



WELCOME TO **STARK CITY** TESLA INDUSTRIAL PARK





**FAINTING GOAT GAMES
&**



**STARK CITY GAMES
PRESENTS**

STARK CITY

TESLA INDUSTRIAL PARK

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Tesla Industrial Park

Theme

The greatest combination of futurists, mad scientists, and super-geniuses in the nation.

Scale

A small city neighborhood, roughly a rectangle approximately eight blocks long by four blocks wide.

Aspects

Science! Is a Two-Edged Sword

Attracts Great Minds

The Cutting Edge Is Last Year's Tech

Location

Tesla Industrial Park lies west of downtown Stark City (that is, the Silver District). To its south is the Stark City University student ghetto of Hobbes.

Description: Tesla Industrial Park is the technology center of Stark City. Here you can find pure R&D firms engaged in super-science (such as Paragon Engineering), defense contractors (such as ARES and Maniacal, Inc.), and various other high-tech firms working on super-science and bleeding-edge technology. Stark City University is also based here.

In 1891, the wealthy industrialist Richard D. Danforth provided a substantial endowment to found Stark City University. Danforth selected Stark City over New England because of the city's reputation as a growing center of industry. At the same time, Danforth also endowed several science departments, to emphasize that Stark City University would focus on pragmatic topics. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics were, and continue to be, SCU's focus. The Regents take the University's mission very seriously. They encourage graduate research to advance technology and develop a meritocracy, rather than purely intellectual pursuits or ivory-tower elitism.

Enticed by the University's mission, an offer of unlimited electricity from the nearby power plant, and a large financial investment from Adrian Colter enticed Nikolai Tesla to establish

a state-of-the-art laboratory near SCU in 1923. As Tesla's experiments continued, he started bringing his vision into reality. The neighborhood became the first and only location to have wireless electrical transmission for all buildings. Tesla coils provided wireless telegraphy to all of the homes in the neighborhood as well. As Tesla's inventions transformed the neighborhood, it shed its old nickname of "Collegetown" and became "Tesla Industrial Park."

In 1928, while experimenting with transcontinental wireless communications, Tesla intercepted a transdimensional message. He attempted unsuccessfully to communicate with the source. Shortly thereafter, the Teslacracy contacted Nikolai Tesla and offered him the secrets of dimensional travel, deep space travel, and near-immortality — in exchange for assistance in subjecting the Earth to the Teslacracy's rule. Tesla refused the offer, and the Teslacracy initiated their invasion with an attempt to kill Tesla. Tesla survived through the use of his death-ray technology and with the help of the Sentinel. Afterward, Tesla created a massive wireless electricity generator to charge the multiversal ether around our planet. Tesla believed that the energy shield thus created would protect Earth from the Teslacracy for decades.

From his brush with the Teslacracy until his disappearance in 1943, Tesla worked tirelessly to prepare the invasion he feared inevitable. He described his ultimate project as a "teleforce" weapon capable of bringing down a fleet of enemy airplanes from hundreds of miles away. Tesla never demonstrated his "death ray" or "peace ray," as it was alternately called in the press. When Tesla disappeared, the Federal Bureau of Investigation seized all of Tesla's research that they could locate.

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In the years after Tesla, the neighborhood has continued to witness invention and scientific advancement, even if it has lost some of its eccentric charm. The Tesla coils providing wireless lighting, electricity, and telegraphy still exist, but are no longer powered. The city only recently shut them down because of their interference with cell phone towers.

Moreau Laboratories

Aspects

Tarnished Reputation

Living on Borrowed Time

Discreetly Looking for New Talent

Description: In the 1950s and '60s, the world followed the exploits of Dr. Marvin Moreau as he traveled the world making scientific discoveries in its darkest corners and applying the knowledge to create his own inventions. Dr. Moreau founded Moreau Laboratories to take advantage of his discoveries. Through his travels, Dr. Moreau "discovered" several indigenous medical cures that he was able to synthesize for commercial distribution. The revenue from these drugs provided him with large amounts of seed money to pursue his more exotic research goals. Moreau Laboratories conducts basic and applied research in oncology, immunology, neuroscience, metabolism, and infectious disease.

As Moreau aged, he traveled less, and began to think about the future. He decided that he needed a son to whom he could impart his vast knowledge and who could carry on his legacy. Moreau set about acquiring genetic material from the best and brightest minds of his generation to combine with his own to create the greatest scientific mind of the next generation. Moreau invented a procedure to implant genetic material of his choosing in a carrier embryo, and an artificial womb that

could incubate a child to term without needing a biological mother. Dr. Moreau's experiment produced his son, Marvin "Buddy" Moreau, Jr.

Buddy grew up at his father's side, but despite Dr. Moreau's best efforts, Buddy lacked his father's scientific genius. After Dr. Moreau's death, Buddy struggled to live up to his legacy. Buddy turned the company's administration over to his bodyguard, valet, and trusted confidant Robert Mondo. Buddy transformed Mondo into a man-lizard in a regrettable lab accident, but Mondo still manages to keep Moreau Labs running as a business. Buddy tried to compensate by using his father's inventions to fight crime as Doc Chimp, aided by Mondo, who takes on the role of Doc Chimp's sidekick, Komodo.

Despite Mondo's best efforts, Moreau Laboratories is on the decline. Its revenue has greatly decreased as Dr. Moreau's patents have expired and generic versions of the drugs have come to market. Meanwhile, Buddy has not produced anything resembling a commercial success. To provide much-needed cash for the company, Mondo sold the patent for Moreau's genetic combinator and artificial womb to NyxTech. The company is bleeding cash and has incurred millions in debt. Buddy continues to attempt to replicate his father's success, but has only a series of failed experiments to show for it. Mondo has also sunk millions into research toward reversing his transformation into a man-lizard.

At its height, Moreau Laboratories had 200 researchers and scientists and 40 post-doctoral researchers, who consistently published in various medical and scientific journals. The current staffing levels are a fraction of that level, and only about 20 researchers currently work at the company. Mondo has initiated a recruiting drive to develop the next generation of scientists and researchers. Buddy still is the nominal leader of the Moreau Laboratories research team, but Mondo has attempted to keep him insulated from recruiting and decision-making. Mondo worries that if Buddy finds out about the effort, it will only hurt his feelings and Buddy might undermine his efforts or dismiss him as CEO. Although Buddy is the majority

shareholder of Moreau Laboratories, Mondo feels a duty to the other shareholders. As the share price has dropped, Mondo has purchased a large percentage of the outstanding shares himself.

Doc Chimp

Real Name: Marvin "Buddy" Moreau

Origin: Birthright

Abilities

Prowess 6

Coordination 5

Strength 5

Intellect 2

Awareness 5

Willpower 5

Stamina 10

Determination 2 (if used as PC)

Specialties

Science (Biology) Expert

Powers

Damage Resistance 5

Magical Attack Resistance 8

Strike (Bashing) 6

Transforming Ray (Animals) Device 3 [Extra:
Instant; Limit: One Type (Primates Only)]

Qualities

Likes to Punch

Progeny of Famous Action Scientist (Marvin Moreau)

Chimp Fancier

Works with Komodo, His More Competent
Valet/Sidekick/Bodyguard

Challenges

Bad Luck

Sworn Enemy of PETA

Has Trouble Using Inventions

Background: Decades ago, the world hung upon every word that passed Dr. Marvin Moreau's thick mustache. Moreau's exploits were plastered on the cover of every magazine and newspaper as he traveled the world, making discoveries in its darkest corners and applying that knowledge to inventions and

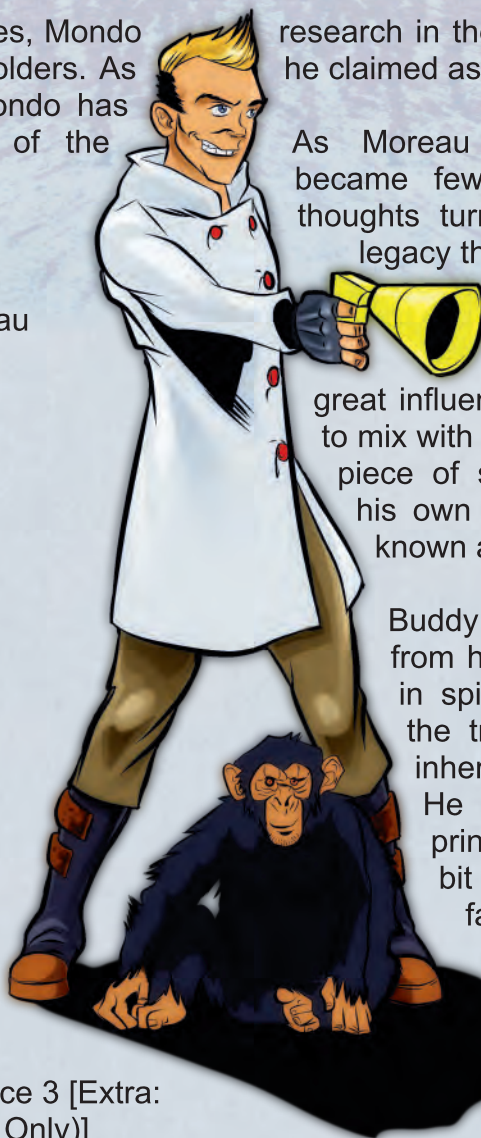
research in the many areas of expertise that he claimed as his own.

As Moreau got older, his expeditions became few and far between, and his thoughts turned to the future and to the legacy that he owed it. He would have a son and pass his knowledge onto him, thereby securing humanity's future. Using his great influence to acquire genetic material to mix with his own, he built a monumental piece of scientific machinery and grew his own son, Marvin Moreau, Jr., also known as "Buddy."

