

ICONS

SUPERPOWERED ROLEPLAYING

OFFICIAL GAME ADVENTURE

THE MASTERMIND AFFAIR

By Morgan Davie



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INTRODUCTION



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INTRODUCTION

THE WAGER

The door is always in a dark corner. At the end of a twisting hallway perhaps, or tucked deep in a miserable alleyway. A brass plate is mounted on the door, and engraved on its face is a winged lion. There is no other name or marker.

If there is an appropriate knock from an appropriate person, the door will open and give access to the ultimate retreat. The club-rooms beyond are filled with velvet armchairs and tasteful artworks. Here, the better sort of criminal can smoke his cigar in peace, safe from costumed do-gooders.

Access to the club comes with certain expectations. Every guest abides by a code of conduct, at risk of losing their membership. However, this is no haven of peace and friendship. The patrons are ambitious, arrogant and often wicked. There are frequent disputes.

So it was last night. A fierce argument erupted between two patrons. They shared a name, and did not wish to share it any longer. Before an audience of bemused onlookers, these rivals agreed to settle the matter once and for all, with a contest. He who wins the contest gains sole and final claim to the title both covet: **Mastermind**.

This pick-up-and-play adventure for **Icons** entangles the heroes in a contest between two villains. The adventure will probably take two evenings of play, but you can complete it in one session by keeping the focus tight and pushing forward the plot, or extend it to three or more sessions by adding in sub-plots and complications.

THE HEROES

The heroes don't choose this adventure – it chooses them. Villains they have never met drag them into a contest that does not concern them. They cannot avoid becoming part of the action.

The adventure assumes that the characters are a team of heroes who fight crime in a city, including any street-level crime they encounter. If they don't fit this template, the GM will need to do a bit of work to make the notes that follow fit the characters smoothly, paying particular attention to the hook used to get the characters involved and the expectation that the characters will rely on each other and communicate with each other as a team.

It helps if the heroes have a base of some kind, secret or not. If you are using some new characters created specially for this adventure, raise the issue by asking the players what their base is like. They are likely to go along with the suggestion and accept that they do have a hero base.

THE VILLAINS

The main villains of the adventure bear similar names, which is precisely the trouble. **MISTER MASTERMIND** and **MONSTER MASTERMIND** both fancy themselves to be the smartest and most cunning villains in the world. At one point they were close allies, but those days are long past, and now they are deadly rivals in every way.

Several secondary villains are also ensnared in this plot. These include **THE CLIQUE** (super-powered mean girls and their tough-guy friend) and **SPEEDSAW**, a fierce and ruthless thug-for-hire. Also of note is one **PROFESSOR HOMINID**, a neutral party who has agreed to serve as arbiter for the contest.

Descriptions for all these villains can be found at the end of the adventure.

Throughout the main body of this adventure, Mister Mastermind will often be referred to simply as “Mister”, and Monster Mastermind as “Monster”.

THE RULES

Mister Mastermind and Monster Mastermind have both agreed to participate in a contest and to abide by the result. The agreement was as follows:

- Both contestants will contribute something of value to the contest “stake”.
- A neutral party will select a group of costumed heroes unknown to both contestants, and arrange for them to take possession of the “stake”.
- Once the heroes have the stake, the neutral party will announce that the contest has begun and advise the contestants which heroes were chosen and where they can be found.
- The first contestant to return to the club-rooms with the complete stake (both contributed parts are needed) shall win the contest.
- The winner of the contest will be given sole claim to the title of “Mastermind”. The loser relinquishes any claim on the title, and can no longer use that word in his name or activities. Furthermore, the loser must acknowledge in public the other’s claim to the title.
- If there is still no winner 48 hours after the contest begins, then a stalemate will be declared, and both contestants will be forced to buy drinks for everyone in the club-rooms for an entire week.

Professor Hominid has chosen the player characters to be the pawns in this game. His attempt to deliver the stake to them makes up **Chapter 1: Trouble on Main Street**. Once he is satisfied that the heroes have taken the bait and retrieved the stake, he will begin the contest and advise the masterminds who the heroes are and where they can be found, setting in motion the events of **Chapter 3: The Devious Intrusion**. Meanwhile, the heroes will try to understand what’s going on in **Chapter 2: The Ruby and the Rod**. The various threads all come together in a dramatic resolution in **Chapter 4: Mastermind Supreme!**

CHAPTER 1: TROUBLE ON MAIN STREET

The villainous **CLIQUE** have learned that there's a valuable prize in a post box, and they show up to claim it. Unfortunately for them, word also reaches the heroes. A pitched battle ensues as the Clique try to secure their prize and escape, and the heroes try to stop anyone from getting hurt.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

The characters cannot avoid being involved in this scene. Although their involvement might appear accidental, it is not. **Professor Hominid**, in his role as arbiter of the wager, has taken it upon himself to ensure the heroes know about this raid. He might tip them off himself, or arrange for their signal devices to pick up a cry for help, or contrive some other reason for the characters to hear about this.

As GM, don't be subtle about how you draw the characters into this scene. You might just start with the characters arriving, and they can decide afterwards how and why they turned up. Whatever method they choose was the result of Professor Hominid's manipulation.

Just hearing about the raid will be enough reason for many heroes to rush to the scene, but some groups might need a bit more persuasion. Hominid might be more crafty and arrange for one of the character's connections to be in the room when the Clique arrive. He might put the prize in a post box that is owned by one of the heroes. He might fake a message from the Clique during the



heroes to step in and stop them. He is extremely resourceful, so you can try almost any approach you like to hook in the characters. And in the massively unlikely event that your team of heroes just don't want to show up to a criminal raid, you can always compel some of their qualities to get them on the scene.

THE SETTING

This scene takes place in a main-street post office building, a three-floor stone building with heavy pillars and small windows. There are three zones of interest here:

- outside the building (ordinary street lined with office buildings and main-street retail)
- the lobby (giving access to the post office proper, and also to the post box area)
- the post box room (behind a security door, with no windows at all)

The distance from the street to the box room is Extended. The lobby to the box room, and the lobby to the street, is Close. This means that an average character can't move all the way from the street to the box room in one panel. (This means the lobby will probably be an important battle zone.)

When adjudicating slam effects, use these three zones as a guideline – for example, someone in the lobby can be slammed out to the street. (Of course, once in the street, a combatant could be slammed further down the street rather than back into the lobby!)

If and when people start interacting with the scenery: exterior walls are Strength 7, the post boxes are Strength 8, and the security wall separating the box area from the lobby is Strength 9.

THE SITUATION

Professor Hominid has concealed a metal wallet containing the stake in a post-office box, and lured the Clique in to grab it. Now the heroes enter the scene to find a heist in progress.

When the characters first arrive, it is just on closing time. Rush hour is just beginning, making it hard to get around by ordinary vehicle. The post office is shutting its doors (keyholders can access their post boxes all night long, but it closes to public access from now).

There are six people inside the post box room:

- DESTINY, who is using her aura to burn through post boxes at random
- SCORCHER, who is using her aura to do the same thing on the other side of the room
- PRINCESS, who is flying around just inside the entrance, asking everyone to hurry it up
- BEEF, who is by the entrance with his hand around the security guard's neck
- the SECURITY GUARD, who is being held by the throat against a wall of boxes
- a LITTLE OLD LADY and her yapping DOG, cowering in the far corner

There's no-one at all in the lobby and the rest of the post office is evacuating fast.

Out on the street, law enforcement has not yet established itself. If the heroes have a bad relationship with the police, then Professor Hominid will have arranged to delay the arrival of law enforcement. If the police and the heroes get on fine, then police will already be arriving and setting up a line. Either way, the situation will still be confused and developing when the heroes get there. The heroes are free to decide whether they immediately go into the post office, or whether they wait to talk to a police officer first.

FINDING OUT WHAT CAME BEFORE

Characters might be able to get some insight into this situation before they arrive. Perhaps they can access security camera footage, or one of the characters uses postcognition or precognition. Here's the chain of events that led up to this situation:

- Security guard checks the clock on the wall.
- Little old lady arrives with yappy dog.
- The Clique arrive on foot, except Destiny who flies in.
- Beef smacks down the guard and scares off other staff.
- A random, unstructured search of the post-office boxes begins immediately – Destiny uses her destructive aura and Scorcher uses her flame aura.

These events can tip off the characters about some of the villain powers. Smart players may realize that if the villains walked in, then they might have escape vehicles concealed nearby. They do have vehicles nearby, as described below.

DEVELOPING THE SCENE

Taking on the Clique

It is likely that the heroes will charge right in and start kicking butt. The Clique weren't expecting super-powered interference on this job, but they won't back down from a fight.

Running the battle

Don't play the Clique as an effective team. They are no good at supporting each other or co-ordinating their efforts. This is a major limitation and if heroes exploit it, the Clique can be easily defeated.

Here's how to get things started:

- Remember, the Extended distance from the street to the box room is too far for most characters to both approach and attack in one panel
- Beef will hold the entrance and Wait for anyone to get close, then punch them in the face. He wants to make it hard for anyone to get in. He'll use the Interposing action if someone tries a ranged attack against one of the girls. He's more interested in protecting the girls than in hurting any of the heroes himself. His concern for the girls challenge will be obvious: "I'm not going to let you hurt my girls!"
- Scorcher will step forward to take on anyone who gets past Beef. Demonstrate her overconfidence challenge right off the bat: "Give me the best you got, it doesn't matter – it won't slow me down!" She might try to Lure the scariest hero into a one-on-one throw-down.
- Princess will fly around in the background, frustrated by this turn of events. She will wait for an opportunity to swoop in and steal someone's powers. Her vanity challenge will be in evidence as she tries to avoid anything that might mess up her looks. "Just leave my hair alone, do you have any idea how long it took to get this right?"
- Destiny will try to find and secure the prize. Demonstrate her mean attitude challenge by having her insult her team-mates for not doing a good enough job. The team-mates won't appreciate this at all, except Beef, who is just pleased that one of his girls is paying him some attention.

Don't worry if some of the Clique are taken out very quickly. This encounter is intended as a warm-up by Professor Hominid, and it doesn't need to last long to play its part.

If the players are relatively new to **Icons**, openly suggest potential Retcons, Power Stunts and opportunities for Determined Effort. Help players figure out the Aspects of the villains and make



sure they know how to use them. Although this fight might take a little while to play out, it isn't particularly dangerous for the heroes.

If the battle lasts longer than expected and the Clique find themselves in a strong position, highlight the Clique's challenges as they start in-fighting, abandoning each other and making foolish decisions. This will give the heroes a renewed chance to triumph.

