short, the world's a mess.

The low point, of course, came back in '89 when there was a total nuclear meltdown in the Russian city of Chernobyl. That was bad enough, but it got worse.

It turned out that a supposedly covert Delta Prime team was seen battling their Soviet counterparts in Crimson Pride just before the disaster. Before the mushroom cloud had settled over the city, the Kremlin had "determined" that Primers were at fault, and they launched a reprisal at Atlanta. Within the hour, the capitol of the South was a smoking crater.

Of course, we couldn't tolerate that, so we blasted back, taking out Kiev. We also destroyed Minsk, and it turn we lost San Francisco before the madness finally came to a glow-in-the-dark kind of end.

OUR RAVAGED PLANET

That's enough history for now, and it should give you a good idea why most people would just as well shoot a delta as give her the time of day. The fact is that—even when we're good people—we're dangerous.

Even if you never actually harm anyone with your own powers, you're a magnet for trouble. Most people killed by deltas weren't intentionally murdered. They were just innocents caught in the crossfire.

Before you became a delta, you probably felt the same about us as everybody else. Best to keep away from us. Far, far away.

Well, kid, there's no running from yourself.

DECISIONS

Now that you know a bit about your heritage, it's time to decide who you're going to be. It's not as simple as choosing between good and evil.

This is real life.

That means no one can tell you what to do. Okay, they can tell you all right, but there's nothing that says you've got to listen.

That said, listen to this.

You've basically got two choices: register or don't. After that, things become more complicated.

SIGNING ON

You've seen the posters and the ads. Superior leans into the frame and points out at you. In Superior's long-gone tones, the booming voiceover tells you: "It's your duty, and it's the law. Register now!"

The law is pretty clear about this matter, and with Kennedy still running the country by decree, you don't have to worry about a long court trial. If you're a delta (or even a suspected delta—some of us have powers that aren't all that obvious), then you've either got to sign up or rot in jail.

Strictly speaking, you've got to register within seven days of discovering your powers. If you fail to do so, you're eligible to spend the rest of your life rotting in a high-tech cell in either the Fortress or New Alcatraz.

THE PROS

The feds have all sorts of reasons why you should register.

It's your duty. Hey, it's the law, right? Never mind that it's one that was handed down by a government that hasn't been elected for over 30 years.



It's for the safety of your neighbors. This way, whenever there's a problem with a delta in the area, people know which house to burn down. They skip right past the regs and knock down your door instead. Your neighbors are safe—as long as they don't live next door to you. Deltas have a notoriously bad effect on property values.

It's to protect yourself. The theory here is that if you're registered and something happens that could be traced back to powers of your kind, you can provide the police with an alibi. Then they can cross you off the list of potential suspects. Or they can just lock you up, and with the courts the way they are these days—few juries, mostly judges appointed by Kennedy and his goons—you have no recourse other than taking matters into your own hands.

It's for your own good. If you register, you're eligible to use your powers openly without fear of being hauled in for that reason alone. If the police need to, they can always find a different reason, but that one's off-limits. Best of all—and this is the one bonus even I can't argue with—you don't have to spend the rest of your life either on the run or waiting for one of your neighbors to turn you in.

THE CONS

No privacy. Everyone knows you're a delta. The DRA doesn't keep that information secret. Even if you join up with Delta Prime or Triumph, Inc., (the world's largest, privately owned employer of deltas), your family and friends have to deal with the stigma of being associated with you.



Your movements are tracked. If you even leave town, you've got to tell Delta Prime when you're leaving and where you're going to. It's the only way for people to feel safe around someone like you, it seems.

Everyone you know is in danger. Like I said before, everyone knows you're a delta. This includes every killer, every psycho, and every jackass with a chip on his shoulder that you've ever run across. And with just a little bit of research, they can find out where you live. Even if you're with Delta Prime, they can still find your family and friends

The draft. When you're registered, the government can draft you for any reason it sees fit. This may only be on a mission-by-mission basis, but it can involve long-term deployment too. This is another reason the DP needs to know your location at all times.