Buddy spent his early life learning from his father as best he could. But in spite of his father's best efforts, the truth was that Marvin had not inherited the elder Moreau's genius. He grasped basic science principles very well, but he was a bit of a dim bulb and lacked his father's spark for invention and keen insight.

Still, Moreau loved his son and took him on his adventures. The younger Moreau turned out to be handy in a tough spot, as he was a formidable pugilist. Once while fighting witch doctors in the Amazon, Buddy was blasted with a magical enchantment — but instead of harming him, the enchantment was absorbed into his flesh, granting him a high degree of resistance to both physical damage and magic.

After his father's death, Buddy struggled to live up to his legacy. Lacking any great intelligence, Buddy focused on being a hero, using one of his dad's greatest inventions, the Moreau Transformation Ray Pistol, as his heroic sidearm. His trusty sidekick, the hero Komodo (who had accidentally been transformed into a man-lizard during one of Buddy's public appearances) keeps Moreau Labs running as a business. Komodo also provides the basic common sense and competence that allows Buddy to be an effective hero.



JOB FAIR
 BEGIN YOUR FUTURE
 WITH US TODAY

After a recent adventure in the sewers underneath Stark City, the Transformation Ray Pistol was damaged. Its species selection dial was locked into the “primate” category. Sadly, neither Komodo nor Buddy knows how to repair the gun. However, Buddy has decided to “look for the positive,” and has capitalized on this mishap by making it his trademark and adopting the heroic moniker of Doc Chimp.

PETA and the Stark City Police have both raised questions about the dozens of chimps that Buddy creates on his campaign against crime. So far, Buddy has been able to placate them with promises to develop a way to reverse the process. There’s no telling how long that will last, though ...

Komodo

Real Name: Robert Mondo

Origin: Transformed

Abilities

Prowess 6
 Coordination 5
 Strength 6
 Intellect 5
 Awareness 8
 Willpower 5

Stamina 11
 Determination 1 (if used as PC)

Specialties

Acrobatics
 Martial Arts Expert

Powers

Power Nullification 6
 Precognition 4
 Strike (Bashing) 6 [Extra:
 Secondary Attack (Affliction:
 Nauseate)]
 Swinging Device 6 - Grappling
 Gun

Qualities

The Swinging Serpent of Justice
 Wants to Find a Cure

Challenges

Dangerous Touch
 Strange Appearance
 Tempted to Stray
 Powers Ineffective Against Constructs

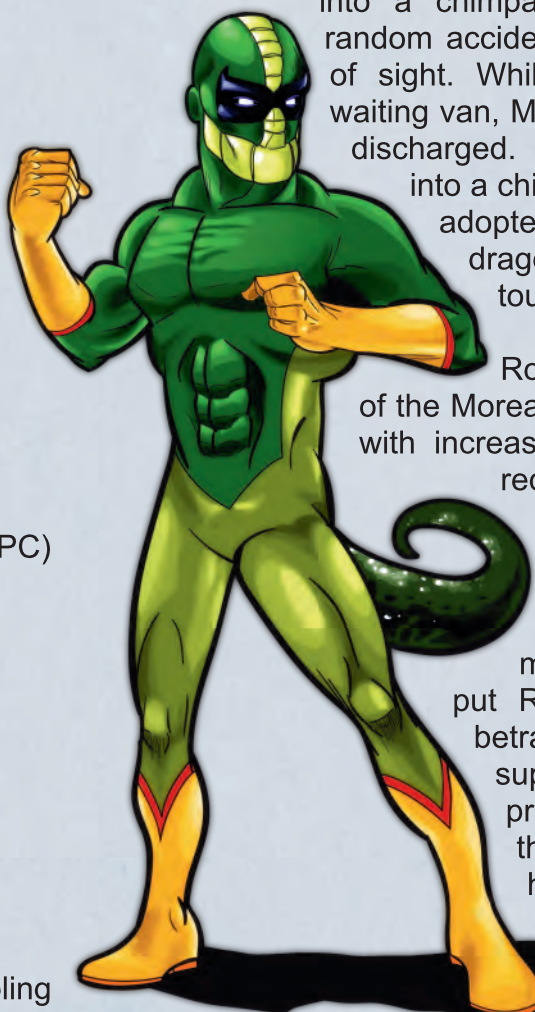
Background: Robert Mondo was a professional bodyguard when he met the son of the famed Dr. Marvin Moreau. Marvin the younger was giving a demonstration of the Moreau Transformation Ray Pistol, which the press had dubbed the “Chimp Gun.” Robert was Marvin’s bodyguard, hired to protect him and the “Chimp Gun” from being taken by those who would use the weapon for evil.

The planned demonstration — changing a dog into a chimpanzee—was spectacular, but a random accident put Robert in the pistol’s line of sight. While loading the device into the waiting van, Marvin dropped the weapon and it discharged. Instead of transforming Mondo into a chimp, the effects were strange. He adopted the features of the Komodo dragon, complete with nauseating touch and reptilian skin.

Robert had become another victim of the Moreau Transformation Ray Pistol, but with increased abilities instead of crippling reductions in reason and capability.

However, his touch can cause disease, forcing Robert to continue working with Moreau as they both seek a cure. One more than one occasion, this has put Robert Mondo in a position to betray Marvin, particularly when a supervillain entices Mondo with promises of a cure, or points out that Marvin isn’t half the scientist his father was. Robert continually struggles between the hope that Marvin can find a cure, and just venturing

out on his own to find his own cure for this disease, even if it means throwing in with the seedy criminal underbelly of Stark City.



18761281
 MOREAU
 I NEED FOR
 COMING
 DR. AMAL
 FOR DETAILS
 952-555-3098
 NO BACKGROUND
 CHECKS NEEDED!

Using Komodo, Doc Chimp, and Moreau Laboratories

- Characters with scientific backgrounds could be drawn to Stark City through job interviews with or offers of employment from Moreau Laboratories.
- Mondo wants to hire scientific leaders who can pull Moreau Laboratories out of its slow, inevitable downward spiral. If Mondo cannot achieve that, he may turn to less reputable strategies for securing income. Moreau Laboratories could easily serve as weapons supplier or underground medical facility for Stark City's criminal element. With Doc Chimp, a popular if not terribly effective superhero as its public face, Moreau Laboratories could long avoid suspicion of collusion with supervillains.
- Doc Chimp's late father, Marvin Moreau, invented dozens of special-use items that had little to no commercial value. These sit in a warehouse in the Moreau Laboratories complex. The characters may need access to such a device, and would be forced to negotiate with Mondo for its use or locate it surreptitiously.
- The PCs or innocent bystanders could be exposed to some of Moreau's handiwork when Mondo unknowingly authorizes the rental of "unused" storage warehouses, and renters discover the bizarre creations or auction them off.

Impossible Technology, Inc.

Aspects

"Impossible" Just Means We Haven't Tried It Yet

Scientific Advancement Trumps Profits
Weird Is the Order of the Day

Description: Andrew Cook, aka Kid Impossible, founded Impossible Technology, Inc., after cashing out his employee stock options in Valkyrie International. Cook left Valkyrie with the sole intention of putting research first and profits second. Impossible Technology's first major product was a device

that allowed owners to communicate with their dogs. In essence, it was a worn telepathy device giving audible expression to the wearer's thoughts. Of course, only the ridiculously wealthy could afford the \$50,000 device — and once owners discovered that their beloved animals wanted nothing but to play, eat, and sleep, the novelty wore off.

Impossible Technology has used the base technology to create similar communications devices allowing most mammals to "talk." The market for such devices was relatively small until someone suggested creating one for humans to use. Cook had never thought of that application. His "MenCom" (Mental Communicator) is now commonly used by stroke victims and other people unable to speak. Impossible Technology employs a staff of 300 scientists and engineers to perfect and improve this technology. The profits from these devices fund Cook's current research and his small team of scientists.

Very few of Cook's inventions are commercially successful, because they often solve problems that don't exist or have limited practical application. Among Cook's successful research areas are time travel, deep-space exploration, and interdimensional communication. Impossible Technology's time travel device worked, to a point. When Cook completed it and powered up the device, an exact duplicate of himself appeared, claiming to be a future version of Cook. The future Cook instructed the present-day Cook to destroy the device and abandon all efforts in that line of research. Cook has, thus far, reluctantly obeyed the future Cook's instructions. Cook's deep-space exploration project has yet to bear fruit, but looks promising. He is attempting to create an Alcubierre drive, which requires exotic particles that possess negative mass and a power source sufficient to replicate the energy production of a small star. External observers estimate that a workable prototype might be available for interplanetary travel within a decade. Cook's interdimensional communications project is the subject of *Improbable Tales #8, Extraordinary Journey*.

Kid Impossible

Real Name: Andrew Cook

Origin: Trained

Abilities

Prowess 2

Coordination 3

Strength 3

Intellect 7

Awareness 4

Willpower 3

Stamina 6

Determination 1 (if used as PC)

Specialties

Computers Expert

Electronics Master

Mechanics Expert

Medicine Expert

Science (Biology) Expert

Science (Chemistry) Expert

Science (Genetics) Expert

Science (Physics) Master

Powers

Gadgets 7 [Extra: Arsenal (Binding [Extra: Burst], Force Field [Limit: Temporary], Shrinking Ray, Teleport [Limit: Location-Specific (only allows transport to laboratory)]]; Limit: Ability-Linked (Intellect)]

Qualities

Respected in the Scientific Community

Friendly with Matteo Rodrigues, CEO of Valkyrie International

Scientific Super-Genius

CEO and Chief Technologist of Impossible Technology, Inc.