Finding The Stake

Very early in the fight, a post box is accidentally smashed open and out falls a distinctive item. The item is a large steel wallet, soldered closed along the seam. It lands right in the hands of Destiny or Scorchers.

- This is the stake! Destiny spends one of her Probability Control effects to make this happen.
- It isn't very strong and can be forced open (Strength 3). Note that when you Grab an object you might damage it – this might well tear the box open and send its contents (see below) flying.
- The Clique will try to pass the wallet to Princess. She might swoop over to collect it, or she might stay by the door and have it thrown to her.
- If it is thrown, a hero might try and grab it out of the air. The hero must succeed on a Coordination (3) test to Interpose himself/herself; if the check is failed, then Princess will catch the box. Even if the Interpose test is successful, the hero will only catch the object

on a successful Co-ordination (4) test, and if that is failed then the object spills wildly on to the floor. If and when Princess gets her hands on the box, she will try to leave the battle by flying away.

- The others will try to fight their way out to their two concealed getaway motorcycles with Beef's strength, Scorcher's ability to turn into fire, and the rest of Destiny's good luck.
- If Princess manages a successful getaway, her success is short-lived. Professor Hominid didn't intend to actively involve himself, but he has no choice. As she flies by, he will use a stun gun to blast her from a concealed position. The dazed Princess will be grabbed by the police and will be easily claimed by the heroes, while Professor Hominid will discreetly teleport away..

Negotiating with the Clique

The heroes may decide charging in with intent to smash is not the best course of action. Instead they might take some time to figure out another way to resolve this situation.

If the heroes want to talk, the Clique will happily have Scorcher negotiate. They have hostages, but they genuinely don't want to hurt that little old lady – they're mean, but they're not vicious. They just want to find their prize and clear on out of there.

If pushed, Scorcher will grab the little old lady, hold her tight, and say that if there's any trouble she'll turn on her flame and the lady will get crispy-fried. She's bluffing (Awareness vs. Scorcher's Willpower 4 to realize this). Scorcher doesn't care too much about the little yappy dog, however, so it might not be so lucky.

Whether the heroes actively start talking, or just sit and wait and see what happens, the Clique will follow the same general plan: find the stake, have Princess fly it out, then have the remaining members fight their way out to their two concealed getaway cycles. Probably this will lead to a battle, as described above.

Exceptionally persuasive characters may be able to convince the villains to give up on their raid without actively fighting them. Should this happen, mark it up as a win to the heroes and get on with the adventure. There's plenty of fighting to come!

Getting away

The Clique have two motorcycles stashed nearby.

- The cycles are two extended moves from the lobby.
- Players might Retcon that they have already found and sabotaged the bikes.

If the Clique get to the bikes, a chase seen might eventuate.

- If Movement speeds are very different, then the outcome will be obvious – either the Clique will get away fast, or the pursuing heroes will easily catch them up.
- If speeds are roughly similar, then run the chase as a series of attempts by the villains try to shake off their pursuers. Destiny could use her luck to steer through the crowded machinery of a factory, forcing the heroes to deal with many obstacles. Scorcher could set a billboard on fire so it falls over on the pursuing heroes. Beef could try to make a jump over a barrier wall. If any of the heroes make it through two of these attempts without being shaken off, they can catch up to their prey and force another close confrontation, this time to the finish.

COMPLICATIONS

Police

Outside, the local police form a solid line. Five or six cars, plenty of officers taking cover and watching, others keeping pedestrians clear and blocking off traffic. All of them are expecting trouble and worried that this could go south in a big way – it's never easy when you're dealing with super-powered criminals.

- If any of the heroes have a connection in the police, put that character on the scene, perhaps as the officer in charge. Otherwise, the officer in charge is Captain O'Malley, who takes a cautious approach to this whole affair.
- The police give plenty of opportunities to compel a hero's Bad Luck challenge. A hero's action in battle might damage or destroy a police car, for example, or accidentally humiliate Captain O'Malley.
- Scorchers is the villain least concerned about the police. She might turn into fire and attack the cars themselves, causing them to blow up one page after she strikes – long enough for heroes to put out the blaze or help people get clear of the explosion. Anyone within Close range of an exploding car will suffer 4 damage.

Media

Before too long, reporters and cameras will be on the scene as well.

- If one of the characters has a connection in the media, this is a great time to have them show up. Similarly, anyone with an Enemy in the media might feel the effects here.
- Characters with the Appearance or Bad Luck challenges can find themselves treated poorly by the media – their actions might be misinterpreted, or the camera might zoom in mockingly on their distinctive look.

Personal

The personal lives of the heroes can also flavor this scene.

- If one of the heroes has a connection who is family or a romantic interest, it is easy to add them as another hostage to this scene. Professor Hominid might even have arranged for them to be there in order to make the heroes more likely to get involved.
- If one of the heroes has the Bad Luck quality, then damage to the post boxes might inadvertently damage something important to the character – the deeds to their new house, a family heirloom they were entrusted with, etc.

MOVING TO CHAPTER TWO

After the crisis is resolved, this Chapter moves into a wrap-up phase. This could involve all of the following things. Don't spend more time on any of them than is needed. For example, if the heroes agree to give a statement to the police, you certainly don't need to play out this long, boring process.

- The media will want comments from the heroes
- The police will want statements from the heroes
- The Clique will probably be taken into custody, although some might escape
- The wallet, if still intact, can be opened. It contains two strange things – an incredibly beautiful glowing ruby, and an incredibly high-tech device.
- The police seem happy to let the heroes take the wallet and its contents (this may be influenced by Professor Hominid)

The most important outcome is that the wallet and its contents enter the care of the heroes. Once this is done, Professor Hominid's task is complete, and the mastermind affair will proceed.



CHAPTER 2: THE RUBY AND THE ROD

This sequence is mostly investigative in nature, as the heroes have a chance to find out more about the incident with the Clique and the strange prize they've recovered. The heroes might discover the involvement of the mysterious Mister Mastermind, currently believed dead, and the Monster Mastermind, still at large. Meanwhile, the masterminds are preparing to strike...

The characters begin Chapter 2 when they have possession of the wallet from the post box (or if the wallet has been broken, its contents). It is Professor Hominid's intention that they keep hold of these items. To run Chapter 2, above all else it is important to know what the heroes will do with the ruby and the rod.

Professor Hominid has ensured the items are obviously unusual, hoping that heroes will give them some special treatment and take them away for further inspection. It is likely that the heroes will do exactly this.

Some hero groups may decide this isn't the right approach for them, however. For example, a hero who has connections in a high-tech research lab might take the items there and hand them over for analysis. In such situations, Hominid hopes that the message he's about to send will cause the heroes to take the items back into custody.

MESSAGE OF WARNING

Professor Hominid will deliver an anonymous threat to the heroes to put them on guard before the contest begins.

- The heroes will find themselves visited by a crow. The crow has wires running into its brain, and strange adjustments to its vocal tissue so that it can issue words through its beak.
- The crow will announce: *"We are coming to reclaim our property, and when we have it back we'll destroy you and your whole city!"*
- The crow will then collapse and, shortly thereafter, expire, the stress of these technical modifications being too much for its tiny body.



Some heroes may be motivated and able to save the crow, depending on their interests and powers.

RUNNING AN INVESTIGATION

The heroes may decide to investigate further the circumstances by which these items came into their possession. None of this information is essential to the plot; the rest of the adventure will happen regardless. These investigation scenes serve two purposes:

1. Revealing elements of the backstory to help the players understand more swiftly what is happening later in the adventure.
2. Giving players space to demonstrate the personality and style of their characters and a chance to earn some Determination.

ADVICE ON INVESTIGATIONS

When running these investigation scenes, keep the following advice in mind:

- Investigations can easily bog down and even the most diligent players can end up bored.
- To keep things interesting, try to use the investigation process as a springboard for other kinds of action. Some suggestions are given below. During the investigation, use every opportunity to tie in the Qualities or Challenges of the team and the heroes.
- Don't be stingy with information. If characters look in the right direction, they should be able to find out whatever there is to find out. In fact, the villains in this adventure are expecting the heroes to find much of this information.
- Feel free to use Compels in these scenes – in fact, be generous with them. This is a chance to show off the Challenges of the heroes. Never make information dependent on a compel, however. Issuing a Compel to have a character lose their temper is fine, but they should be able to walk away with the information whether or not they accept the Compel.
- If players want to use Determination during this sequence, for example to Retcon some knowledge, be generous with the information you give out in response. Players should definitely feel that they got some value from their spend of Determination.

PACING THE INVESTIGATION

If you intend to run this adventure in one session, you'll want to compress Chapter 2 as much as you can. Don't throw it out completely, however. Ask the players to generally describe what they want to do for investigation, and then give them all the information that you can justify giving and immediately move on to Chapter 3.

If you are adopting a slower pace, Chapter 2 could give you a complete session all by itself. There is plenty of scope for role-playing and character-based scenes during these events, and these can be explored in a natural and unhurried manner, all the better to contrast with the frenzied action to come.

INFORMATION FROM THE POST OFFICE

There are clues in the Post Office, but not many. Professor Hominid and the two Masterminds have not been anywhere near the Post Office themselves. Hominid's actions here were as follows:

- Accessed Post Office records to find an empty box
- Fashioned a master key that would open any box
- Arranged for the security camera to be disabled for twenty minutes
- Sent a henchman to put the wallet in the empty box

Heroes who want to speak to anyone at the Post Office will be directed to the Manager, one Mrs Plumrose, a short and plain-spoken woman in a green suit. She'll need to be persuaded to help them (Persuading 2, or as determined by the GM, see below). Some characters may be able to

bypass Mrs Plumrose and use various skills or powers to directly access Post Office records and security footage (Intellect 5, computers specialty applies).

- The wallet was found in a post box that is currently unassigned. About one in thirty of the boxes are currently unassigned. This one had been used up until two months ago, when the previous owner passed away.
- Characters with the Computers specialty or a similar power will find signs in the computer records that they were externally accessed the previous morning. The external user sought to identify an unused box. The box containing the wallet was the first result of this query.
- Although there are security cameras in the post box area, there is no sign on the tape of the wallet being put in the post box. Diligent searchers will find that yesterday afternoon, twenty minutes of security footage was corrupted to show the same short sequence over and over again.
- Careful forensic inspection of the post box (Searching 3) will find scuffs and marks in the lock mechanism that indicate the lock was teased open using a generic key, not the correct one.