No rights. When you sign up, you give your life over to the feds. Kiss the Bill of Rights good-bye. Come to think of it, since Kennedy tore the damn thing up when he declared martial law 36 years ago, it hardly matters.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

So if you've signed your life away, what next? As a registered delta, you've got several options: Delta Prime, the Delta Academy, corporate work, freelance, or a normal life.

DELTA PRIME

Hey, if you're looking to become the tool of an oppressive, fascist government, go ahead and Hancock that dotted line. Compared to other deltas, Primers lead a pretty good life. Uncle Sam feeds you, clothes you, and tells you what to think and do.

You even get a steady paycheck. Sure, it's stable and legal and all that, but don't kid yourself. You are working for the Man.

By "the Man," of course, I mean Kennedy. Is there anyone else?

As part of DP, you can be a covert operative doing all sorts of wetwork (read: killing) and other spy stuff. Or you can be one of the costumed puppets they let run around to "inspire" the regs. Either way, you're sure to find yourself facing off against delta criminals and major threats of all kinds.

I've got to admit that the Primers have done some good over the years. They've managed to save the planet more times than I'd care to count. Of course, each and every one of them had to sell their souls to do it, but that's the price you pay.

Delta Prime's got offices and operatives all over the country, although their main headquarters is on the outskirts of Alexandria, VA, just spitting distance from DC.

THE DELTA ACADEMY

If you're under 18, Delta Prime doesn't want you. In that case, the feds want you in the Delta Academy instead.

The Academy is located right in downtown Crescent City, in the band of buildings that went up around the rim of the circle where Chicago used to be. In fact, from the top of this diamond-shaped structure, you get a beautiful view of Chicago Bay.

Delta Prime encourages the parents of any registered delta minors to send their kids to the Delta Academy so they can be trained in how to control their powers. There's also the added benefit of the fact that they won't be running

around loose in whatever town they were growing up in. Teenagers are dangerous enough with cars. With superpowers, they're a real headache.

Before you start calling me an old crank, let me tell you that I'd never send a kid of mine to the Academy. Sure, it's safer for everyone involved, but it also means the feds can get their hooks into the kid during his formative years.

There's a reason the military doesn't like admitting people after they reach a certain age. The older you get, the more you already know who you are, and the less willing you tend to be to take orders without question.

The same's true with deltas. Get a kid into the Academy when he's 13, and by the time he gets out, he's ready and willing to sign up with Delta Prime for life.

The Academy takes children in at any age, although it's rare to see a delta younger than eight. It does happen, though, and it can be a real problem. Just imagine a superpowered kid in the middle of his "terrible twos." Boggles the mind.

CORPORATE WORK

Just because Delta Prime wants you doesn't mean you want them. Maybe you're more interested in a fat paycheck than in saving the world. If so, there are a number of corporations out there that would be happy to hire someone with your particular skills.

The bidding for deltas can get pretty fierce at times, even surpassing the salaries of top athletes. And why not? A well-known delta's endorsement is worth at least as much as one from nearly any reg, no matter how talented.

By the way, if you're thinking of hiring on with a pro regs sports team,

forget it. All reg teams have strict rules against using the talents of any kinds of deltas, whether on the field or off.

However, if you're interested in a real challenge, you can always try your hand at deltaball. Of course, after that incident in LA a few years back, you don't get to play in front of live crowds anymore, but the TV audiences are huge.

The largest employer of deltas in the nation is, of course, Triumph, Inc., the corporation founded by Rex Shepherd after he retired from the hero game back in 1960. As the world's richest man, Shepherd controls a lot of power, and not just because of his money. He's got a number of the most powerful deltas on the planet under contract, and with the kind of checks he's writing, when he says, "Fly!" they ask, "How high?"