Wants to Create the Future

Challenges

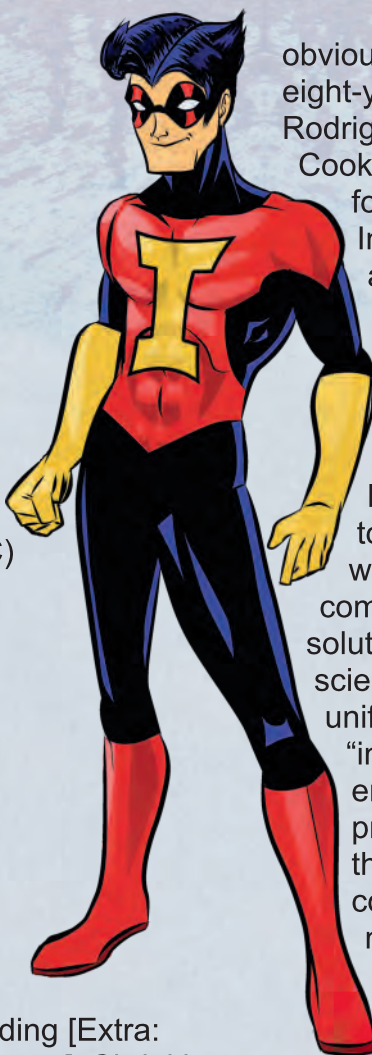
Bad Luck

No Business Sense

Awkward Teenager

Clueless Academic

Background: Andrew Cook was a child prodigy. He spoke at six months, passed his high school equivalence exams at age three, and got his first Ph.D. at eight. Despite his



obvious brilliance, few were willing to put an eight-year-old in charge of an R&D lab. Matteo Rodrigues, CEO of Valkyrie International, saw Cook's potential and hired him. After working for several months at Valkyrie International, Cook decided to pursue another Ph.D. in medicine. His dissertation led to a dozen patents in advanced bio-technology — none of which earned him a penny.

Cook had several problems relating with his co-workers and subordinates. Few took the child seriously in the lab. Cook would often propose outlandish, overly complicated solutions to problems. His solution might require an entirely new field of science to work. His co-workers almost uniformly dismissed his solutions as "impossible." When Cook created an engine that got 250 miles to the gallon, he proved his colleagues wrong. Of course, the engine was completely impractical and contained over a million dollars in exotic materials. His colleagues took to calling him "Kid Impossible," and the name stuck.

Using Kid Impossible and Impossible Technology

- To prevent an invasion from the Teslacracy, Nikolai Tesla created a massive wireless electricity generator in Stark City and used it to charge the multiversal ether around our planet. He intended to create a protective shell between this dimension and all others. There have been two known incursions into Stark City from extra-dimensional sources (the Gloriana Invasion and the Caudatians of Improbable Tales #8, Extraordinary Journey). There are several possible explanations why Nikolai Tesla's efforts stopped the Teslacracy but did not stop the more recent attempts. Tesla's energy field may be susceptible to burrowing techniques deployed by the Gloriana and Caudatian visitors. The shield may need to be recharged. Modern-day alterations to Tesla's network of Tesla coils may have weakened the shield or disabled it completely.

- Kid Impossible's efforts into interstellar travel will eventually bring him into conflict with the

Sirian Principality and other extraterrestrial threats. If the PCs assisted Kid Impossible in the past, he may request their assistance again in piloting his experimental interstellar spacecraft.

- Impossible Technology can always be used as a location for any adventure involving science run amok.

Valkyrie International Aspects

The Best Medical Assistance Money Can Buy
Intensive Care or Invasive Care?
Combat Medics Wanted

Description: Valkyrie International, founded by Matteo Rodrigues, is a large manufacturer of medical devices. The company fills a unique niche. It specializes in producing cutting-edge medical monitors. The devices can be worn or implanted subcutaneously, and they remotely, automatically monitor the subject's health. Valkyrie maintains a dedicated team of medical professionals to monitor the data streams at all times.

Device users must subscribe to the monitoring service, although they can choose from several plans. Valkyrie contacts local emergency services when clients at the silver level experience a medical emergency. Gold members receive constant medical monitoring of blood chemistry, respiration, and heart function. Physicians monitor clients for any changes or warning signs, and suggest more extensive medical examinations if needed. Valkyrie also maintains a crack extraction team of paramedics, physicians, and surgeons for platinum-level clients needing immediate medical assistance. Diamond membership is available to metahumans, police officers, firefighters, and other individuals in high-risk positions.

The firm's manufacturing center is located in Stark City, but Valkyrie also employs thousands of medical professionals across the country to respond to their users' needs. Valkyrie has flight-certified medical extraction teams in every major metropolitan area. Helicopters and vertical take-off and landing jets equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment can be deployed anywhere in the



country. If a client needs immediate medical attention, a medical team on the vehicle can perform the emergency operation or stabilize the patient for transport to a hospital.

The Cowl

Real Name: Matteo Rodrigues

Origin: Transformed

Abilities

Prowess 6
Coordination 6
Strength 6
Intellect 6
Awareness 5
Willpower 5

Stamina 11
Determination 3 (if used as PC)

Specialties

Athletics
Computers
Drive
Electronics Expert
Martial Arts Expert
Science (Physics) Expert
Stealth Expert

Powers

Gadgets 6 [Extra: Arsenal (Invisibility - stealth technology in cloak, Stunning (Strength) - tasers in gauntlets, Super-Senses [Infravision (Thermal Imaging), Enhanced Vision +2, Extended Vision +3] - goggles in cowl); Limit: Ability-Linked (Intellect)]

Qualities

CEO of Valkyrie International
Rebuilt by Dr. Sam Hanner
Attached to Haley, a Friend from College

Challenges

Hates the Thugs Who Gunned Him Down
Determined to Make the Most of His Second Lease on Life
Determined to Get Revenge

Background: Matteo Rodrigues was a quiet and promising young college student who seemed destined for greatness—until one

terrible night when he was violently cut down by a group of gang-bangers during a random drive-by shooting. Matt was declared dead at the ER that night. A closed-casket funeral was held shortly thereafter. His friends and family mourned and moved on.

However, unbeknown to almost everyone, Matteo was not dead. He was in a severe coma, from which the ER doctors had estimated he would never recover. Dr. Sam Hanner had secured his parents' permission (and pulled some strings with the US government) in order to requisition Matt as a test subject for Project: Phoenix, a top-secret Department of Defense program developing techniques for sustaining and eventually reviving coma patients.



Years later, Matt awoke in a classified medical facility. Through electro-dynamic therapy, his muscles had not only been maintained, but had been improved to the peak of human fitness. Additionally, revolutionary "brain mapping" technology had gifted Matt with a photographic memory and a variety of new skills and knowledge (the equivalent of several college educations).

Making the most of his second chance, Rodrigues devoted the next few years to using his newly acquired abilities to develop his own company, Valkyrie International. With money no longer a concern, Matt embarked on his true passion. He set about using his fortune, intellect, and physical prowess to develop the skills and gadgets to fight crime up close and personal. Adopting the identity of the Cowl, a costumed vigilante, and dashing through the streets in the "Hush," a phantom sports car of his own design, Matt has become a symbol of

dread to those that would cause the innocent to suffer. He prowls the city by night, determined to make its streets safe again and to exact vengeance on the men who ended his life.

Using the Cowl and Valkyrie International

- Wealthy PCs might subscribe to Valkyrie International's services, or a character in need of assistance could spend a point of Determination to retcon a membership for himself or herself. Valkyrie International might also respond to police or media reports as an opportunity for free advertising. There's even a chance that one of the characters' enemies could hold a membership. How might the PCs react if, during a heated battle, Valkyrie International rescue teams entered the fray to extract and treat a wanted criminal?

- Valkyrie International maintains a very sophisticated monitoring network to ensure that it can respond to a customer's needs immediately. The network could be attacked by hackers who want to monitor Valkyrie's clients. Rodrigues could contact any known computer or IT security experts for assistance. If the government attempts to use the technology, Rodrigues may initially allow them access, but if he eventually decides that the government's monitoring becomes too invasive, he may choose to oppose their efforts, recruiting other

superheroes to help him restore his subscribers' privacy.

- Should the Cowl ever uncover the people responsible for his death, he will attempt to exterminate them and anyone associated with them. If the Cowl goes from superhero to vigilante outlaw, the characters may be called in to "talk him down" or apprehend him.

Maniacal, Inc.