Interest in this scene

The post office is not the most exciting environment, so don't spend too much time there. To bump up the interest while characters are investigating here, consider the following:

- Have the heroes show off how great they are at being detectives. Give them a lot of scope to narrate events themselves and talk about what they are doing. Hand out the results of the investigation easily, and have NPCs act impressed by the observational skills or computer hacking prowess of the characters.
- Test how the heroes interact with civilians and due process, in the shape of Mrs Plumrose. Do the heroes show her respect? Do they care about privacy rules and post-office regulations? Will they convince her they are trustworthy or circumvent her concerns in some other way?

INFORMATION FROM THE CLIQUE

It is extremely likely that some or all of the Clique are now in custody. They are an obvious source of information about the prize – after all, they were trying to secure it. However, they know very little, and they aren't particularly interested in sharing what they do know (Persuasion tests against Willpower to convince them to talk).

- They heard about the prize by accident. Scorcher and Destiny were talking by cellphone when they seemed to cross wires with another call.
- The call they overheard had two women talking about “a beautiful gemstone worth billions” that was currently sitting in a post box in the Main Street Post Office.
- This was enough for the Clique to decide they wanted to get their hands on this jewel. Post office boxes are easy targets for supervillains, so they decided to raid the site that very day.
- They intended to sell off the gemstone in a different city and use the funds to support their lavish lifestyle.
- Technologically adept heroes might investigate the cellphone records of Scorcher and

Destiny and try to track down the overheard call (Intellect 4). This will reveal they did not “cross wires” after all. The call they heard was a recording that was inserted into their phone call deliberately by another party.

Note that Destiny and Scorchier both have damaging auras that will dismantle ordinary restraints and bars. If they are in police custody, this will be dealt with in some way appropriate to your game. There might be a high-tech power suppressor in the room, or there might be guards outside watching for attempts to disintegrate anything and ready with the sleep gas or fire-suppressant foam if there's trouble.

Interest in this scene

The Clique don't have much information because they are pawns of parties unknown. However, there is lots of scope to add interest to this section of the investigation.

- Access to the Clique may be problematic if the heroes are not on good terms with the police. Simply getting to talk to them might be a challenge in itself. Have characters justify their access and perhaps demand some Persuasion tests.
- The Clique might try some mind games: The women will not hesitate to try to seduce any man who talks to them. These attempts will be massively insincere and full of contempt. They know that they can often get what they want by playing up to men, and a man in a cape is still just another pathetic man.

If seduction isn't working, they'll try other approaches. Scorchier will try to pull her visitor into a fight. Princess will loudly threaten everyone with the damage her Daddy will do to their careers, and will criticize everyone's dress sense. Destiny will be more thoughtful and playful, blithely unconcerned with her current predicament and disparaging about her teammates.

- Beef is much less helpful. He will try to help “his girls” even though they won't spare him a thought. He might try to take the rap for everyone: “It was all my idea! I forced them to do it! It's all my fault!”
- The Clique have obvious limitations and weaknesses as a team. If appropriate, this can provoke questions about inter-character dynamics within the hero team. Perhaps a friendly police officer, or even Destiny herself, could ask these questions of the heroes: Do the heroes co-operate effectively? What motivates and unites them? What would make them stronger as a team? What are their team weaknesses?
- Given some of the other information available, heroes might be able to convince the Clique that they were played for chumps. Very canny heroes might be able to win over the support of the Clique, who hate being manipulated. This support might come in useful in Chapter Four, when the Clique might again get involved in the plot.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CROW

The message crow, which has probably died, is another source of information. Again, it doesn't provide much information by itself but some clues can be gained, particularly from someone who can make sense of the technology.

- Neural circuitry has been plumbed into the crow's mind to control its behavior. Combined with the mechanical throat, it is able to speak a designated message. This kind of strange cybernetic work is a sign of an advanced scientific mind. (Intellect 0)
- The technology used on the crow does not appear to be related to that of the rod. Although both are highly advanced, they display different kinds of logic and unique approaches. (Intellect 2)
- The modified crow has been designed to perish. Whoever invested the time and energy in making it an electronic messenger cared not at all for preserving its life or any of that work. (Intellect 3)
- If a hero can somehow make connection with the bird and communicate with it, it cannot provide much information – its electronic command center overwhelmed its brain, so it didn't notice much after it awoke. It does however remember being grabbed out of a cage by big, hairy hands.

Interest in this scene

The crow will only hold the attention of the heroes for a short time so try to make this small tragedy memorable. The message crow is a tragic and pathetic creature. Play up its innocence, and the horrific way in which it has been used by an unknown villain. Describe its feathers ruffling in the wind while its glassy eyes stare blankly at a gray sky. Mention that it must have been in pain but unable to make itself fly away.



INFORMATION ABOUT THE WALLET

The metal wallet that contains the rod and the ruby can offer a few hints. Inspecting it with good engineering tools, or just some experience with mechanics, might determine the following.

- The wallet was made recently, probably within the last 48 hours. (Intellect 1)
- It was clearly not made to withstand much pressure. It's almost as if it was designed to break open. (Intellect 2)
- If a character has the Postcognition power (or similar) and makes a power test (difficulty 2), they can sense the maker's glee as they make the wallet and ensure it is flawed and unstable. A massive success will reveal a vision of Professor Hominid hard at work, laughing to himself.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROD

The metal rod displays an extremely sophisticated technological understanding. Occasionally blue energy crackles over its surface.

- Close inspection of the surface (Awareness 1) reveals that the rod is inscribed with the name of a ship: the U.S.S. Hardison. Following up on this clue is described below.
- The rod's purpose is unclear. However, it is apparent (Intellect 1) that it is booby-trapped to self-destruct if it is modified or the running charges over its surface are subjected to interference.
- The booby traps can be circumvented through clever use of powers or a very difficult (6) Intellect test, limited by Co-ordination (that is, use the lower of the character's Intellect and Co-ordination scores).
- If the booby traps are removed, detailed analysis (Intellect 4) reveals that it is a device for transmuting electrical energy into cosmic energy. Understanding how to operate the device is even more confusing but a very intelligent character might manage it (Intellect 6).
- The technology used on the rod is different to that used on the crow. (Intellect 2)
- Characters with good investigative resources, or who are mechanical and technological geniuses, will be able to determine that there is a distinctive style at work in the rod's workmanship, like a signature. An appropriate power (such as Postcognition), suitable connections (other hero teams with villain databases) or the use of Retcon might reveal the creator of the rod: Monster Mastermind.

Interest in this scene

Use the rod to force the heroes to show their personalities in terms of being cautious. This is a strange, unknown device that nevertheless promises much fascinating knowledge. The heroes need to choose between cautiously locking down the rod and leaving it untouched, and taking the risk of inspecting it to learn its secrets. Different heroes will see things differently.

Whichever way the heroes are leaning, use an NPC to push in the opposite direction. The police captain is a good character to recommend caution. Captured members of the Clique will argue for risk-taking, although their status as villains might limit their influence! If the interested NPCs are pre-existing connections of the heroes, this will work even better.

It might even be appropriate to Compel a team challenge (such as bickering or in-fighting) to provoke an argument over what to do about the rod.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S.S. HARDISON

The inscription on the Rod naming the U.S.S. Hardison is a fake, deliberately planted to mislead the heroes. Monster added this detail to implicate his opponent. He hopes the heroes will conclude that Mister is behind this affair and will prepare themselves to counter his skills.

- The U.S.S. Hardison was a naval vessel that was recently seized by Mister Mastermind, through mind control of the entire crew. He held the world to ransom but was defeated. In the battle he was lost overboard, and his final fate remains unknown.
- This plot was defeated by the most prominent group of NPC heroes in your game. (If you haven't got such a group in your game, use the Power Team: Joe Warlock, Levitar, Skimmer and Tornado.)
- If the heroes have connections in the navy, or with the NPC heroes who were involved in the U.S.S. Hardison takeover, they can follow up on the rod's existence and its strange powers. While these sources cannot definitively say the rod wasn't on board, but they can say they know nothing about it. A navy connection will say that the "U.S.S. Hardison" inscription is extremely unusual, and she's never seen as navy gear engraved with a ship's name before, making her doubt its authenticity.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RUBY

This slender ruby is about the size of a quarter, and set within a silver circle.

- It is clearly very valuable indeed. Anyone who knows anything about jewelery will be instantly aware of this. The entire Clique will also know this.
- The ruby is infused with magic. Characters with appropriate sensory powers will be able to determine this easily.
- Characters with the Occult specialty will recognize that the ruby is aligned for use in magical works. Such a character can use an Intellect (2) test to determine that the ruby is a power enhancer for mental powers derived from magical source (adding +1 to all such effects).
- Postcognition and other divinatory powers will not work on the ruby, due to its magic load.
- Characters with good investigative resources, or who are knowledgeable about the occult, may determine that a ruby focus is the trademark of one Mister Mastermind. Suitable connections or the use of Retcon might reveal this, or if Mister's name has already come up thanks to Monster's false clue, then it will be easy to connect the ruby to Mister. The ruby might even be the one famously worn on Mister's forehead! (It's not, but don't tell the characters this.)

Interest in this scene

Use the ruby to highlight the position of the heroes in regard to wealth and glamor. Unless it is identified as a magical artifact, the ruby is simply a valuable piece of jewelry. Emphasize to characters in financial straits that this ruby could pay their rent for a year or more. Emphasize to very wealthy characters that this is easily the match of anything they own. It is unlikely to tempt any of the heroes, but it will give them a chance to reveal their character and suggest their personal circumstances. It also lays groundwork for Mister's plans for the ruby.

INFORMATION ABOUT MISTER MASTERMIND

Various clues here suggest that Mister is involved in some way. Once his name has come up, characters can gather information about him through mainstream media sources, and through other channels such as connections in other hero teams or with government tracking agencies. All of the character information about Mister can be learned if the heroes' resources warrant it, but the main pieces of information to share are:

- He uses occult science to control minds, using a ruby on his forehead to increase his powers.
- He has a long history of villainous schemes, usually to install himself as a ruler.
- His most recent plot involved the U.S.S. Hardison (see above).
- His closest connection is with Monster Mastermind, his hideous ally.

Interest in this scene

Use character investigations here to foreshadow Mister's later appearance. Depending on the investigative methods used, you might have the heroes review a case file from some failed plot, including a dramatic photo or video of the villain in a dramatic moment. Build up Mister here so his eventual appearance on the scene can be suitably appreciated.

INFORMATION ABOUT MONSTER MASTERMIND

Monster's involvement may also be signaled to astute characters. Similar investigative methods can be used to divulge more information about him. The main pieces of information are:

- He uses highly advanced technology to accomplish his goals.
- He is an ally of Mister Mastermind, although recent reports suggest they no longer work together.
- His plots generally revolve around the acquisition of new technologies and the demonstration of his genius for all to admire (and fear).