There's a catch though. Even if you sign on full-time with Triumph, the feds can still call on you at any point. Shepherd and Kennedy seem to have some kind of deal that keeps this from happening too often. When it does, it usually just means that a Triumph delta gets detached to a DP squad for a certain period of time or the length of a single mission. Then the Triumphant gets to go back to her luxury apartment while the Primers head back to the barracks.

FREELANCERS

If you like, there's nothing stopping you from going into business for yourself. If you're a real do-gooder, you don't even have to charge for your services. Or you can only bother charging those who can afford it. Some people even have insurance that covers unexpected charges for having their bacon hauled out of the fire, and you



can make a good living off that, as long as you've got yourself an accountant to handle the intricacies of the billing process.

Don't think about trying to defraud the insurance companies though. They've got their own teams of delta investigators, and if they even suspect you've been cheating them out of their premiums, they're happy to punch your one-way ticket to the Fortress. More than one innocent freelancer has found himself in a holding cell this way, so it's a riskier way of earning a living than you might think.

Of course, you can just hire out your services on a job-by-job basis. The real problem here is that if you ever make a real name for yourself, you can expect one of two things to happen—and maybe both. Either a corp like Triumph, Inc., is going to make you an

offer you can't refuse, or Delta Prime's going to do the same thing.

As a freelancer, the trick is to keep your profile low enough that you don't attract too much attention, while at the same time you have enough clients that you don't starve.

I've got a lot of respect for freelancers. Anyone who can actually register and still try to maintain her own destiny has a long, crooked road to walk. I prefer life in the shadows.

Some freelancers even try to maintain a secret identity so they can have a normal life. Unfortunately, it's not a secret from the Primers, and they have a habit of not giving a damn about any freelancer's personal life. When they need you, they usually just show up wherever you are and haul your ass out along with them, secret IDs be damned.



A NORMAL LIFE

I hope you didn't skip all the way down to this entry first off. If so, go on back and keep reading.

It's a joke.

No registered delta ever gets a normal life.

A SECRET LIFE

Your other option, of course, is to hide your light under the biggest bushel you can find. Literally, there's no one forcing you to run on down to the nearest Delta Prime office and show them why you're not a reg anymore. Of course, you've got to face the consequences if you're caught.

PROS

Why in God's name would you want to be a Defiant? (That's what people are going to call you if you don't register, no matter if you're part of the Defiance Movement or not.) That's a damn good question.

Freedom. Once you register, your life is no longer your own. In a very real way, you're on a federal leash held by Delta Prime. Sometimes the leash is long, and sometimes it's short, but when they want to yank you around, they've got you, and good.

Privacy. Complying with the DRA doesn't mean you just walk into the nearest Delta Prime office and say, "Hey, I'm a delta." You've got to basically bend over and let them creep up inside you with a microscope. Now, they don't have to tell all your neighbors that you've registered, but when the DPs show up on your doorstep to search your house and question your relatives and neighbors, people are going to talk.

Safety. When you lose your privacy, you lose your safety. Say you're a Primer and you foil some madman's plan for poisoning Manhattan's water supply. Then you find the bastard and spank him in front of the entire, couldn't-be-less-grateful city. Do you think your family's safe from him or his friends anymore? Do you think you're going to be able to relax in your own house? As a Primer, you can't control who knows who you are. Sure, some Primers wear masks, but that doesn't mean you can't figure out who they are with a little legwork. Trust me.

Be your own delta. This country was founded on the idea that all men are created equal. That you've got rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. When you sign that line, you give all that up. You surrender yourself over to Kennedy's government, one which hasn't seen an election in over 35 years. You become complicit in the country's betrayal of those ideals.

CONS

Now, as much as I believe in being a Defiant, it's not for everyone. No matter how you want to slice it, it's a hard life. Here's why.