Aspects

Well-Connected

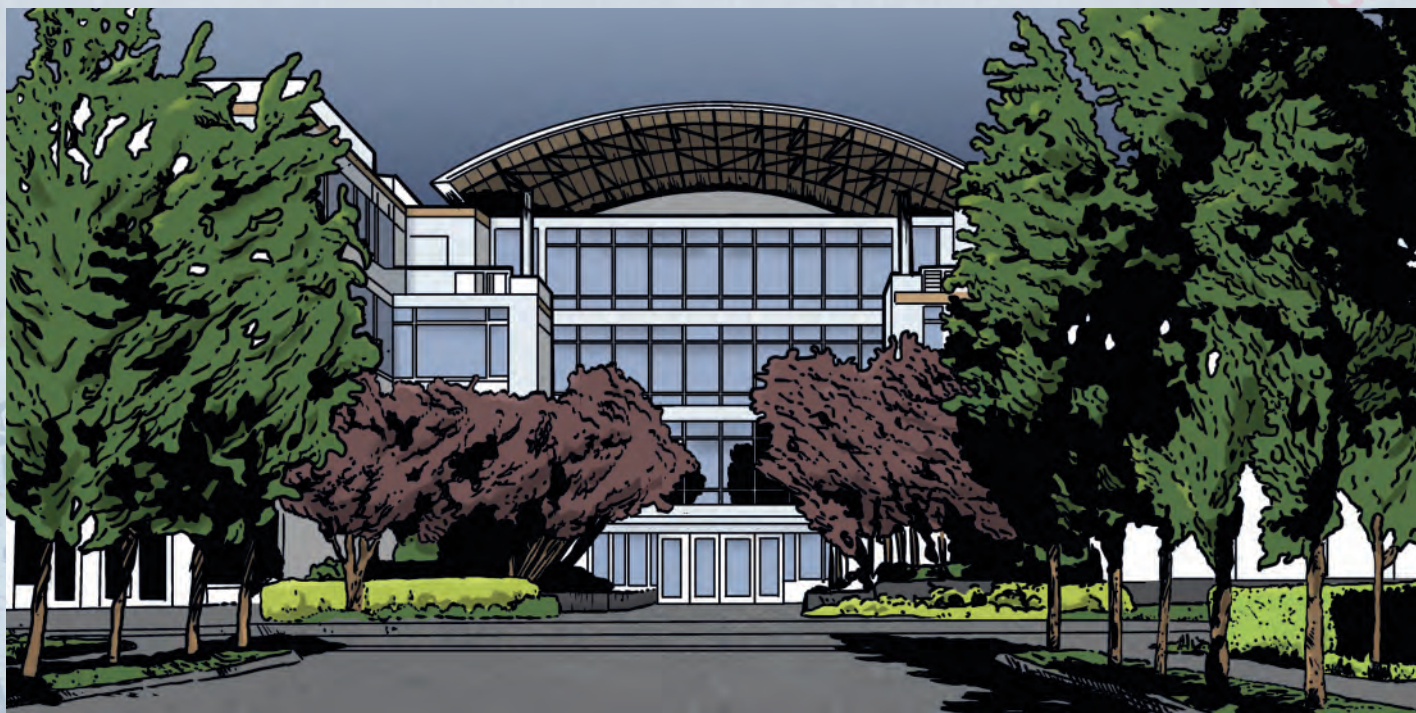
Unlimited Assets, Unlimited Fun

A Workforce with a (Criminal) Record

"Let our eyes be your vision!"

Description: Maniacal, Inc. was born after Reginald Coakley, a supervillain in Stryker Federal Penitentiary made a U-turn in his life. After a TV interview where victims and law enforcement were allowed to interact with him, Coakley felt as though he had received a much-needed wake-up call. After the interview, he went into solitary confinement for a month. Emerging from the cell, he went on a mission to reinvent himself.

Coakley burned through his prison time by researching and then advising those running his businesses. After surviving lawsuits from ARES



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Labs, Coakley turned the money back into his companies. From DVDs to the popular website Fetch.com, Coakley's businesses posted huge gains and became financial powerhouses. As money poured in from legitimate enterprise, Coakley made sure that he gave back to the very community he once victimized. These donations brought Coakley to the parole board's attention. After years in prison and with the support of some of his victims, Reginald Coakley was released early from prison.

With ARES Labs blocking any pathway by which Coakley might enter the arena of powered armor defense contracting, he decided to go with something low-key. He did extensive research in the field of eye protection. Coakley's first set of sports glasses, the Scarabs, were an instant success. The Scarabs had interchangeable lenses and were marketed to athletes and shooters. As the Scarabs gained popularity with the military, Coakley began to alter the design. First, he developed his next line of glasses, Snap Shells, with integrated heads-up displays linked to a wearable tactical computers built into soldiers' armor. He then branched out into helmets, body armor, and lines of "military operator-based" clothing. While he grew the tactical side of the business, he simultaneously grew the sports side. Sports shoes, clothing, and hydration packs nourished a brand that became synonymous with the action sports crowd.

Calling his brand Maniacal, Coakley finally took the company public. Selling the stock with the announcement of his new product, the Oracle, Coakley went from millionaire to billionaire. Oracles are glasses linked to a cell phone or other smart device. By using integrated video technology and voice activation, Oracles are capable of making one's life truly interactive. Virtual reality superimposed onto one's vision gives the wearer total connectivity to his or her environment.

As Coakley built his business empire, he always tried to give back to a city that had once despised him. He gave to charities and volunteered to several different helping-hands organizations across the city. To see that prison wasn't just a revolving door for those thrown

back into society, he went out of his way to recruit ex-cons. He gave them decent jobs, respect, and the ability to grow with the company they were helping to build. Maniacal, Inc. is mostly known for this attitude toward second chances. In keeping with his "giving-back" approach to life, Coakley created Team Phoenix, an action sports team that travels from district to district putting on demonstrations while talking about being rehabilitated from prison. As the Maniacal brand continues to grow, Team Phoenix has been traveling about the country more and more. Their goal is to keep kids out of trouble, spread the word about Maniacal gear, and show that sometimes a second chance is all someone needs to get back on their feet.

Maniacal resides within a giant manufacturing complex that defines the vision of the area. Modern robotic manufacturing side by side with a slew of dedicated employees make up the day to day operations. Of the 157 employees, 62 are convicts on parole. The majority of workers are referred by either Horizon House or Odyssey Residences, the Stark City Halfway Houses. This includes the entire staff of Team Phoenix. While many are often taken aback by the company's willingness to hire recent parolees, Coakley prides himself on giving folks a second chance. The other side of the equation is that all the parolees know that if they slip into a life of crime again, Coakley will be the first one to turn them in.

The Maniacal Complex also has a proving ground. This is an outdoor range that can be fitted with a variety of terrain and obstacles so that new Maniacal gear can be tested under the most stressful conditions. The proving grounds has been used by military forces, Stark City SWAT teams, certain superheroes, and even the occasional bachelor party. All parties have not only tested Maniacal gear, but have also used the proving grounds for their own training, as it is one of the most versatile tactical and sports training centers in the world.

Using The Complex

- Most heroes and civilians can tour the Complex. There is a brief tour of the production facility as well as occasional shows put on by

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Team Phoenix. Villains who raid the Complex to acquire Snap Shell, Oracle, or Turtleback Body Armor technology can find plenty of folks to take hostage. Such supervillains can sometimes find allies among the Maniacal workforce, as not all of the convicts employed there have had their moral compasses reset.

- The proving grounds is a multifunctional arena set up in the southern side of the Complex. The arena can be set up as an obstacle course, race track, ball field, or open space. The area has been offered for use to the Stark City police and fire departments, as well as local sports teams (including youth leagues). Coakley sometimes brings in big-name bands to hold concerts for charity. The proving grounds can be set up to handle multiple scenarios and training opportunities.

- Coakley likes to offer certain product testing to local area law-enforcement officers, athletes, and superheroes. He invites them in regularly to test out his products, and any such testing could lead to further adventure.

Team Phoenix

Aspects

Go to War or Go to Jail
High Risk, High Reward

Background: Team Phoenix is the very public arm of Maniacal, Inc. Reginald Coakley sends his team of action athletes all over the globe to spread the word about the versatility of Maniacal products, and to put on an incredible show. The demonstration team is actually a front. As Coakley's company became more prolific, the federal government saw his vision of rehabilitation as a way to expand their field of influence in Stark City. Of the twenty-person road crew that makes up Team Phoenix, six are actually "paroled" supervillains. Approaching Coakley and ordering him to act as the public face for the team, the government turned Team Phoenix into a front for a covert tactical team designed to take down supervillains.

Each member of the team has had a special implant surgically inserted into his or her head. If any member fails to work with the team or

tries to escape to pursue criminal interests, the team's handler will activate the implant. The implant can be set to cause major pain, stun, or kill outright (by exploding). The more powerful a superhuman is, the more powerful the device becomes, as it is powered by the carrier's own nervous system.

The "road crew" consists of six Phoenixes. These super-powered former villains are supported by a strike team and operations crew led by a handler. The federal government makes a deal with each of the Phoenixes. For every villain captured, each member's prison sentence is reduced by one year. If the villain serves as a Phoenix for five years and survives, his or her sentence is set aside entirely.

Using Team Phoenix

- Characters can encounter the team when it is on tour. The average show will be a group of athletes — typically skateboarders, bicyclists, and parkour enthusiasts — performing for the crowd. When the show is done they will typically pack up and enjoy the night in whatever area they are visiting.

- The Phoenixes are often sent after some of the most dangerous supervillains and other high-level threats. This will often put them at odds with superheroes who do not have criminal records or government funding. The Phoenixes have had many run-ins with local heroes in other areas, and the Phoenixes are always quick to try to assert their authority and drive off the other heroes. This has even resulted in dust-ups with several heroes.

- If the government feels that a hero or heroes are getting too troublesome or getting too close to a government operation, they can send in the Phoenixes. This often comes to blows, but there have been times when the Phoenixes have sided with the heroes and fought against their government masters.

Team Composition

- 2–6 Phoenixes (rolled up using the tables in **ICONS** or **GREAT POWER**, selected from the ranks of published villains, or even played by the characters as their PCs)

- One handler, Aila Foster (see below)
- Six-person tactical team (see below)
- Two-person operations coordination team
- Six-person road crew including drivers, roadies (laborers), and technicians (who know about the Phoenix's true mission, but do not participate in anything but the public shows)

MAG (Metahuman Assault Gun): This weapon, the signature firearm for Team Phoenix's tactical backup, fires gyro-stabilized mini-rockets that explode into several constricting bands; these bands nullify superhuman ability by short-circuiting the target's central nervous system. The pistols are a very powerful tool and the government doesn't want them to fall into the wrong hands. Each MAG carries an embedded computer chip that, when activated, burns out the gun and destroys any remaining ammo therein.