Interest in this scene

As above, use these investigations to foreshadow his later appearance. Ideally, the information shouldn't include any visual detail on Monster's appearance – just bits and pieces, like an out-of-focus photograph of a claw or a silhouetted hunchbacked shape. In this way, his eventual appearance can be a dramatic reveal of his hideous visage.

INFORMATION ABOUT PROFESSOR HOMINID

Some heroes might discover the involvement of Professor Hominid. In the unlikely event that this happens, the characters may determine the following:

- Professor Hominid is apparently immortal
- He claims to have been the first in the world to discover how fire could be made and tamed
- He is, and always has been, a scientist, working enthusiastically in the paradigm of the day. He taught the ancient Egyptians, the classical Greeks, and the renaissance Italians.
- He ultimately respects only power, and over the years he has launched many schemes to remake the world into one more fitting for his view of humanity: a fierce, brutal world where power triumphs.

Interest in this scene

If the heroes uncover Hominid's involvement, use the opportunity to highlight the overall mystery and the nature of genius. Why are three genius villains, all rivals, together involved in this strange affair? Are the heroes smart enough to stand against them? Use an NPC or some other prompt to bring the focus of attention on the intellectual power of the hero team.

COMPLICATIONS FOR CHAPTER TWO

Characters with the Appearance challenge will face this here, as their investigations bring them face-to-face with members of the public.

The Bad Luck challenge might also rear its head in any number of ways, but be careful not to use it to restrict access to any information. Bad luck should always be a complication, not a block in the road.

A character Enemy might decide to get involved in this affair, particularly if the enemy is the sort who might frequent the clubrooms where the wager was made. The enemy could decide to support one or other of the masterminds as an excuse to get at the heroes. Or they might intervene to stop the masterminds, trying to keep their hero for them alone. Or they might make sly connections with their nemesis hero and, out of a twisted sense of courtesy, gently hint at the true nature of what is going on.

Characters with nosy media connections will find them easy to involve in this part. Investigative journalists like nothing better than chasing down leads and working out the truth. This sequence is a great opportunity to give some supporting cast members some time to shine.

CHAPTER 3: THE DEVIOUS INTRUSION

In this chapter, the two masterminds launch their plans to seize the rod and ruby from the heroes. Exactly how this sequence will play out depends heavily on the group of heroes. Each hero team has its own style, and the masterminds will do their best to choose the most effective courses of action. A group with a well-known public base will be approached differently to a team who meet in the sewers or in someone's apartment.

WHAT THE MASTERMINDS KNOW

After Professor Hominid revealed that the heroes are the ones with the rod and ruby, both masterminds began uncovering all the information they could find on the heroes. If the heroes are brand new with no public history, or a super-secret group who try to expunge all records of their existence, this will be a challenge for Mister and Monster. Nevertheless, Professor Hominid has found the heroes somehow, and it is likely both masterminds are resourceful enough to find the same set of information.

As the adventure unfolds, make judgment calls about how much the masterminds have discovered about the heroes. Refer to the section on “running masterminds as villains” for guidance in adjudicating this matter. As GM, your responsibility here is to present these villains as geniuses, and also to deliver a fun challenging time for the players, so make sure the masterminds discover enough to achieve both of these goals.

RUNNING CHAPTER THREE

This part of the adventure is a mix-and-match set of elements that can be assembled to make a dynamic and appropriate chain of events. Each mastermind has several plots to draw upon, and will use as many of them as possible, plus others you might add to the mix or improvise. Choose events and scenes that seem dramatic and interesting to you. When deciding which events to use when, keep in mind the specific nature of the hero team and their strengths and weaknesses.

Hand out plenty of Determination in this sequence. The adventure is written so that these events will get out of the characters' control. The players should feel that their heroes are indeed up against masterminds. There are notes at the end of the adventure about playing mastermind villains in **Icons**, and now is the time to ensure you are ready to use that advice.

WHEN PLOTS GO AWRY

Things will go wrong. The masterminds know this – they expect it, in fact. They wouldn't be very good masterminds if they weren't ready with contingency plans.

Represent contingency plans with Retcons. “Pay” for each Retcon by adding a point of Determination to the team pool. The planning genius of the masterminds is represented in the game by countering whatever maneuvers the heroes try in Chapter Four, and passing Determination to the heroes in compensation.

The point of Chapter Three is that everything keeps getting worse for the heroes. Your goal is to stop them from resolving any of these situations early, with the result that more and more unsolved problems will build up. To achieve this, be forthright in distracting, delaying and deterring any character actions that might resolve a situation early.

Compels can be an excellent tool to achieve this and ensure the heroes cannot resolve any of their problems swiftly. Compels provide a mechanical way to ensure that the situation builds up towards a dramatic climax. Try to put as many plans into play as possible before moving on to Chapter Four.

Note also that this generosity with Determination will not carry on into Chapter Four. When Chapter 4 is in play, villainous contingency plans stop being so effective, and challenges don't interfere with the heroes quite so much. In Chapter 4 they should be spending the Determination they've earned, so don't hold back on letting them earn it here in Chapter 3.

MISTER MASTERMIND'S PLANS

Mister's approach relies on Mind Control of a variety of people – members of the Clique, connections of the heroes, and ultimately, if all goes well, one of the heroes directly. He intends not to set foot near the hero base himself, but to work the other characters and circumstances like a puppet master to get the prizes out.

CALLING ON THE CLIQUE

The Clique catch a break as Mister Mastermind puts them to work.

Depending on what has happened to the Clique, Mister might well put them to work.

- If some members are being held by ordinary police, then it will be a simple matter for Mister to use his mind control powers to free them.
- If any Clique members are being held by a special supers holding facility (something previously established in your game, or even by the heroes themselves) then they will probably be left alone there. They aren't worth enough to Mister to go to the trouble of freeing them from such a place.
- If some members are at large, then Mister will use his networks to find and contact them and arrange a meeting.

When he has contact with the Clique, he will ask them to join him for revenge on the heroes and on Monster Mastermind, who Mister will claim was behind the set-up: "Monster Mastermind was just using you to pick up the rod for him. He suspected that the heroes were watching it, and he didn't want to face them, so he manipulated you into doing his dirty work." If there are Clique members held prisoner by the heroes, then freeing them is an additional motivator.

The Clique will agree to this deal unless the heroes have already complicated matters, for example by talking to the imprisoned members and portraying a different situation. In these circumstances, Mister will simply use his mind control powers on the Clique members. This will work, but it means that if the heroes can break this mental hold, the Clique will immediately turn against Mister.

Mister will send the Clique to the heroes, to ambush them in their base. He uses his magic to allow one of them (preferably Destiny, if she is available) to "home in" on the ruby, wherever it is. He asks for the ruby and rod to be delivered to him, and in return he'll ensure that their criminal records are expunged.

Mister doesn't expect that the Clique will be able to retrieve these items, but he does expect they will cause enough distraction that another of his plots will come to fruition.

A THREATENED FRIEND

A connection of the heroes approaches them for help, but the connection is already a puppet of Mister Mastermind.

This plan requires that a hero has a connection who knows his heroic identity (a connection who only knows the civilian identity will not be of use) and whose link to the hero has been found by Mister. Any obvious public connection (e.g. a nosy reporter) will be easy for Mister to locate, but any NPC who has been seen in public with a hero can be considered fair game for this gambit.

- A connection of the heroes calls them, tearful and upset, claiming to have had a terrifying experience.
- The connection claims that they were approached by a hideous monster (the description matches Monster) who said that the heroes have to surrender the rod and ruby or he would kill them all, starting with the connection.
- The connection says that the monster said for the heroes to go to a city bridge to parley. Once there, the monster will make himself known. [This is a complete lie to get the heroes out of their base. There is nothing at all at the bridge. However, Mister might use this as an

opportunity to launch another plan – see below.]

- The connection desperately wants to be somewhere safe. Without asking directly, the connection will try to gain access to the hero team's secure base of operations.
- Once within the base (and hopefully with the heroes off to the bridge) the connection will try to steal the rod and ruby and then make an escape, delivering the prize to Mister.

The connection is under Mister's Mind Control. They retain their personality and self-hood but they cannot resist the instructions to plant this false story and steal the ruby and rod.

This plan can use more than one connection, if appropriate. Mister will not hesitate to load up the hero base with lots of these controlled minions, who will co-operate in service to Mister even if they've never met previously.

Freeing an NPC from Mister Mastermind's control

Under ordinary circumstances, do not give controlled NPCs a chance to break free of Mister's power.

If a hero determines that an NPC is mind-controlled, they can try to snap them out of it. If the NPC is clearly acting directly against their true personality (for example, by betraying their love interest), there is a chance that the control might be broken by a character who tries to persuade them to resist the control. A hero can also try to break the control by appealing to something else, like the connection's emotions, or some shared history. For these techniques it is appropriate for the player to spend a point of Determination.

Resolve these attempts to break control using a Willpower (Persuading) test against a difficulty of Mister's Mind Control score (7). Give this test a +2 if the connection is clearly acting directly against their personality. If the first attempt to free the connection fails, a second attempt can only be made by using Determined Effort.

CONTROLLING A HERO

Mister Mastermind cuts out the middle-men and tries to get the heroes to do his bidding.

Mister knows success will be in his grasp if he can just get one of the heroes to fall under his spell. There isn't much point going to the trouble of breaking into the hero base when he can just wait for a hero to come outside and fall under his control.

Seizing control

Preferably, Mister will try this plot when a hero is alone. Depending on how many other plots he has going, he might also try it when heroes are available but in a group. If any of the heroes go out to the bridge expecting to parley with Monster, or otherwise leave the safety of their base, Mister might take the opportunity to work his mind-control magic.

- Mister, disguised as a destitute and homeless man, will make himself visible to the heroes on a high point (window ledge, bridge support, or the like).
- He wavers drunkenly on the edge, shouting obscenities at the sky, saying he's just seen "the monstrous face of death itself" and readying himself to leap.
- If he knows one of the heroes can fly, he will actually jump off the ledge, counting on them coming to rescue him. If they don't, he will still come to a safe ending, having chosen his high point carefully so he can swing on flagpoles, crash through awnings, or land on a passing trash scow to land unharmed.
- All of this is simply to win an opportunity to talk to a hero alone, and with the hero's guard down so he can more easily mentally control them. A hero who does not describe taking precautions against the disguised Mister will make the Willpower test against his Mind Control power at a -2 penalty.

- If this contrivance doesn't work, Mister might simply turn his mind control powers towards the heroes and use them directly. This is riskier, as his cover can easily be blown, and getting away from a team of heroes is not always easy. Should it come to that, allow Mister to have a getaway route planned but award some Team Determination to acknowledge this Retcon.