A double life. Sure, you think you can keep quiet about who you are, but it's tough. Some delta powers are nearly impossible to hide. Even with those you can conceal, you're going to be tempted to use them from time to time. My only advice here is, if you ever do use your powers, make sure no one sees you. If you can't do that, wear a mask. Gloves help too. In fact, even if you're sure no one can see you, cover up anyhow. You never know. There's a reason all those goofs are running around in costumes out there.

Trust no one. If you don't tell the feds you're a delta, make damn sure you don't tell anyone else. If anyone figures out that you're a delta—or has even good reason to suspect you're a delta—your life, as you know it, is over. Parents have even been known to turn in their children, and vice versa.

Life on the run. Chances are good that eventually somebody's going to figure you out and turn you in. Unless you like your chances in the Fortress, you'd better hit the road. If you're determined to stay in the States, you're pretty much doomed to living life on the run. At the very least, you have to set up a new life somewhere far away and hope no one tumbles to who you are. Leaving the country's always a possibility, but most places aren't much better, and Delta Prime's chase units don't really give a damn about international borders anyhow.

Prison. If you do get caught, you're looking at one hell of a long term in either the Fortress or New Alcatraz. The phrase you'll hear a lot of is "life without parole." Of course, if you're willing to play ball once you've been caught, the government might allow you to join Delta Prime instead, but only if they really need you. And guess who gets the most dangerous assignments from there on out?

Death. If you piss off enough people before you're caught, you might never be lucky enough to see the inside of a prison. Lots of times, the Primers will decide to save the kangaroo courts around here the bother of a trial. The next thing your loved ones know, you were killed "resisting arrest." Even if you manage to get your day in court, if you killed anyone in the course of evading arrest, you're doomed. It's a one-way ticket off this mortal coil for you.

CAREER CHOICES

Assuming you make the right choice and piss on the DRA, your life's not over yet—at least until you get caught. For now, you've still got a few options: keep quiet, tell the world, run, get a mask, or join the Defiants. Or you can try some combination of these.

KEEPING QUIET

The first thing you need to do is learn to keep your mouth shut. I don't care if you're dying to tell your parents, your spouse, or your best friend. Don't.

First, the more people who know your secret, the harder it is to keep it. It only takes one person to make a single slip of the tongue, and you can kiss your life good-bye.

Second, it puts the person holding your secret at risk too. They've just become accessories to your crime, and lying about it may not do them or you any good. Some courts have people with powers like mine that they haul out to verify testimony in high-profile cases, and if a fugitive delta isn't high-profile, I don't know what is.

TELLING THE WORLD

Have you actually listened to a word I've said? If you really want to just drop your pants like this, you're on your own.

Okay, there are some deltas like Bill King who have stood up and openly proclaimed who they are, but they're unique cases. You've got to have a certain kind of personality to pull it off, and it doesn't hurt if everyone you've ever cared about is dead. Otherwise, you can count on having them harassed by the government, the press, and any enemies you might make.

Of course, if you don't have anyone you care that much about, you're all set. Just make sure you don't develop any other friendships in the future either, unless you're sure they can handle themselves at least as well as you can.

Just because you've told the world doesn't mean you're off the hook. Now you've got to deal with the fact that everyone who watches the news or reads a newspaper now probably knows what you look like. And when they spot you, they're a lot more likely to call the feds than shake your hand.

In short, unless you've got a death wish, forget about this.

LIFE ON THE RUN

If you really want to keep your friends and family safe, think about hitting the road. Living on the streets isn't a whole lot of fun, nor is couch surfing—if you've got the kind of friends who don't mind harboring a fugitive for a few nights at a time. However, you really cut down on the chances of someone getting to know you well enough to discover your secret and turn you in.

Chances are that folks back home are going to figure you were killed or ran away or simply dropped off the face of the earth. Sure, this isn't going to make them happy, but it's better than having Delta Prime or the latest incarnation of the Dreadnauts show up on your family's doorstep. If that happens, you can be sure it won't be a social call.

Life on the run's lonely though, and it's not for everyone. When you find yourself getting homesick, you need to remind yourself that if you stuck around your home might have been destroyed. At least this way the rest of your family can enjoy it.