Tactical Team Member

Abilities

Prowess 4
Strength 4
Coordination 3
Intellect 3
Awareness 3
Willpower 3

Stamina 7
Determination *

Specialties

Drive
Martial Arts
Military
Weapons (Guns)

Powers

Damage Resistance Device 3 - Armor Skin Suit
Binding Device 5 - MAG
Power Nullification Device 5 - MAG

Aila Foster

Abilities

Prowess 4
Coordination 4
Strength 3
Intellect 5
Awareness 4
Willpower 5

Stamina 8
Determination *

Specialties

Drive
Leadership
Martial Arts
Pilot
Weapons (Guns)

Powers

Damage Resistance Device 3 - Armor Skin Suit
Binding Device 5 - MAG
Power Nullification Device 5 - MAG

Qualities

Holds the Phoenixes' Leashes

Challenges

Unhappy Camper
Secretly in Love with Reginald Coakley
It Aches When It Rains (-1 to physical abilities while injured)

Background: Aila had spent years as a Secret Service agent when she took a bullet to the left shoulder protecting her boss. After she had spent years on the sidelines, her old boss, now a senator, called her back to service to be the handler of the Phoenix Initiative. Living side-by-side with supervillains has made her gruff and sarcastic. She has yet to request a transfer, as she feels these "thugs" are being put to good use to protect the public, and she has fallen deeply in love with Reginald Coakley. She often goes out of her way to update Coakley on the team's progress. Although Coakley hates what the government has done to his idea, he does enjoy spending time with Aila.

Mr. Mayhem

Real Name: Reginald Coakley

Origin: Gimmick

Abilities

Prowess 5

Coordination 6

Strength 7

Intellect 8

Awareness 4

Willpower 6

Stamina 13

Determination * (1 if used as a PC)

Specialties

Business Expert

Computers Expert

Electronics Expert

Mechanics Expert

Mental Resistance Expert

Power (Gadgets) Expert

Powers

Ability Increase (Prowess +2, Coordination +3, Strength +4) Device - Powered Armor

Damage Resistance Device 6 - Powered Armor

Gadgets Device 7 [Extra: Arsenal (Blast [Extra: Extra Type], Flight, Super-Senses [Ultraviolet Vision (Night Vision), Telelocation (Radar), Enhanced Vision +2, Extended Vision +3]); Limit: Ability-Linked (Intellect)] - Powered Armor

Life Support Device 8 [Breathing, Cold, Heat, Pathogens, Pressure, Radiation, Toxins, Vacuum] - Powered Armor

Qualities

Respected in Scientific & Business Circles

Aspires to the Stark City Aristocracy

Wants to Improve Society at a Profit

Titan of Bleeding-Edge Industries

Reformed Criminal Mastermind

Challenges

Impatient (Especially with Bureaucrats)

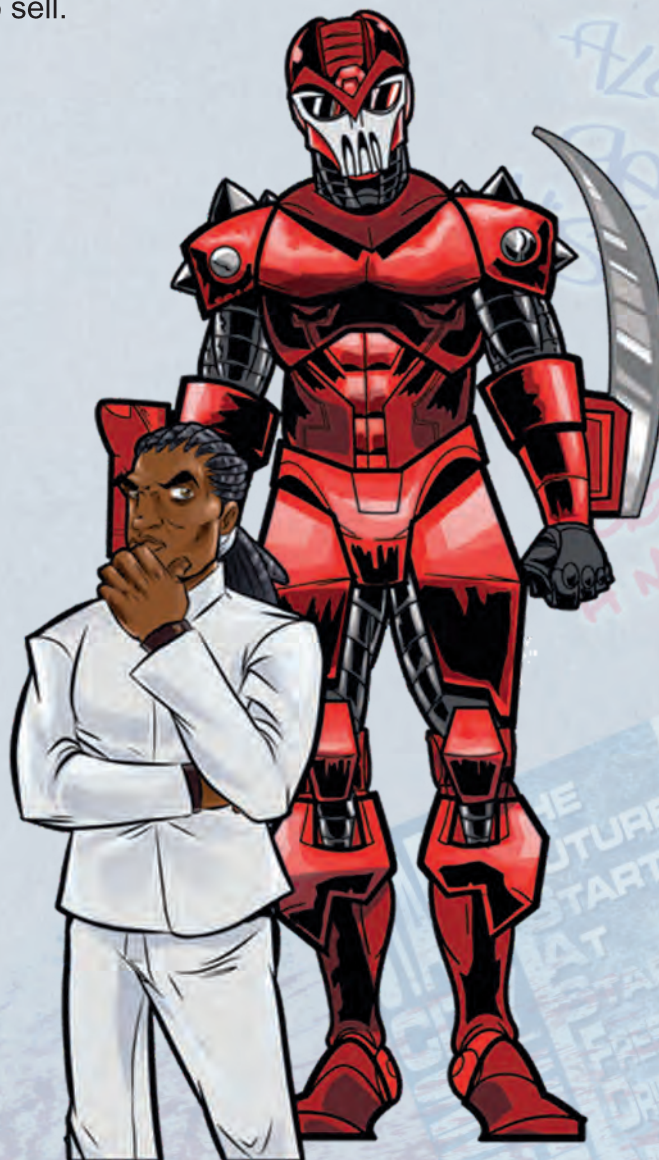
Former Supervillain


Still Feels Guilt for His Crimes

Prowess, Coordination, and Strength 3 Without Suit

Clashes with ARES Labs

Background: Reginald Coakley grew up in public housing in Geartown. His grandmother raised him and tried to insulate him from the criminal activity in the neighborhood. She encouraged him to focus on his studies, but only partially succeeded. Coakley excelled in school with minimal effort, but could not resist the easy money of the drug trade. He needed it to supplement his grandmother's fixed income. When Coakley's grandmother died, he dropped out of high school and committed himself to a life of crime. Coakley worked his way up from runner and lookout to lieutenant for a gang of drug dealers. Coakley's intelligence and business acumen helped him to rise quickly. His willingness to do anything, now matter how risky, earned him the nickname "Mayhem." He saw opportunities for big scores, and improved distribution of drugs that his leaders dismissed as too risky, unprofitable, or outright impossible to sell.



The background of the page is a collage. At the top left, there is a poster that says "JOB FAIR" in large letters, with "BEGIN YOUR FUTURE WITH US TODAY" underneath. To the right of this, there is a poster with a picture of a person and some text that is partially obscured. In the bottom left corner, there is a poster with a picture of a person and the text "NO BACKGROUND CHECKS NEEDED". There are also various graffiti tags and drawings scattered throughout the background, including a large "W" and "H" in the middle right, and a "V" in the bottom right.

Ignoring his superiors' orders, Coakley decided to organize a robbery of ARES Labs. He planned to sell any items and information obtained to competitors or a foreign government. Coakley was unprepared for the sophistication of the advanced prototype weapons and armor his crew recovered. He was similarly unprepared for the reaction of the ARES special operations units sent to recover the items and information. The units targeted Coakley's gang and offered a million-dollar reward for his location. His former gang leaders quickly turned against him and his co-conspirators abandoned him.

Coakley decided to use the stolen goods to defend himself. He examined the schematics of the weapons and armor for ideas, and combined the various components to create his first suit of powered armor. Coakley defeated an ARES unit and scavenged their equipment to improve his armor. Within a few days, he created a suit that was better than anything ARES Labs was producing. Coakley decided to take over the drug and protection rackets in Geartown. He easily destroyed or subjugated his former leaders. He informed them that they could call him "Mr. Mayhem" now. Mr. Mayhem decided to acquire supplies to outfit his new crew by attacking the ARES special operations units hunting him. He had soon assembled a crew of gang members outfitted in powered armor. A series of bank robberies and gang warfare followed, with no small amount of collateral damage. Mr. Mayhem might have taken over all of Stark City, but the ARES Labs technicians created a kill switch that attacked the central computer control system of the stolen armor. Immobilized in their suits, Mr. Mayhem and his gang were trapped — and delivered by ARES agents to the Stark City Police Department.

The court sentenced Coakley to sixty years in prison. The testimony of the next-of-kin of innocent bystanders injured or killed by Mr. Mayhem and his crew helped determine the sentence, but more importantly, the testimony and prison sentence caused Coakley to reevaluate his life. Coakley decided to try to correct his past mistakes. From prison, he submitted patent applications for the many many improvements

he made to the ARES Labs technology. He offered some of them as restitution for the damage he had caused the company. ARES Labs refused Coakley's offer, but used his ideas anyway. Coakley sued and received a judgment worth hundreds of millions of dollars for patent infringement. He settled with ARES Labs for less than the full amount of the judgment, providing the company with what he felt was fair compensation. He used the rest of the money to compensate victims of his crimes and saved a small amount to outfit the prison with an electronics workshop.

During his limited free time in prison, Coakley designed one of the first personal computers and wrote the operating system to run it. He exchanged code with others in the industry and co-founded Orange Computing, which went on to become one of the largest and most successful computer, personal electronics, and software companies in the world. Coakley stayed out of the corporate side of the company, but contributed to the technical innovations of Orange until the Internet became more widely accessible. He sold his portion of Orange, becoming a billionaire in the process, and developed his next business. Coakley created a set of algorithms to allow users to catalogue the contents of the web, and to allow users to search it more effectively. Fetch.com became the predominant web-based search engine. As it moves into the production of consumer electronics devices, Fetch.com has come into direct competition with Orange.