You might decide to establish Mister's control using notes or a secret meeting so it is a surprise to the other players, but it will probably be more fun for everyone if this is played out in front of the room so that all the players know that one of the characters is under a mind-control effect.

When Mister is face-to-face with a hero, take the opportunity to demonstrate his two major challenges, the ruby of Khat-Apoor on his head that is the focus for all his powers, and the personal challenge that he believes he is born to rule the world (he is not shy about telling people this).

Using the hero

If a hero falls under Mister's control, he will instruct them that Monster is coming to steal the ruby and the rod, and that they should be delivered to Mister immediately for safekeeping. No mention of this should be made to anyone else, as they might be spies for Monster! However, the hero is permitted to warn his or her team-mates to prepare for Monster's arrival.

Mister tries not to violate any of the hero's aspects. Once he sends the hero off to do his bidding, he cannot maintain the control or change the hero's orders, so he hopes the general instruction of "get me the ruby and rod" will be enough to see him through.

Most importantly during this sequence, pay close attention to the player of the controlled character. Taking control away from a player can be a really negative experience for some people. If the player is not enjoying being subjected to mind control, then give them an opportunity to escape at the earliest opportunity. Suggest to the other players that their characters notice the hero behaving oddly, or have Mister unwittingly violate one of the hero's aspects. An even better solution is to advise the hero that they can spend a Determination to Retcon that they were never controlled at all, and are just going along with the villain to fool them into making a mistake.

On the other hand, if the player is enjoying the challenges of being mind-controlled, then be shameless about trying to keep them under Mister's influence. Compel any Challenges that can justify maintaining the control, such as psychological weaknesses or rivalries with other heroes. Hero vs. hero battles are a long tradition in supers comics, and you might be able to build up to such a contest here.



THE FASCINATING RUBY

The captured ruby has its own method of getting free.

Mister has loaded up the ruby with a magical load that activates several hours after it is captured. The ruby wants to be worn, and starts quietly emitting magical signals that entice those nearby to do exactly that.

The ruby has two powers:

- Mental Detection 5, which kicks in two or more hours after it is captured. The ruby quietly takes a reading off all people nearby, evaluating their mental scores. Characters who experience this notice a flash of light from the ruby and understand that it is evaluating their Intellect, Awareness and Willpower scores. They can try to resist if they choose using their own Willpower. If they have the Mind Shield power then this automatically resists the scan.
- Mind Control 5, which kicks in four or more hours after it is captured. The ruby selects a target whose Willpower is 4 or less and, when they are in sight of the ruby, it tries to take control of them. The ruby does not have a mind of its own, so its control is very crude. Victims of the mind control put the ruby against their forehead (where it stays) and talk in a monotone as they try to walk out with the ruby, and perhaps with the rod as well.

Note that a mind control attempt that fails is immediately recognizable by the target as a mind control attempt. A failed attempt will likely result in the ruby being locked in a lead-lined box or some other careful secure place. The ruby will desperately continue attempting to seize control of anyone in range once its mind control power is revealed. It can only control one person at a time.



MONSTER MASTERMIND'S PLANS

Monster has a more direct, if no less devious, approach. He relies on technology, infiltrating the hero base with a range of robotic servants and then entering himself. He uses chemicals and devices to shut down security and give the heroes plenty more to worry about. He has also arranged a significant distraction, in the form of thug-for-hire SPEEDSAW, a tough villain who races through the streets in a suit made of chainsaws.

ENTER THE ROBOTS

Monster Mastermind's robot minions attempt to infiltrate the base.

Monster Mastermind's first action is to deploy his robotic minions to infiltrate the heroic base. Crabicon, Batulac and Centropede will use their powers of flight, burrowing and wall-crawling to find a way into the base. As they go, Batulac and Centropede will evaluate the defenses of the base and find ways in and around them.

Depending on the nature of the base, you might decide to have this infiltration be automatically successful and allow the robots to position themselves within the base. Otherwise, make a secret test on behalf of the hero who devised the base defenses or the one who would typically maintain them. This will usually be a test of Intellect (perhaps aided by the Electronics specialty). The difficulty is 5 as the two detection robots combine their powers to try and infiltrate effectively. If this test is successful, the heroes are alerted to the robot incursion and can investigate as the robots scatter into the base. If the test is failed, then the robots are not detected at this stage.

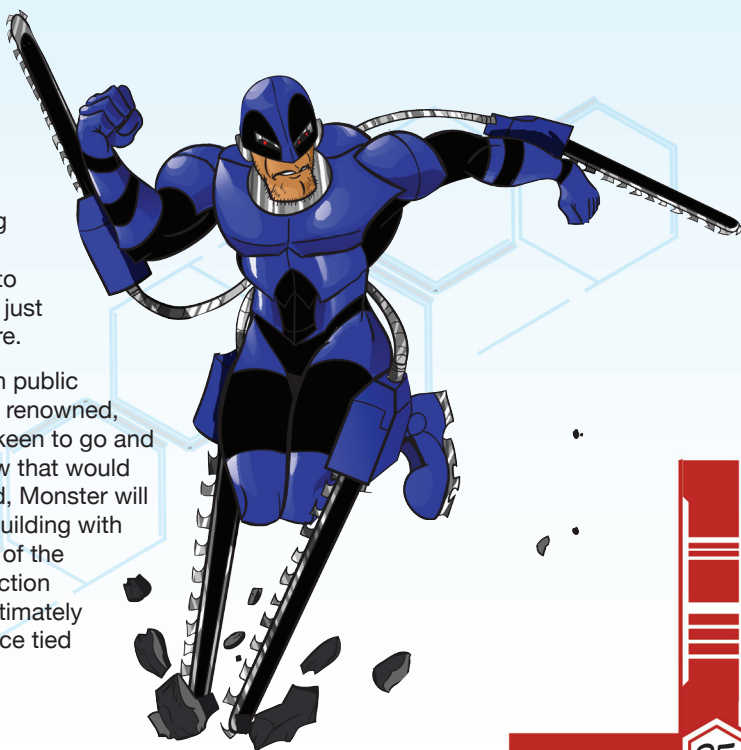
If the robots make it into the base, they will immediately start finding a way to circumvent any security systems to help Monster gain access. This might involve pulling panels off walls and burning connections, releasing locks and deactivating surveillance monitors.

SPEEDSAW RUNS WILD

A brutal thug-for-hire turns up at the doorstep, tearing up everything in sight.

In parallel with the attempted infiltration by the robots, Monster will send a hired mercenary to cause a distraction.

- If the hero base is concealed, or the heroes are relatively unknown, then Monster has has openly approached Speedsaw and asked him to wreck the building containing (or closest to) the hero base. Speedsaw will back himself to take down the rookies, or he just won't expect them to be there.
- If the hero base is a known public landmark and the heroes are renowned, then Speedsaw may not be keen to go and tear it up, because he'd know that would be asking for trouble. Instead, Monster will ask Speedsaw to tear up a building with a connection to one or more of the heroes. It should be a connection that Monster might have legitimately discovered, rather than a place tied to the hero only in secret.



Speedsaw is not a subtle operator. He makes a lot of noise and goes about the destruction in a matter-of-fact way, occasionally becoming gleeful when he wrecks something particularly cool like a public sculpture, or slices a car clean in half. Demonstrate his challenges through description: remark on his distinctive appearance and describe his actions as being slightly out of control to indicate that he clearly doesn't have full command over his suit's technology.

He is not expecting trouble, but an experienced mercenary like Speedsaw is always careful. Speedsaw will make sure to start by putting some innocent people in the middle of the mayhem. He finds a taxi and tears out the tires with his saws. The taxi will veer off the road and crash into the site of Speedsaw's rampage. Speedsaw will chainsaw up the door mechanisms to trap the driver and two female passengers inside. He knows that these people are useful to him as a distraction, especially if he tries to make a getaway.

When he is confronted by the heroes, he will evaluate his odds. He will back himself to take out (or at least intimidate) a bunch of greenhorns, but he will not hesitate to run for it if he thinks he is in trouble. Monster doesn't need him to stay to the bitter end, and he serves Monster's needs (and those of the plot) just by being on the scene and giving the heroes one more problem to juggle.

MONSTER MOVES INSIDE

The brazen villain steps boldly into the most dangerous place to be.

Monster is a resourceful genius, and even if his robots were found and destroyed he will use the knowledge gained from them to gain access to the hero base.

He immediately sets about accessing the rod and the ruby. His sensor arrays can easily determine where the rod is being kept, and he cautiously makes his way through the base to reach it. This is resolved with a series of secret tests, likely tests of Intellect. If any of these tests are failed, Monster's intrusion will be discovered. You might like to modify the difficulties given to reflect any special precautions taken by the heroes.

- For Monster's initial entrance to the base, the difficulty will be 9 (8 + 1 for Monster's specialties). If this fails, Monster makes it into the base undetected.
- Make another secret test to reflect Monster's attempts to locate the hiding place of the rod. This will be difficulty 8. If this fails, Monster will find the repository undetected.
- Make a third secret Intellect test to reflect Monster's attempts to retrieve the rod without raising the alarm.
- If the ruby is with the rod, then Monster takes both items. If the ruby is separately kept, repeat the last two secret tests.

If it looks like Monster is going to make his getaway undetected, it is time for Professor Hominid to make things more difficult for the would-be masterminds. Move on to the ending of Chapter 3!



FACING THE MONSTER

The hideous villain is not what he seems...

Monster is a technological wizard and can therefore use devices to achieve a wide variety of effects. However, his primary tool is a holograph projector that makes three-dimensional images visible to cameras and the naked eye. If his intrusion is discovered, or if he would be well-served by adding more confusion to the pot, he will use his holocaster to launch a number of tiny holographic projectors. These will fly out through the base and unleash a blizzard of confusing illusions such as:

- an enemy of the heroes
- a connection of the heroes, in trouble from a menacing robot
- Mister Mastermind
- one of the heroes apparently betraying the others
- something that targets the Psychological challenge of a character, like a snake if the character is afraid of snakes (this only if Monster might reasonably have discovered this challenge)

These illusions will be used to cover the actions of Monster and his minions, as well as simply to confuse matters by making it seem like there is someone in a room that is actually empty.

Monster will also be accompanied by any of his robotic minions who remain, and these will defend and protect the bestial brainiac to the extreme of their ability. If and when the heroes encounter Monster, demonstrate his challenges: give his hideous appearance a dramatic reveal, then describe the brain case in particular. Have Monster lose his temper completely when something goes awry.