It's not always a choice, of course. Lots of closet deltas get forced into leaving town when their secret is revealed.

The worst part about life on the road is that sooner or later your luck is going to run out. Someone—maybe even someone you don't even know—is going to recognize you or see you using your powers or whatever, and she's going to turn you in. The only thing you can hope then is that you can run far enough or fast enough to get away.

I've been living "on the run" myself now for over nine years. No, it's not a whole lot of fun, but it sure as hell beats rotting away in New Alcatraz.

I've actually met some deltas who've been on the run since the DRA was first handed down, if you can believe that. You'd think that more than 35 years of

looking over your shoulder would have an effect on most people, but these folks seem to have weathered it just fine. Of course, the ones who flaked out were captured years ago, right?

Keep thinking that. It makes the long nights a bit easier.

At least it does for me.

GET A MASK

Masks are pretty common in the delta trade. Not everyone wears them, but those that do have their reasons, and they're usually damn good ones.

As I said before, the world can be pretty hard on someone who's a confessed delta, and that's true no matter if you're registered or not. One way to get around this is to wear a mask.





There's a long-standing tradition of masked deltas, going all the way back to the Silver Ghost himself. When you think about it, wearing a mask makes a lot of sense. If no one knows who you really are, you get to go home at the end of the day and put your troubles away. Otherwise, with a little detective work, those troubles can track you home and blast your place to splinters.

The flipside of this is that normal citizens don't always trust people in masks. After all, you can't really tell who's behind the mask, and you can't even be sure if it's the same person from day to day. While protecting your identity and your privacy, a mask also removes a certain amount of accountability.

Wear one or not. It's your choice. If you're a Defiant though, I recommend it.

JOINING THE DEFIANCE

Despite what the government-censored newshounds might try to shove down your throat, the Defiance isn't really the ruthlessly efficient organization you might be hoping for (assuming you're a closet delta). Other than the *Delta Times* and a few mailing lists, there's no real way to contact a whole bunch of deltas at once.

Remember, we're an oppressed people. As soon as we rear our heads enough to pop up on Delta Prime's radar, we're either outlawed or co-opted directly into the government (or a government-condoned corporate venture).

By DP's definition, joining the Defiance Movement is easy. All you've got to do is develop delta powers and not tell the feds.

In reality, it's both that easy and a whole lot harder.

Sure, we (if I can speak for Defiants everywhere for a moment) take all comers, but there isn't really a "we" to speak of.

There are pockets of more-organized deltas scattered all over the place, but we don't have much in the way of mechanisms to coordinate with each other. Yeah, every now and then some crackpot stands on top of the Empire State Building and declares himself the leader of free deltas everywhere. He'd get his ass laughed out of the country if Delta Prime wasn't so busy thumping on him.

So, hey, you want in, you're in.

BEING A DEFIANT

Welcome to the club, you poor bastard.

Like the song says, "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave." Once you're a Defiant, you're marked for life. The only hope you have is that if you're ever caught you can manage some kind of plea bargain with your captors. Otherwise, you're looking at life in a high-security cell. And this isn't *The Shawshank Redemption*, and you're not Tim Robbins. You're not getting out.

BEING A DELTA

It's kind of strange actually. It's as if becoming a delta does something to your head. You hardly ever hear about a delta who swears off using his powers so he can live a quiet life in the suburbs. I'm not saying it doesn't ever happen, but some of us just seem to get too heady with our powers to contain ourselves.

Give a man a mask and the power to bounce bullets off his chest, and even the most shy and retiring bookworm can become a glory hound.

For some it comes from a sense of responsibility. You've got these amazing powers, after all, and there are people out there who could use your kind of help. If you're not going to save them, who will? Delta Prime? They're too busy more often than not.

Other deltas just have something to prove—usually to themselves. They act like they just won the superpowers lottery, and they've got to share their winnings with the world.