After Coakley served the minimum amount of his sentence, the parole board approved his release. He returned to Stark City and created a powered armor company. His intention was to create an advanced set of armor with superior surveillance and defense capabilities to allow law enforcement officers to better combat supervillains. ARES Labs moved to stop Coakley in the courts, claiming that he was improperly utilizing its research. Coakley decided to abandon his efforts, fulfilling any remaining debt he felt toward ARES, and focused his efforts on forming Maniacal, Inc. He used the advanced surveillance research of his armor division to create a new kind of cutting-edge sunglasses company. The glasses can

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come with enhanced low-light, infrared, or night-vision lenses. His latest hit product, the Oracle, is a pair of sunglasses that has transition lenses and uses a heads-up display linked to a smart device for integration with Fetch.com. The “augmented reality” glasses project information gathered from the Internet about the people, places, or things that the wearer is viewing. For example, a restaurant might have links superimposed over it to show its reviews, a menu, and an online reservation form. Maniacal also creates athletic clothing and shoes. Coakley is working on ways to integrate technology into both.

As a side project, Mr. Mayhem has recreated his old armor — just in case. It is an improvement on his original design, but still uses modified and improved ARES weapons and parts. The controls and operating systems are, however, all of his own design. Coakley has had multiple offers to buy his armor or the plans, but Coakley has thus far refused, to avoid any conflict with the lawyers from ARES Labs.

Using Mr. Mayhem and Maniacal

- Coakley is a reformed villain, who feels genuine remorse for his crimes. He is frustrated by the government's inability to fix the endemic problems he sees, and ARES Labs' incessant attempts to punish him for his past crimes. If Coakley becomes too frustrated, he could take matters into his own hands. How do the characters respond when an armored avenger begins blowing up drug labs and their inhabitants? Coakley could develop a “Robin Hood” persona and begin robbing ARES Labs and other corporations that are not involved enough in improving their communities.

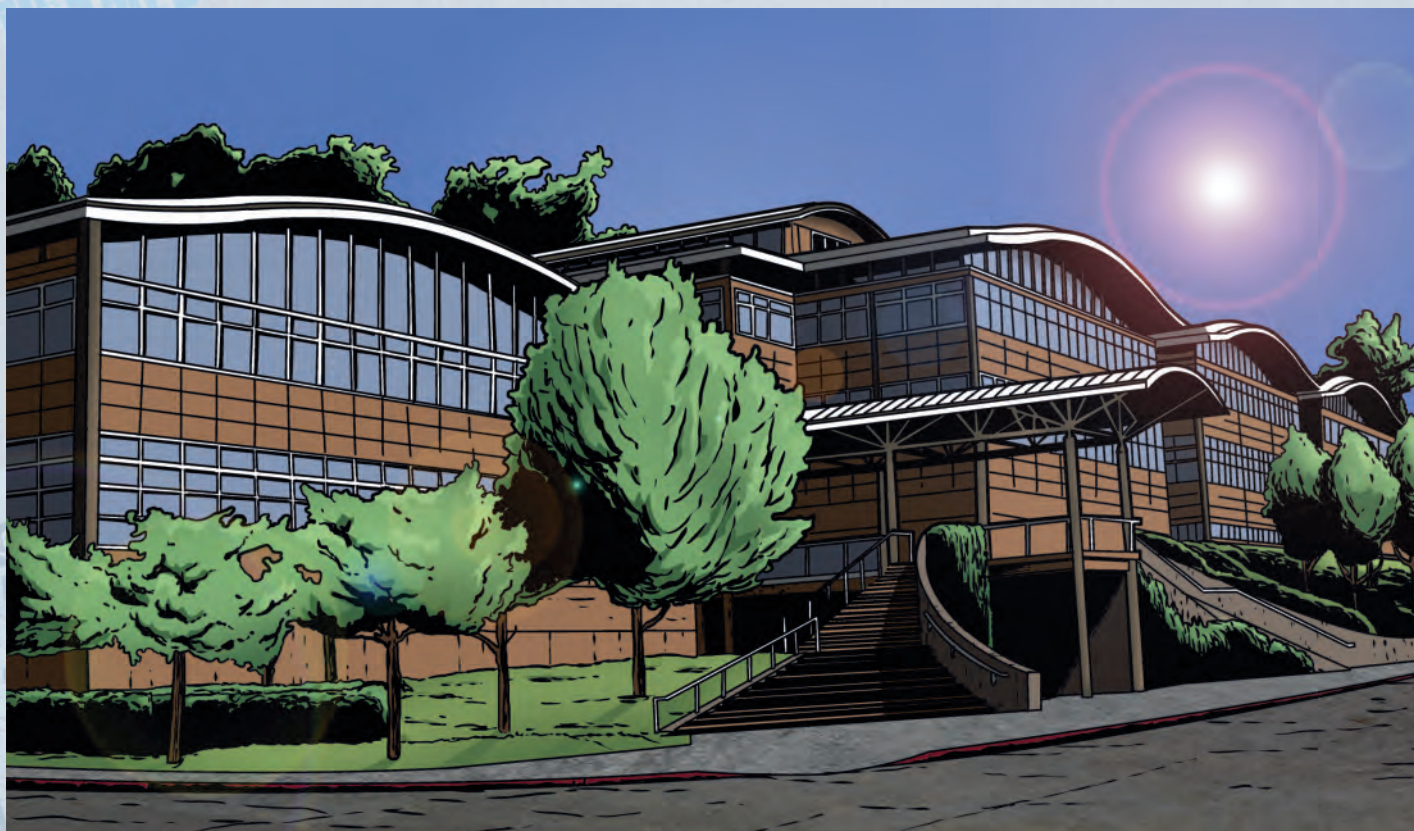
Paragon Engineering

Aspects

“We don't make the products you buy. We make them magical.”

Corporate Deal with ... the Devil
Wizards Wanted

Description: Albert von Bollstadt founded Paragon Engineering several decades ago. It is a small research firm that employs fewer than 100 people, most of whom are scientists, engineers, and post-doctoral researchers. Little is publicly known about how much money the



company makes or the sources of its funding. As a privately held company, it is not required to report its finances to the investing public. Paragon attempts to stay out of the news and wants nothing to do with publicity of any kind.

Paragon Engineering does not manufacture its own products, but instead leases devices or creates processes for others to make their products better. The company's first invention was a process for greatly improving the tensile strength of certain metals. The next invention was a process for allowing cheap metals to be used as replacement material in electrical devices that previously required gold, silver, or platinum to work effectively. Unknown to Paragon's customers, both of these processes were derived from von Bollstadt's alchemical research.

Von Bollstadt was not content merely to capitalize on alchemy for profits, so he used his contacts in the magical community to expand into more esoteric areas. He discretely sought out shamans, wizards, and legendary magical devices to allow his team of scientists to determine their potential commercial uses. The result has been a concerted effort by Paragon to commercialize magical teleportation. A more recent venture has involved Paragon Engineering sending teams of scientists and magicians into alternate dimensions to discover alien technology and bring it back to this dimension. The results of one such attempt are featured in Improbable Tales #10, Through the Looking Glass.

Because of the sources of Paragon Engineering's products, the company does not patent anything. It relies instead on its culture of secrecy and dire magical spells to prevent disclosure of its secrets. Paragon Engineering employs a team of wizards with dubious morals to prevent employees from divulging anything sensitive, and to destroy anyone who might learn too much. The research facility is guarded by demons, golems, and various extra-dimensional horrors

The Mystic

Real Name: Matthew Lance

Origin: Birthright

Abilities

Prowess 2
Coordination 6
Strength 3
Intellect 4
Awareness 4
Willpower 6

Stamina 9
Determination 1 (if used as a PC)

Specialties

Occult
Performance (Stage Magic) Expert
Sleight of Hand Expert

Powers

Cosmic Power 6 [Transforming Ray (Offensive); Extras: Shrinking Ray (Offensive), Dimension Travel; Limit: Ability-Linked (Willpower)]

Damage Resistance Device 4 - Enchanted tuxedo

Flight Device 3 - Enchanted cape

Illusion 8 - Images

Qualities

Seeks Vengeance
Paragon of Prestidigitation
Stage Magician Turned Dimension-Traveling Wizard
"Abracadabra!"

Challenges

Hunted the Council of Eight
Previously Transformed Victims Seek Revenge
All Spells Have Obvious Visual Effects
No Compassion for Criminals
Doesn't Understand Current Cultural References

Background: Matthew "Matt" Lance comes from a long line of magicians. He started performing stage magic at an early age and developed a reputation as a master illusionist. Lance's grandfather contacted him with a

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warning of a conspiracy of wizards seeking to destroy him. Lance's grandfather asked him to come home and receive instruction in the family secrets. Lance ignored his grandfather's pleas, assuming that he had become senile, and continued with his packed Vegas show. It wasn't until his grandfather's funeral that Lance discovered the family business wasn't stage magic, but actual wizardry. In the weeks that followed, Lance learned how to create real illusions and transformations from his grandfather's written instructions, and donned his tuxedo and cape.

The Mystic then sought out his grandfather's killers. He quickly discovered them and turned each of them into a Rubik's cube and tossed them into a void dimension from which they could not escape. It was not until years later that the Mystic discovered the murderers were mere lackeys of the Council of Eight. The Council approached the Mystic and demanded his service to them. The Council instructed the Mystic that they were the magical guardians of the infinite dimensions, and he owed his powers to them. His grandfather had attempted to shirk his responsibilities and paid with his life. The Mystic would either submit to the Council of Eight or be destroyed by them.

The Mystic refused to cooperate with the murderous wizards and destroyed them wherever he found them. He skipped from dimension to dimension, picking his battles wisely. When he could, he transformed his victims and expelled them to the hellscape dimension. When he was outnumbered, he fled to the next dimension. The Mystic is now familiar with dozens of dimensions, some parallel Earths and others wildly different from Stark City's Earth. When the Mystic entered this dimension, Paragon Engineering founder Albert von Bollstadt found him and offered him sanctuary. Von Bollstadt offered the Mystic a potion that would prevent the Circle of Eight from tracking him. In exchange, the Mystic provides Paragon Engineering with assistance in acquiring technology from parallel dimensions.