ENDING CHAPTER THREE

Spend Chapter 3 putting as many pieces on the board as possible. When you think you've got as much in play as you can manage, it's time to start resolving things by moving on to Chapter 4, using the next event.

By this time, the following things might be going on:

- one or more connections are in the base, under Mister's control
- one or more of Monster's robots are secreted within the base
- one of the heroes is under Mister's control
- the ruby has influenced another of the heroes
- the Clique have launched an attack on the hero base
- Speedsaw is terrorizing civilians in the vicinity of the base
- Monster has entered the base himself

The situation is saturated and the heroes are over-stretched. It's time to start wrapping things up.

PROFESSOR HOMINID STIRS THE POT

Initiate the shift from Chapter 3 to Chapter 4 with this event.

Professor Hominid decides to bring the heroes up to speed on what's going on. Neither Mister nor Monster were expecting this, and they won't be pleased by Hominid's interference. Hominid couldn't care less, he just wants everyone to know what's going on.

This is a video message. It can be delivered in multiple ways. Hominid might seize control of any video screens in the hero base, or send in a lizard with an image projector. The video shows a cro-magnon in a lab coat, seated in a well-upholstered chair and smoking a pipe. He says:

"It is I, Professor Hominid, discoverer of fire, inventor of the wheel, and genius behind every technological innovation in the history of mankind.

You are caught in a contest between the sinister sovereign of souls, Mister Mastermind, and the beast with the beautiful mind, Monster Mastermind. They both want the ruby and the rod. This contest will decide who is the true Mastermind.

I'm here to add a small complication. I've used neutronic energy to make the ruby and rod share a resonance signature. As of now, if these items cannot see each other for more than ninety seconds, then they'll both erupt in plasma explosions. Farewell, city blocks!

Enjoy your battle, all of you. And may the best mastermind win."

Hominid speaks the truth. He has overlaid a super-science energy signature on to both items, and their resonance is activated as he talks – they will briefly glow blue as this happens. This extra complication from the Professor is to ensure that the two Masterminds can't just take one prize each and call it even, they must try and claim both.

Without intervention the lizard will shortly expire, just as the crow did before it.



CHAPTER 4: MASTERMIND SUPREME!

The heroes are up against it now, with problems erupting on all sides and a threat of massive explosion. As everything they have is seized by Monster, and everyone they know is controlled by Mister, they are forced to dig deep and fight back.

MANAGING THE MADNESS

At this stage of the adventure there is a lot going on. To help manage everything, you'll want to be fairly strict about the order in which characters act. The conflict rules suggest that conflicts begin with the panels of everyone on one side, with the panels of everyone on the other side following. This pattern repeats every page.

For this adventure, with more than two sides involved, it is recommended that on each page, panels happen in the following order:

- Mister and any mind-controlled people.
- Monster, Speedsaw and the robot minions.
- The heroes.
- The Clique (if present).

This order is a recommendation, not an absolute rule. Nevertheless, use this order unless there's a clear reason not to.

SIDE: MISTER MASTERMIND

Non-super pawns of Mister: they will try to find and retrieve the ruby and rod.

Super pawn of Mister: they act with this side now. They will either fight anyone who is directly threatening Mister, or they will try to retrieve the ruby and rod. If Monster is in a position where he might win, they will confront him directly. As previously noted, if the player is not enjoying this, give them an opportunity to be free of control once again.

Mister: his priorities are, in order: get out of harms way, try to put heroes under his control, put any normals who might be useful under his control, seize the items, chase his extra goal.

SIDE: MONSTER MASTERMIND

The robots: The three minion robots will, firstly, try to find and retrieve the ruby and the rod. Secondly, they will cause all kinds of mechanical trouble: they will cut lighting boards dropping the base into darkness, sever lift cables so people are stuck within, and attack anyone who comes near.

Speedsaw: Speedsaw will continue to tear up the street for the duration of this battle. If heroes rise to the bait and confront him, then he will battle them until he is victorious or he feels he can no longer win.

Monster: He will try to stay out trouble while moving directly to the rod and ruby to take them away. He is ready to take hostages with his claw, reverse engineer technology that stalls him, and use his hologram projector to confuse and baffle any heroes he might meet. (At this climactic stage, be bold about using hero aspects as inspiration for the holograms, for example of the character's unrequited love or sadly deceased partner.)



SIDE: THE CLIQUE

Scorcher and Beef: If they are working with Mister, they will attack any of the heroes they encounter, and Monster too if he's there. If they defeat all the heroes they can find, they will retrieve the ruby and the rod for Mister.

Destiny and Princess: Regardless of how they got there, they are most interested in retrieving any pretty or valuable things for themselves, and in settling any personal scores with heroes who humiliated them earlier.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS: THE ROD & THE RUBY

Professor Hominid has made the rod and ruby explosive threats.

- If the rod and the ruby are outside of visual range of each other, they both become unstable.
- On the fourth page of continuous instability, they will both channel extradimensional energy into huge plasma explosions (Blast 10).

If the rod and ruby are apart when they become active, there will probably be a mad rush by the heroes to bring them together.

Mister and Monster may not have witnessed Hominid's message, in which case they will not know what the glow on the rod means and will not understand why they should bring the items together. However, they are both masterminds and will realize that something is wrong. They will both spend actions to avoid disaster – Monster will envelop an item in a stasis field, and Master will use mind control to stop communication with the plasma dimension, but both these solutions are temporary and can only buy them time.

If the explosion is about to happen, the heroes will be forced to come up with ways to stop or minimize the danger.

- "Defusing" the explosion trap is possible but very challenging (Intellect 6). Combining abilities with one of the masterminds is possible; give the hero a +1 bonus if they get a mastermind's help. This will stop any explosion from happening.
- The effect of the explosions can be restricted by putting the items in heavy vaults or high above the atmosphere, or by siphoning off the explosive energy into another dimension. This kind of trick is likely to be a power stunt, but characters might come up with a good approach that fits comfortably within their normal powers.
- The trigger event can also be deferred in some way. The masterminds are both capable of doing this temporarily, as discussed above. Some other way could be found to make the explosion never trigger – perhaps the items can somehow be tricked into believing they are close together when really they aren't? Again, player ingenuity will provide responses here.

If the players are stuck on how to stop the explosions, suggest to them that they spend a point of Determination and then tell you how the explosions could be prevented from taking place (as a Retcon). They will still have to carry out the solution they devise, but they can be reminded that they do have the power to influence and resolve this situation.

Bringing the items together

A further wrinkle in the scenario might happen if one of the heroes tries to bring the rod and ruby together to make something new, a combined super-item that affects both science and magic. Neither mastermind will come up with this idea, as they are both too locked in their own paradigms and rivalry, but a hero might. Give the hero the ability to spend Determination in a Retcon to announce what the combined item might do. This act should signal the climax of the scenario, and force final resolution for everyone.

If Monster gets the ruby

If Monster gets his hands on the ruby, Mister has a special surprise waiting. If and when Mister



sees Monster with the ruby, he will use it as a focus point in an attempt to mentally control Monster. The ruby, used as a focus, has the effect of negating Monster's Mental Resistance specialty (the Psyche Booster chip), rendering Monster vulnerable to a takeover by Mister.

This conflict should happen in sight of the heroes, so they can intervene or take advantage of the distracted state of both villains. If heroes do not intervene, then Monster ends up controlled by Mister. If the heroes try to intervene, then have them test against Mister's power score of 7 to disrupt the controlling effect.

If he is controlled, Monster will be instructed to surrender the items to Mister. Unless heroes are pressing him, Mister will then be unable to resist taking advantage of the moment to have

Monster announce “you are the superior mastermind”, an act that goes directly against Monster’s Motivation aspect, forcing another test as above. This might lead to Monster breaking the control of Mister.

Furthermore, if Monster is controlled, his own fail-safes come into action. After one page, his robots (presuming they are still functional) recognize that their master is incapacitated. On the next page they move to rescue him by attacking Mister and giving Monster a painful electric shock that automatically brings him out of the control.

If Mister gets the rod

If Mister gets hold of the rod, he is in for a shock – literally. The rod will detect his voice pattern or biological readings from his skin or breath, and determine that it is being held by him. Then it will use a hidden power to Paralyze Mister for one page. Ideally this effect should take place within sight of one or more of the heroes. This is only a temporary respite, but it is enough to give Monster or one of his robots a chance to recover the rod.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS: THE OTHER VILLAINS

Speedsaw in a frenzy

Speedsaw was introduced in Chapter 3 as a distraction and a fly in the ointment, but in this Chapter he can take on a much more direct role in the mastermind contest. This is because Monster Mastermind has worked out how to control Speedsaw’s suit remotely!

- If Monster is in trouble, he can use his remote control to summon Speedsaw and force him to intervene on Monster’s behalf.
- If Mister gets the rod and the ruby, Speedsaw can be directed into hunting and attacking him. Because Monster controls the suit, it won’t matter if Mister seizes control of Speedsaw’s mind.
- If a distraction is needed, Speedsaw can be dragged into an appropriate position and pushed into an extreme frenzy of destruction that the heroes don’t dare ignore.

Speedsaw will not be pleased by this chain of events and will resent losing control. There is no chance he’ll switch sides to work with the heroes however, but he might well leave the battle or at least stand aside as Monster falls, should the remote control over his suit be disrupted somehow.

The Clique come loose

The Clique are foils and spoilers to be used in this Chapter however suits the narrative. Their high level of self-regard and self-interest mean they can be turned in any direction as the situation unfolds. It is entirely possible that they could be talked over to the side of the heroes during the course of this battle, in which case Monster and Mister both become fair game.

Ultimately, the Clique want to avoid being arrested. If any of their number end up caught or stopped, the others will try their best to free them and get out of there. They aren’t interested in going back to jail if they can avoid it.

Of course, the Clique is also riven with dissent, and heroes can exploit this to turn the Clique on itself. If these villains can be turned against each other, then they might be left to fight it out amongst themselves in the background while the main heroes and villains engage in the real battle.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS: THE GREATEST PRIZE

Monster's extra goal

To add another layer of complication here – if one is needed! – Monster Mastermind can have an additional goal. In his investigations into the heroes he recognizes that they have something he wants. For example, if one of the heroes is an alien or a super-scientist, then their new technology includes something Monster is eager to claim for himself. During this contest, Monster also has the goal of stealing this material or object, and destroying any remnants he can't take.

In fact, it is possible to use Retcon (rewarding the team Determination pool accordingly) to have Monster Mastermind recognize something about the heroes and their resources that hasn't yet been revealed. Perhaps they are sitting on some ancient Atlantean technology but don't know how to unlock it? Perhaps they have stumbled upon the Infinity Mask without being aware of its galaxy-spanning power? Monster knows that there is a far greater prize to be had than the title of Mastermind, and he will try to claim this while also winning the contest.