These are the kind who get on my nerves, even though they've got their place. Usually they change their tune after some other delta (Primer or otherwise) kicks the crap out of them. It's not so fun being a delta when you're laid up in a shed somewhere, hoping you can heal up before anyone finds you.

Still others are a bit more subtle, using their powers to suit their own ends, if and when they're necessary. These are the most dangerous kind, since it's often hard to know just who it is you're dealing with and what she's capable of.

HALOS AND HORNS

Just because you spat on the DRA doesn't mean you're a saint. If you're a Defiant, then by definition you're a criminal. The real question is what kind of criminal you are.

Some of us take to Robin-Hooding, while others simply line their own pockets. Some want to save the world, while others are the people the world needs saving from. Most of the time, you can't tell the two kinds apart, at least on the surface.

Remember what I said before about not being able to trust anyone? Well, that's doubly true with other Defiants. If they tell you they're good people, just misunderstood, take it with a grain of salt.

It's hard to imagine how the regs might "misunderstand" a bank robbery, right?

On the other hand, if someone comes right out and tells you he's bad news, listen to him. Don't try to change him. Just walk the other way. Unless of course he's threatening to hurt someone. Then I'll leave it up to you and your conscience as to what you should do.

There's a whole subsection of deltas who just let the power go to their heads. They think they're above things like laws and human life. They treat the rest of the world like their playground, brothel, and toilet all rolled into one. And woe to anyone who gets in their way.

These are the guys who give the rest of us a bad name. If you're one of them, all I can say is you'd better hope the Primers get to you before the Defiants do. If you're lucky, the Primers will cart you off to jail. The Defiants don't have that option.

A DEFIANT LIFE

Now that you're leading a double life or a life on the run—or both—there are some adjustments you're going to have to make.

IF YOU'RE NOT A GOOD LIAR, LEARN

Every time you put on a mask, you're living a lie. You're telling the world that this new identity you've created for yourself is not the real you.

In fact, you're saying the mask has absolutely nothing to do with the person behind it.

Also, you're going to need to be able to come up with plausible excuses on the fly. Why are you never around when your alter ego is? (Lots of other people aren't around either, sure, but if the question's put to you, you'd better have a good answer.) Where have you been for the last few hours/days/weeks? Where did you get all of those bruises?

CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS CAREFULLY

Eventually, the questions are going to catch up with you, and then you're going to have to decide what to do. Can you confide in the questioner? If you can, your life just got a whole lot easier. There's nothing like having someone to back up your stories.

Of course, as soon as you tell your confidant what's going on, you've made her an accomplice to your crime. Think long and hard on that before you break down.

Sometimes it's better if the confidant isn't actually a friend. Defiants have a lot more support out there than you might guess. I've even known of the rare occasion in which a cop or even a Primer has kept a Defiant's secret, for reasons of their own. Of course, you can hardly count on that kind of treatment, but sometimes there's just no other way out.

CHOOSE YOUR ENEMIES CAREFULLY TOO

Lots of deltas are more defined by who they hate than who they love. When you're bouncing around, trying to make the world safe for humans and deltas alike, always try to figure out whose toes you might be stepping on.

If you're not able to handle getting into a battle with someone like the Wiseguy, walk away while you still can.

In fact, run like hell.

The people you piss off are the people you really need to watch out for. These are the people who are going to spend day and night trying to hunt you down and kill you.

If your friends figure out who you are, they might forgive you. With your enemies, you can forget about it. They're not only not going to forgive you. If you really got them torqued, they're going to come to your hometown and start killing people on the off chance you might know one of the victims.

Either way, it's not going to be pretty. Do yourself a favor and avoid this scene entirely. Keep your mask on.

DELTA PRIME IS YOUR ENEMY

If you have any doubts, don't. These are the people you want to steer clear of at all costs. You may not have anything against them, but the reverse just isn't true.