Using the Mystic and Paragon Engineering

- Paragon Engineering could easily be the source of any type of supernatural menace that enters Stark City. The powers of darkness are easily summoned, but not always easily contained or controlled. An example of one such scenario is present in *Improbable Tales #6, The Other Side*. Paragon Engineering could easily replace any of the companies included in that adventure, or it could be added as an additional red herring or co-conspirator with the powers from the other side.

- The Mystic is an amoral vigilante who cares more about vengeance than justice. He is attempting to keep a low profile in this dimension, but if he comes into contact with the criminal element, he will dispose of them as he always has. He transforms them into an inanimate object and tosses them into a hellscape dimension. A PC's connection might run afoul of the Mystic either as someone caught in the crossfire, a disposable witness, or a criminal. Tracking down the whereabouts of the lost connection would lead to an inevitable conflict with the Mystic. If the characters are not careful, they



could be duped by the prisoners of the Mystic's prison dimension into releasing them. How do the characters respond when dozens of supervillains from dozens of different dimensions spill out into the streets of Stark City?

- Eventually, the Council of Eight will come calling for the Mystic. If the Mystic has earned the characters' trust, he may call on them for assistance. If not, the characters may be called in by authorities to stop the full-scale wizards' war that is wreaking havoc in Tesla Industrial Park.

ARES Laboratories

Aspects

Run Like Clockwork

Technology That is Out of This World

Weird Science

Lots of Tour Groups

Description: ARES (Advanced Research Expanding Science) Labs makes most of its revenue from munitions and weapons manufacturing, but the company's leadership is eager to make the public more aware of its other products. So while most of the company's facilities, located in the American Southwest, work on military projects, its corporate headquarters in Tesla Industrial Park focuses primarily on highlighting the non-military aspects of its research lines, such as personal flight devices, energy manipulation, bio-engineering, teleportation, and chrono-engineering. The Tesla Park facility is a working research lab, but it is also a showpiece. Regular press conferences and tour groups serve to spotlight the company's exciting projects. For example, the teleportation pad research was recently highlighted in the Siren newspaper as a possible future cure for the city's rush-hour congestion.

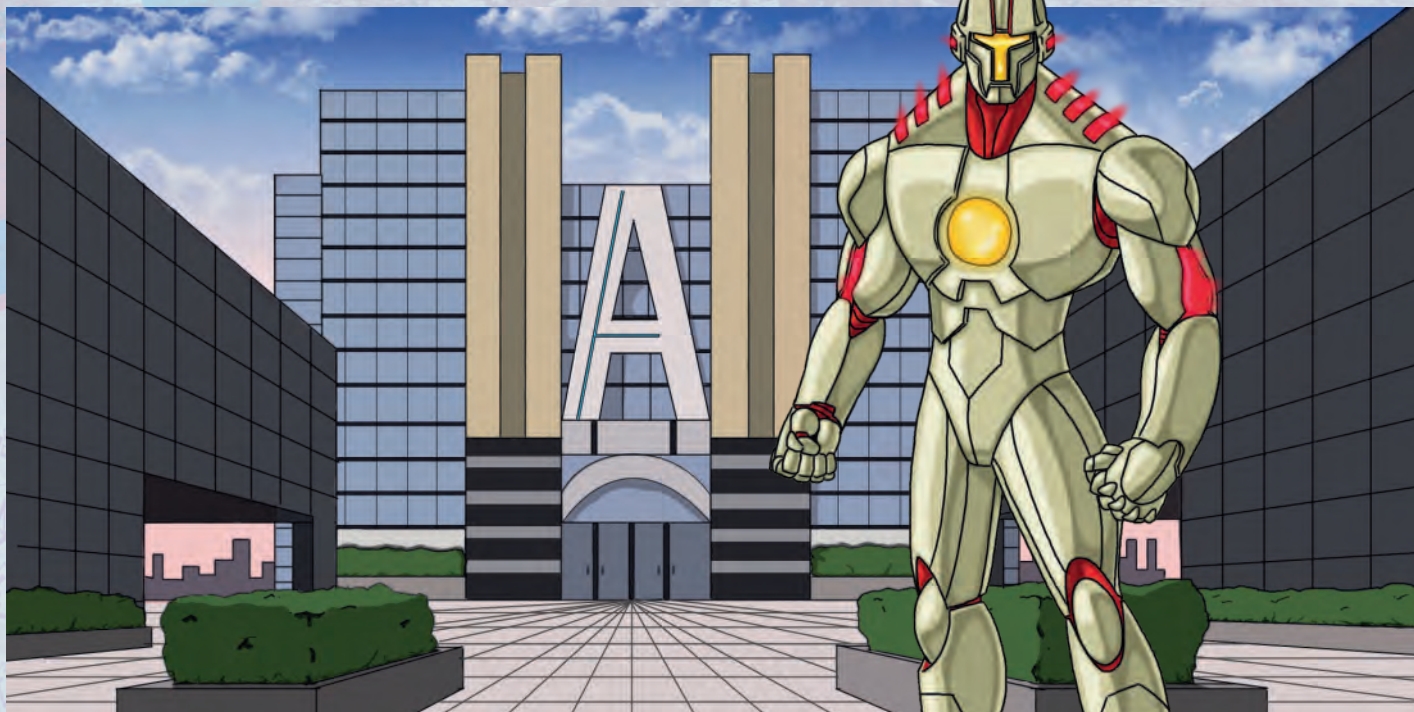
Originally founded in the late 1960s, ARES Laboratories was primarily a small-arms manufacturer that worked on government contracts to improve weapons during the Vietnam war. In the early 1970s, after the war ended, two changes transformed ARES from a run-of-the-mill defense contractor into one of

the leading forces in advanced weapons research. First, Dr. Robert Wright — a visionary inventor — joined ARES as its CEO. Wright's reputation as a scientific maverick led to the second change: ARES won a secret contract to reverse-engineer alien technology found at a crash site in Coyame, Chihuahua in 1974. That contract kick-started the lab's research department and allowed ARES to explore dozens of highly diverse and experimental fields.

However, even with new and exciting directions for ARES, the company never stopped work on the mundane weapons that provided the bulk of its profits. Since the late 1990s, ARES has come under the control of Wright's daughter, Dr. Karen Wright — a strictly businesslike woman whose life focuses on pushing the boundaries of science. She follows in her father's footsteps by increasing the range of the lab's areas of expertise and research.

ARES Lab's secret is that, while Karen Wright is the public face of ARES, the company is run behind the scenes by Orion X, a sentient android discovered by Robert Wright when he surveyed the UFO debris field in Coyame. Orion X was an android serving the military of the Sirian Principality, an interstellar empire whose territory includes Earth. By the time his scout vessel crash-landed, Orion X had grown bored with life in the military (he felt his full talents were being wasted), and welcomed the opportunity to work with Wright on pure research and development. Wright and Orion X became friends over time, and Wright eventually introduced his daughter to Orion. The android's prodigious intellect and experience with advanced off-world technology gave ARES a huge advantage in the marketplace. It would also be their downfall if Orion X's existence were ever to be discovered by the government.

ARES's recent public-relations strategy of highlighting the company's non-military research follows Orion X's analysis of the global marketplace and political climate. He predicted that military spending would decline in coming decades, and wanted to position the company to have a stronger footing in the civilian sector. ARES is not without competition, however;



ARES Labs and Maniacal, Inc. are always at odds. Orion X believes that Mr. Mayhem, Maniacal's CEO, has evidence that ARES is run by an artificial entity.

Orion X

Origin: Unearthly (Artificial, Trained)

Abilities

Prowess 4
Coordination 4
Strength 8
Intellect 8
Awareness 2
Willpower 3

Stamina 11
Determination *

Specialties

Computers Master
Electronics Master
Military Expert
Science Master (Physics)

Powers

Life Support 10 [Breathing, Cold, Eating, Heat, Pathogens, Pressure, Radiation, Sleeping, Toxins, Vacuum]

Qualities

Android Scout from the Sirian Principality
Secret Power Behind the Throne at ARES

Challenges

Suspicious of Maniacal, Inc.
Has Trouble Relating to Most Biological Life

Using Orion X and ARES Laboratories

- ARES is analogous to STAR Labs in DC Comics or Project Pegasus in Marvel. It provides a "weird science" element for adventures or characters. Either a hero or villain could easily have a connection to ARES that could explain the emergence of his or her powers or possession of high technology. Also, the advanced research done at ARES makes their Tesla Park facility a tempting target for supervillains. The psychic communication or chrono-engineering devices would be of particular interest.

- The exact motives of Karen Wright and Orion X are left up to the GM. As written, they're fairly benign and simply focused on scientific research. ARES could easily be a more activist

company interested in promoting public welfare by training and equipping a select group of vigilantes with the latest crime-fighting gadgets; perhaps ARES Labs would even partner with the Sentinels to help make Stark City safer. On the other hand, Orion X could be a malevolent android who has brainwashed Karen Wright, keeping her ignorant while he builds an army of drones in a subterranean level of Tesla Industrial Park and waits for the day when he will make his move to conquer first the city, then the nation.

NyxTech

Aspects

Full of Dark Secrets

Always Looking for "Volunteers"

Takes an Active Interest in the Community

Description: NyxTech is an international medical-device manufacturer headquartered in Stark City. The company started in the business of storing people's dead, frozen heads and bodies with the goal of maintaining them until medical science advanced to the point to where their deaths could be reversed. In developing this technology, NyxTech invented a device that could temporarily (up to an hour) suspend a patient's bodily functions and stave off death in the short term while waiting for proper medical care. The cryogenic suspension chamber was a huge commercial success, and is used by mobile rescue units throughout the industrialized world. NyxTech continues to pursue cryogenics research, seeking to use deep cold to suspend a person's vital functions indefinitely in hope of future revivification. This technology does not currently exist, but NyxTech's animal trials have had some success.