Mister's extra goal

Choose one of the heroes with an unusual power, like dimensional travel, or a power that runs on an atypical energy, like a Blast described as "Tetragon Force". The power could be innate or could be in a device. Mister has surmised that this power could be used to "supercharge" his own abilities.

If this extra goal is in play, Mister will try to get into a position where he can "touch" this power source. This is treated as a special power stunt.

- Mister must be at Close range or nearer to attempt this to "touch" the source..
- The character can attempt to resist or block Mister's attempt to "touch" the power source with an appropriate test (probably a power test) at difficulty 5.
- Once Mister is "connected", his Willpower and Mind Control scores increase by 1 each page the connection is maintained. The victim's Power score is drained by 1.
- While "connected" and for three pages thereafter, Mister gains the power Blast 5 using the energy he has liberated.
- Mister doesn't need to use any actions to maintain the connection – he can do whatever else he likes.
- The connection cannot be broken by the victim except through a Determined Effort.
- If and when the connection is broken, the scores remain at their changed levels for the next three pages and then start to revert to normal, shifting back one point per page.

Mister will be delighted to access this greater power, and as his mind expands with this new energy he will profess to gaining deep insight into the nature of reality and the fragile minds of men. He will still be most interested in crushing Monster for all time, however. His ego is too strong for him to ignore, even as he ascends to a higher plane of being!

COMPLICATIONS FOR CHAPTER FOUR

There are probably complications enough in this sequence, but Bad Luck, Personal and Weakness challenges can easily be pulled in to give the heroes more Determination, and if there are connections in the base then this Quality can be compelled as well.

WRAPPING UP

Chapter 4 ends when the masterminds have run out of options, or when one of them has won and the other cannot stop them, at which point they'll end the fight and flee. Keep this sequence going as long as it remains fun for the players. There is so much going on that it is possible to wrap things up quickly by having various plans interact – if Monster's robot minions interfere with Master's controlled connections, then both those side issues could be resolved in one stroke.

Returning to the club-rooms

The terms of the wager have it that victory comes by returning to the club-rooms with the prize. Enterprising heroes might find a way to steal after a mastermind or otherwise follow the trail back to the club-rooms. Whether this can succeed should be a GM decision.

- The club-rooms are the ultimate secure bolt-hole, and are extremely well-protected. Magic and technology will both be at work protecting the integrity of the rooms. While the door to the club-rooms might be there for a villain, it will just be an ordinary door when the hero reaches it, with no engraving and no club on the other side.
- Alternatively, the villain might be prevented from accessing the club-rooms if they are being followed. The potential mastermind could be stuck in a corridor, ranting about their victory, unable to understand why they can't gain access to the club.
- Or, the hero could be successful and could discover the club and even attempt to infiltrate it. However, this puts the onus on the GM to populate it with a broad assortment of villains and security measures.

It is safest to assume that any return to the club-rooms happens off-stage. The winner, should there be one, is acknowledged by those present. Henceforth, the villainous community will insist that the loser give up all right to the mastermind name. The loser might continue to perpetrate villainous acts, but under a new name.

Fate of the prize

The ruby and the rod, if not claimed by one or other of the villains, and not destroyed in a plasma explosion, might pass into the hands of the heroes and stay there. Use these items as trophies of victory, or as springboards to further adventures – the cosmic rod reaches into other dimensions, and the ruby is of interest to mystic powers, and holding either of them will draw attention from somewhere untoward before too long.

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ABILITIES

Ability	Value
PROWESS	5
COORDINATION	4
STRENGTH	3
INTELLECT	8
AWARENESS	6
WILLPOWER	7

HEIGHT: 6'1 WEIGHT: 185
FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS

Power	Value
Mind Control	6
Mind Shield	6

SPECIALTIES

- Art (sculpture)
- Business
- Investigation
- Occult

CHALLENGES

PERSONAL - BORN TO RULE, PROUD TO TALK
WEAKNESS - MYSTIC RUBY FOCUSES POWER

STAMINA
9

A full-body illustration of the character Mr. T. He is bald, smiling, and wearing a black and red suit with a large red 'M' on the chest. He has a gold gauntlet on his left arm and is posing with his right hand raised.

PERSONAL - BORN TO RULE, PROUD TO TALK
WEAKNESS - MYSTIC RUBY FOCUSES POWER

Mister, real name Ludwig Maurer, was born in the U.S.A. to a large and poor family. His father ran a small shop repairing shoes and making keys, enough to barely keep the family alive. Maurer was determined to be successful, and studied very hard, proving to be a very successful student. However, his higher education went awry as he turned his attentions to mystical and occult knowledge. He never graduated, exploring his own pathways to knowledge, and balancing cutting-edge science with esoteric knowledge. As his power grew, so did his ego, and finally he alienated his family with his arrogance and amorality. Adrift from his moral anchors, he turned fully to villainy,

pursuing his strange and selfish ends without care for the lesser beings who suffered in his wake.

He traveled the world for years, and on one journey bested in mental combat the guru who commanded a mystical ruby. With this focus stone in his hands, he became Mister Mastermind, the Sinister Sovereign of Souls! His powers of mental control were so acute that he could bend almost anyone to his will. His fierce intellect had only grown over the years, and he was now a fearsome foe. In this guise, Mister had his first clashes with heroes who opposed his attempts to become the Emperor of New Amsterdam or the King of the Moon.

Recently Mister's attempt to hold the world to ransom from an aircraft carrier equipped with nuclear bombs was thwarted. Mister was lost overboard in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. He is widely believed dead.

MONSTER MASTERMIND



QUALITIES

THE BEAST WITH THE BEAUTIFUL MIND
MOTIVATION: PROVE HIS INTELLECT

ABILITIES										
PROWESS	4									
COORDINATION	4									
STRENGTH	8									
INTELLECT	8									
AWARENESS	8									
WILLPOWER	6									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

HEIGHT: 6'8 WEIGHT: 345
FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS										
Strike (off-hand claw)										
Invulnerability (armor)										
Illusion Device (Holocaster)										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

SPECIALTIES										
Computers										
Electronics										
Languages										
Mental Resistance										

STAMINA
14

CHALLENGES

APPEARANCE - HIDEOUS HULKING MONSTROSITY
PERSONAL - TEMPER AS FOUL AS HIS APPEARANCE
WEAKNESS - BRAIN CASE IS VULNERABLE

Before he became the villainous Mister Mastermind, Ludwig Maurer's best friend was also his greatest rival. As they studied together, Farraday Lang was the only man who could match Maurer's insight and ability. They shared many breakthroughs, but Lang shied away as Maurer's research took him down more ruthless and unusual paths. Lang stayed in school, became a distinguished academic, and was widely published in many fields.

Lang was instrumental in one of Mister's early defeats, providing a counter-formula to stop a Madness Gas from afflicting the White House. However, he paid a significant price for this act of heroism, as Mister's chemical defense system perforated his body.

Mister could not let his old friend rest, even though he had just undone the White House plan. He transferred Lang's brain into a stitched-together half-cyborg body. Lang's sanity did not survive the transition – he snapped the moment he looked in a mirror and realized what he had become. As Monster Mastermind, the Beast with the Beautiful Mind, he teamed with Mister on several escapades, before finally betraying his creator and leaving him to die in the Himalayas.

Since this betrayal, Monster and Mister have been enemies. Monster seeks always to gain more knowledge and to command ever-stranger technology. He intends to prove himself the most adept mind in all of history, and in particular, to demonstrate that Mister was always the lesser brain.

Monster's expanded brain is held in a highly-impact resistant sheath. He has a Psyche Booster Chip wired into his brain, that gives him his Mental Resistance specialty. If the chip is damaged or deactivated, the specialty disappears. If the sheath is somehow broken, Monster will be incapacitated.

THE MINIONS OF THE MONSTER

BATULAC: Prow 4, Coord 6, Str 6, Int 2, Awa 2, Will 2, Stam 8, Flight 4, Venomous Bite (Affliction) 4, Defensive Systems Detection 4

CRABICON: Prow 4, Co-ord 4, Str 8, Int 2, Awa 2, Will 2, Stam 10, Burrowing 4, Laser Turret (Blast) 4

CENTROPEDE: Prow 4, Coord 8, Str 4, Int 2, Awa 2, Will 2, Stam 6, Wall-Crawling 4, Cutting Torch (Strike) 4, Defensive Systems Detection 4

Three robotic minions of Monster Mastermind -- Batulac is a robotic bat, Crabicon is a robotic crab, and Centropede is a robotic insect.

RUNNING MASTERMIND VILLAINS

Masterminds are challenging NPCs. They are super-geniuses who are always ahead of their opponents and have plans for every eventuality. However, the GM is unlikely to be a super-genius and probably has better things to do than sit around for days thinking up devious plans to outwit the heroes. How can you create the feeling of a mastermind without going to excessive lengths?

Firstly, remember that a big part of the role-playing game experience is how things come across. Do everything you can to make these characters feel like masterminds. Have them use big words wherever possible. Have them explain everything they do, gloating and pointing out their cleverness. Have them eagerly draw attention to their own genius and disparage the intelligence of everyone else. Describe everything they do in such a way that shows them to be very clever and very resourceful.

There is often a temptation in supers games to have villains be buffoons, but resist that temptation for the masterminds. Don't have them put a foot wrong – they can be victims of bad luck, and they can be outwitted by the heroes, but other than that they should do everything right.

Secondly, there are some mechanical tricks to call upon: cheating, and paying out determination.

Cheat

Normally, when a GM is running a game, they have a model of the situation in their head and they try to apply it fairly and honestly. If they've decided there's a spare atmosphere suit in the cupboard, then when a character opens the cupboard, an atmosphere suit will be found.

When it comes to masterminds, these unspoken rules of play can be suspended. Perhaps a hero takes the atmosphere suit and wears it. Only then does the GM have the idea that the suit has been booby-trapped all along. This is perfectly legitimate. Mastermind villains are smarter than anyone around the table, and you can use that to justify almost anything.

Pay out Determination

The approach above is good for small things or to add the occasional exciting moment. For bigger things, or for changes that would frustrate the players, even the score by awarding the players with Determination. Say you decide to have the heroes captured and put in a deathtrap. Tell the players that a hidden shock-grid in the villain's lair knocks them all unconscious, and give them Determination for going along with it. Then tell them what happens when they wake up.