It's nothing personal on their part, and that almost makes it worse. It's easy to understand why someone you've pissed off is trying to put an end to your life as you know it. When you're dealing with something as large and relatively indifferent as the federal government though, things sometimes get strange.

For the most part, these guys are just doing their jobs, and if not for a simple twist of fate, you might be working on their side, or they might be on ours. Sure, there's the occasional federally sanctioned psychopath out there—the G-Man leaps to mind—but they're mostly deltas doing what they've got to do, just like you.



That said, you can't expect any mercy from the Primers. It's their job to track you down and bring you in, and they're good at it. When it comes down to you or them, well, I know which side I'd come down on, but it's your choice—and your life.

CONTACTING OTHERS

This is the worst part about being a Defiant. Finding other Defiants you can trust can be a stone-cold bitch.

You never know about anyone. Most times, two Defiants who meet on the street each do an about-face and do their best to forget their paths nearly crossed.

Sometimes you can find a friend out there, but it's rare. If you do, hold on to her as long as you can. Such people are rarer than diamonds.

Hell, the only saving grace is the internet. Without it, finding and working with other Defiants would be nearly impossible. As it is, it's the best thing going.

The first thing you need to know about is, of course, *The Delta Times*. We're the best source of timely Defiant information in the world, and we're a target because of it.

Delta Prime would love to shut us down, and they've tried more than once. We're strictly outlawed in the US, but fortunately there are nations out there with less-oppressive regimes, and some are beautiful places too.

In fact, more than one nation has granted deltas tax-exempt status in an effort to lure superpowered expatriates within their own borders. They appreciate unregistered help, even if the US doesn't.



Even so, lines on a map aren't much to stop Primers with a real mad-on. We've got ourselves up on several mirror sites around the world, and we shift around from server to server on an almost weekly basis.

Given a chance, I think Kennedy would shut down the entire internet. It's been a thorn in his side since its development in the way that it promotes the free (and anonymous) exchange of ideas. It started out as a government-run means of transmitting data years back, and now it's grown into the most important part of the global economy's infrastructure.

Even if Kennedy wants to, there's no putting that genie back in the bottle.

Anyhow, there are a number of Defiance mailing lists out there too. Most of these are divided up according to who's on the list and why they need to know each other. There are a couple general interest ones, and if you go back to the home page, you can sign up for one right there.

The Liberators, for instance, have a famous list that's been cracked by DP more than once. It's by invite only, and don't bother asking me how to join. I'm not on it either.

One last bit of advice about the internet. It's impossible to tell who's going to read what you write on the internet, so be careful out there. By the same token, try to be polite to the people you meet. You never know which of them can blow your brain to pieces just as easy as looking at you.

OUR MISSION

When I say "our," in one sense I mean "my," but in another way I'm talking about Defiants everywhere. Your take on this whole issue might

differ from mine, and that's fine. This is how I see things though. Take it as you will.

Our mission is to restore democracy to America. Nothing less will do.

By that, I mean we need to rescind the state of martial law which has strangled the people of this country for the past 35-plus years. We need to repeal the Delta Registration Act or—better yet—have it struck down by the Supreme Court as being completely unconstitutional. We need to kick Kennedy's withered ass out of office and have free elections to put a government of the people, by the people, and for the people back in office.

There are those who advocate using only peaceful means to accomplish this, but most Defiants think we're long past that point. It's up to you to figure out what side you're on.

Check out the Declaration of Independence for a clue on how I feel about the whole thing. "There comes a time in the course of human events," wrote Jefferson, and I think that time has come again.

That time is now.

A CHALLENGE

No matter which side of this debate you come down on—even if you're a Primer lurking around this site—get involved in the discourse. As a thinking human being (assuming you're not a Primer), it's your duty.

The greatest power of the web is the free exchange of ideas. If Kennedy has his way, he'll figure out a way to take that away from us somehow, so make use of it while you still can.

After all, when the time for words is over, with what are we left?

See you in the future.