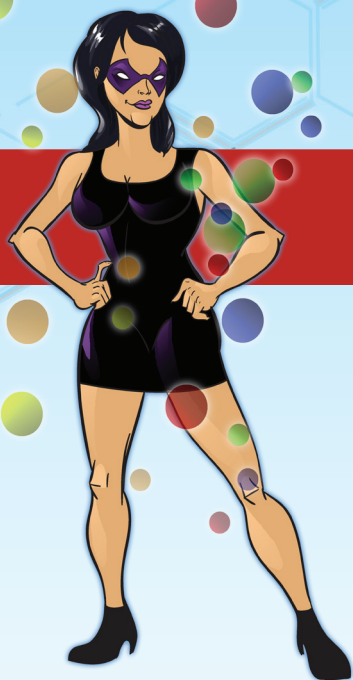
If a player really doesn't want to go along, and is willing to pay out the Determination needed, then perhaps his character manages to escape and is working to free his friends while the villain is ranting and telling them his evil scheme."

The Clique

The Clique are three hot girls who think the world revolves around them, and one guy who does his best to ensure it actually does. They are inclined towards superficial crimes – stealing things they want, defacing ugly things, destroying the property of people they don’t like. They aren’t too good on planning, or strategy, and they certainly don’t want to take over the world. Well, only so far as having everybody envy them and recognize how superior they are to everyone else, style-wise.

Destiny is the closest thing the Clique have to a leader. Her real name is Marion Hinkley, and she

DESTINY



QUALITIES

The Girl of Your Bad Dreams
"Fortune Favors the Beautiful"

CHALLENGES

PERSONAL - MEAN ATTITUDE.

ABILITIES

PROWESS
COORDINATION
STRENGTH
INTELLECT
AWARENESS
WILLPOWER

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HEIGHT: 5'9 **WEIGHT:** 140
FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS

Aura
Probability Control (Positive)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SPECIALTIES

STAMINA

7

dresses to impress, with clothes as sleek and dark as her long raven hair. She has a knack for landing on her feet. Things always seem to work out in her favor, whether or not those eyelashes have to flutter. She has some ambitions of actually doing something lasting, although she isn’t quite sure what, and is easily distracted by simpler attractions for the time being. Destiny is constantly disparaging to her friends, and relishes any opportunity to make them look bad.

Destiny’s most noticeable power is her dots. When activated, hundreds of small multicolored translucent spheres float around her, like strange bubbles of various sizes. When these bubbles impact on anything, they dissolve it slightly. Her aura is enough to eat through wood, metal, and probably people – although Destiny isn’t keen on the idea of really hurting someone, she won’t hold back from giving them a good few bubble-shaped scorch-marks. Or, even better, she’ll dissolve all their clothes away and point out their cellulite.

SCORCHER



ABILITIES

PROWESS

COORDINATION

STRENGTH

INTELLECT

AWARENESS

WILLPOWER

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HEIGHT: 5'11

WEIGHT: 160

FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS

Alternate Form (Fire)

Invulnerability

Aura

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SPECIALTIES

STAMINA

7

QUALITIES

THE GIRL WHO CAN'T SAY NO... TO TROUBLE
"TOO HOT TO HANDLE"

CHALLENGES

PERSONAL - OVERCONFIDENCE

If Destiny is the leader, Scorcher is the instigator of the group. Redheaded Belinda Allen is tempestuous and fiery and quick to action. She isn't fond of thinking things through or talking things out. Talking about feelings and hugging things out, as Princess is sometimes interested in doing, doesn't appeal to her at all. She holds grudges like you wouldn't believe.

Power-wise, Scorcher has three modes. She can be an ordinary person, she can be a person wreathed in a flame aura, or she can actually transform all the way into fire. Her Invulnerability is only in affect when she's fully transformed.

PRINCESS



QUALITIES

DADDY'S DEADLY LITTLE GIRL
"MY DADDY SAYS...."

CHALLENGES

PERSONAL - VANITY

ABILITIES

PROWESS
COORDINATION
STRENGTH
INTELLECT
AWARENESS
WILLPOWER

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HEIGHT: 5'11 WEIGHT: 160
FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS

Flight
Power Theft

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SPECIALTIES

STAMINA

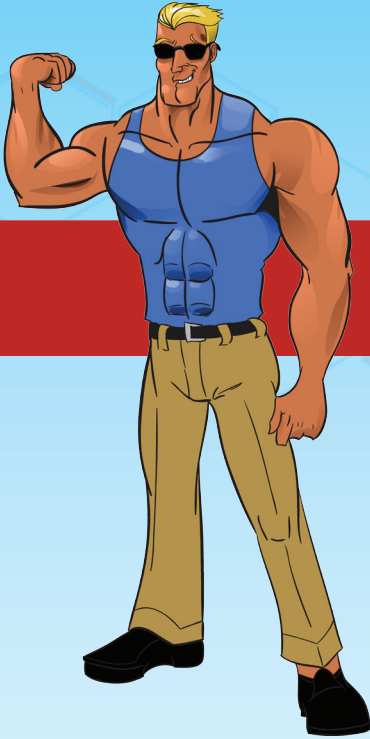
6

Princess is blonde, pretty, and perfect. She has a lovely smile and a charming laugh. She's a bit clumsy and a bit of a ditz. She's also stone-cold deadly when she gets angry. Luckily she doesn't get angry a lot of the time.

Princess can fly, and she can steal other people's powers. She doesn't like to actually get involved in fights, and prefers to zoom around the edges making things difficult for the Clique's opponents rather than actually taking anyone out herself. She'll try and steal powers that look stylish more than those that would actually be useful.

Whoever her father is, he surely seems to dote on her.

BEEF



ABILITIES

PROWESS

COORDINATION

STRENGTH

INTELLECT

AWARENESS

WILLPOWER

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HEIGHT: 6'2"

WEIGHT: 220

FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS

Invulnerability

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SPECIALTIES

STAMINA

11

QUALITIES

"NOBODY MESSES WITH MY CHICKS!"

THE BIGGEST, STRONGEST JERK THERE IS

CHALLENGES

PERSONAL - CONCERN FOR THE GIRLS

If there's a weedy guy on a beach, then Beef is the one who'll kick sand in his face. He's got bleach-blond hair, the latest sunglasses, a muscle shirt, and a major tan all year 'round. He's also a huge slab of hulking muscle, and all too ready to flex if it'll help get what he wants.

Beef is completely devoted to "his" three girls. It is unclear if any of them asked for this attention, but they aren't shy of taking advantage of Beef every way they can.

Whenever one of the girls is a target of an attack, Beef will attempt to interpose himself if he has an action to spend. Let the hero's player decide if they mind the interposition; if not, then they target Beef instead. If so, the player should make a Co-ordination (3) test to strike the intended target.

SPEEDSAW



ABILITIES

PROWESS	6										
COORDINATION	5										
STRENGTH	5										
INTELLECT	4										
AWARENESS	5										
WILLPOWER	5										

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HEIGHT: 6'0" WEIGHT: 200
FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS

Aura (Chainsaws)											
Detection (Energy Trails)											
Super Speed											

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SPECIALTIES

Acrobatics	
Mechanics	
Mental Resistance	

STAMINA

11

QUALITIES

MOTIVATION: IN IT FOR THE MONEY

CHALLENGES

APPEARANCE: INTIMIDATING AND UNMISTAKEABLE

WEAKNESS: CHAINS NEED TO BE KEPT LUBRICATED

Speedsaw is a villainous thug-for-hire. He's a nasty piece of work, a mercenary wearing a high-tech suit he didn't design. The suit is basically a mount for chainsaws – there are two on his arms and two on his legs, belching smoke and dripping oil. By dropping into a crouch, he can use the chainsaws to race along at high speed, tearing up a path as he goes. He likes racing over the top of cars so they split perfectly in half behind him.

PROFESSOR HOMINID



QUALITIES

NASTY, BRITISH AND SMART

*MOTIVATION: TO REWARD GENIUS & POWER, AND
PUNISH SLOTH AND STUPIDITY*

ABILITIES										
PROWESS										
COORDINATION										
STRENGTH										
INTELLECT										
AWARENESS										
WILLPOWER										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

HEIGHT: 5'5"

WEIGHT: 200

FIRST APPEARANCE: ICONS TEAM-UP #1

POWERS										
Gadget Wizardry										
Immortality										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

SPECIALTIES										
Computers										
Electronics										
Mechanics										

STAMINA

10

CHALLENGES

APPEARANCE: NEANDERTHAL

PSYCHOLOGY: IMPATIENCE WITH INFERIORS

Professor Hominid is an intriguing figure who claims to have been born at the dawn of humankind. He says he has been inventing solidly for many thousands of years, and every major step forward in human history came as a result of his ingenuity.

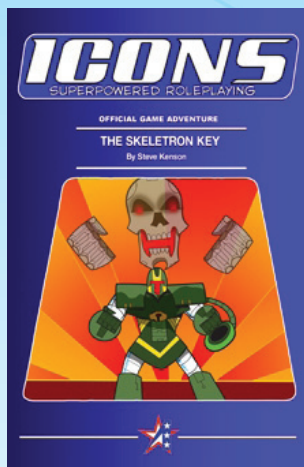
Hominid sees himself as above petty concerns of good and evil. He understands a much older game – power and survival. However, those old rules usually put him at odds with the forces of peace and justice, so Hominid usually spends his time on the run from the law.

Hominid is unlikely to appear in the flesh during this game, although a recorded image of him will be seen. Entprising characters might find a way to confront him, or he might appear in future adventures.

ICONS

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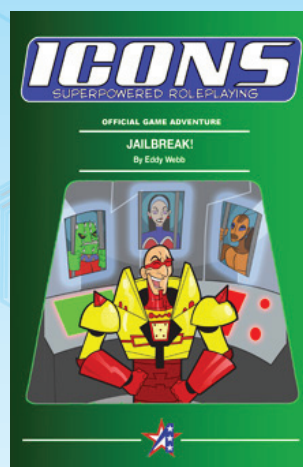
The Skeletron Key by Steve Kenson

A demonstration of Avatar Industries' new SPARTAN (SPecial ARmored TANK) battlesuit for the military goes horribly wrong, leading the heroes into an adventure involving mercenaries, missing scientists, a dying corporate magnate, and a top-secret neural network research project that is far, far more than it was ever intended to be....



Sins of the Past by Theron Bretz

They were the first to take up the mantle, the original article. When the world needed heroes, the Golden Agents rose to the challenge. But time and tide wait for no man (or woman), and the years are finally catching up to the living legends. Is it as simple as that, or is something sinister afoot?



JAILBREAK! by Eddy Webb

What twist of fate has landed our heroes in jail? How will they escape? And who is... the Killer Gamemaster?

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