As the company grew more profitable, it diversified into the fields of biotechnology, cybernetics, and cloning. NyxTech biotech acquisitions focus on developing gene therapy to extend human life or slow the effects of aging. NyxTech's cybernetic division focuses on creating artificial organs to replace those that fail with age. With the recent acquisition of Moreau Laboratories' artificial womb, NyxTech is working on vat-grown replacement organs and cloning technology. The company intends



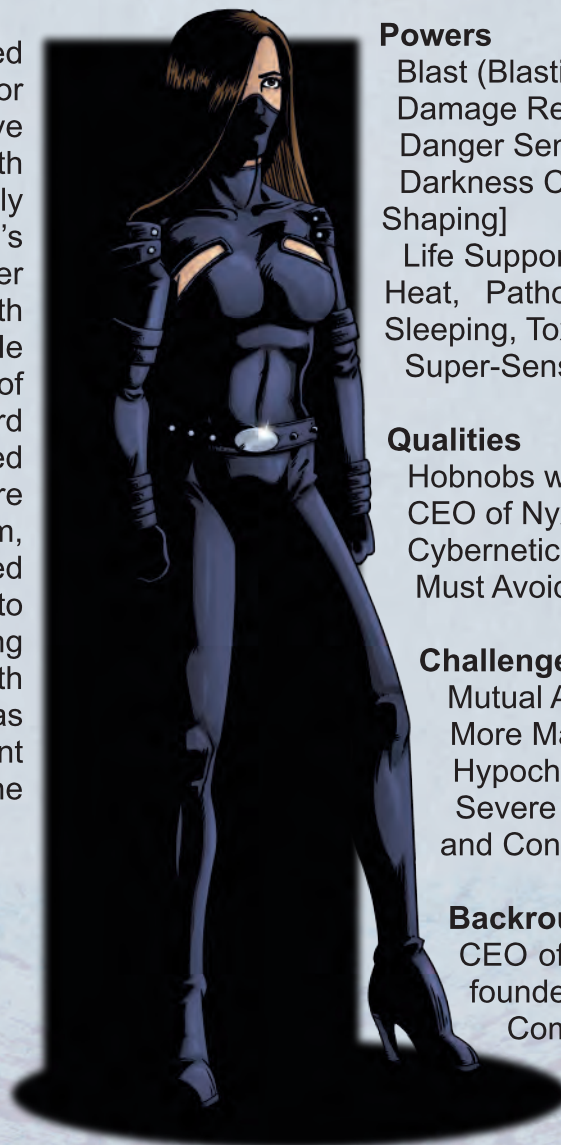
to create replacement organs that are perfect genetic matches for its wealthiest customers. Today, NyxTech employs over 1,000 scientists across the globe and tens of thousands of employees in its manufacturing facilities.

NyxTech has a reputation for ground-breaking products and cutting-edge research. It also has a pristine reputation as a good "corporate citizen," largely because of its generous public commitment to charity. The company has established a multi-billion-dollar charitable foundation that endows medical chairs at the nation's top universities, funds hospital wings, and sponsors other health-related charities and events. NyxTech also support charities aimed at assisting children, the indigent, and the working poor. It often provides free or reduced-cost medical devices to those in need.

NyxTech's reputation for good works stems from a public-relations campaign designed to place the company above reproach. Whenever its business methods or research goals are

seriously questioned or criticized in the media, NyxTech employs a viciously effective and covert team of medical experts, private investigators, and muscle to ensure that the critic is discredited or destroyed. The company has a lot to hide. NyxTech has performed cryogenic stasis research using unwilling human subjects, chiefly transients, illegal immigrants, and others who will not be missed by society at large. Some of its biotech researchers have introduced plant and animal genetic material into those same human subjects. In addition, NyxTech has begun illegal human cloning, with the eventual goal of performing a total organ replacement or even a brain transplant into a young, healthy body for its customers. Finally, the “free” medical devices NyxTech provides to the poor are part of a ruse to collect the recipients’ genetic material in an effort to identify potential test subjects.

Thus far NyxTech has avoided suspicion. The few reporters or medical professionals who have learned too much met with untimely deaths. The only serious threat to NyxTech’s secrets lies in one of its former researchers (Dr. Keith MacKenzie, aka Dr. Arctic). He became suspicious of some of the company’s untoward behavior, and NyxTech targeted him for assassination. Before the assassins could kill him, MacKenzie stole and modified some NyxTech equipment to defend himself. In the ensuing battle, he faked his own death to protect his family, and has sworn to gather sufficient evidence to bring down the company.



Erebus

Real Name: Alethea Nykolaos

Origin: Artificial

Abilities

Prowess 4
Coordination 4
Strength 6
Intellect 6
Awareness 4
Willpower 5

Stamina 11
Determination *

Specialties

Electronics Expert
Mechanics
Medicine Expert
Science (Cryogenics) Expert
Science (Cybernetics) Master

Powers

Blast (Blasting) 7
Damage Resistance 5
Danger Sense 6
Darkness Control 6 [Extra: Shadow Shaping]
Life Support 10 [Breathing, Cold, Eating, Heat, Pathogens, Pressure, Radiation, Sleeping, Toxins, Vacuum]
Super-Senses 1 [Telelocation (Sonar)]

Qualities

Hobnobs with Tesla Park Industrialists
CEO of NyxTech
Cybernetic Killing Machine
Must Avoid Death at All Costs

Challenges

Mutual Antagonism with Doctor Arctic
More Machine than Human
Hypochondriac
Severe Mysophobia (Fear of Germs and Contamination)

Background: Alethea Nykolaos is the CEO of NyxTech and daughter of its founder, Stephanos Nykolaos. Company literature says that the name NyxTech is based on the family’s last name, but

that's not true. Mr. Nikolaos and his daughter worship old, dark gods from ancient Greece. In truth, he named the company after the Greek goddess of the night, Nyx, who was the mother of Hypnos, the god of sleep, and Thanatos, the god of death. Through their worship of Nyx, both father and daughter developed an obsessive and irrational fear of death. Mr. Nikolaos founded the company to cheat death, but ultimately failed. His frozen corpse is safely stored in the NyxTech vaults, waiting for a cure for the rare cancer that devoured him. Unknown to the public, Ms. Nikolaos actually froze her father while he was still alive.

Ms. Nikolaos is determined not to succumb to death's icy grip as her poor father did. Although she has always had perfect health, she replaced all of her internal organs with cybernetic duplicates. As Ms. Nikolaos or her scientists develop newer models, she swaps out the older parts for the most advanced prototypes. She has also used the most advanced gene therapy that NyxTech has to offer — all in an effort to prevent any possibility of succumbing to a disease. Her fear of death by violence has also led her to add armor and armaments to protect herself in case of attack.

When using her “special” abilities, Ms. Nikolaos dons a costume and calls herself “Erebus,” the Greek primordial god of darkness. She is a cowardly fighter, and prefers to strike from concealment. She will not risk injury, and flees if presented with any serious challenge. She only engages in combat when NyxTech is threatened or on missions too sensitive to trust to hired killers.

Erebus's true identity is a secret that only a few of the top scientists at NyxTech know. In her civilian guise, she is a normal, if somewhat reclusive, CEO. She prefers to work and live in a completely sterile environment. She conducts her business by e-mail, telephone, and videoconference. If forced to appear in person, she always has a surgical mask, rubber gloves, and hand sanitizer on her person. Her cybernetics prevent any exposure to toxins and pathogens, but Ms. Nikolaos still takes extreme precautions to avoid exposure to germs.

Using Erebus and NyxTech

- NyxTech is the prototypical villainous corporation. Whenever the gamemaster needs a secret master behind some nefarious plot, NyxTech and Nikolaos are there to fill that role.

- NyxTech has reported Doctor Arctic to the police and accused him of industrial sabotage, theft, and other crimes. The company has paid off several people in the media to report on Doctor Arctic's “misdeeds.” Because of their efforts, most people in Stark City, including the characters, should view him as a villain to be fought or captured if encountered. The characters' perceptions will likely change if they see Doctor Arctic assisting the innocent. Characters are most likely to encounter him in Geartown, where he patrols, or other areas where he knows that NyxTech abducts the homeless for their experiments. In the past, he has staged attacks on NyxTech headquarters, but he knows that the company has moved most of its sensitive operations to locations around Stark City. Doctor Arctic is still trying to locate those secret installations.

Stark City University

Aspects

Graduate School with Some Undergrads
Research Is the First, Second, & Third Priority
(Teaching or Anything Else Ranks Lower)
Hard sciences Built This University

Description: In 1891, wealthy industrialist Richard D. Danforth provided the initial endowment for Stark City University. The next year, the Regents began constructing the University on land donated by Francis Hobbes. Danforth and Hobbes also endowed several graduate science departments and a medical college. The Regents and the University's benefactors wanted to emphasize that Stark City University would focus on pragmatic topics, rather than humanities or the arts.

Unlike most universities, Stark City University was, and to a large extent still is, centered on graduate research. To this day, Stark City University's undergraduate population remains small compared to other institutions of higher learning. It has approximately 4,000

undergraduate students and a graduate and professional student population of over 12,000. Fitting with its focus on academics and graduate research, the Regents ended Stark City University's membership in the Big Ten conference and terminated all varsity sports programs. Some members of the Regents have suggested restarting varsity sports programs, but this proposal has not gotten much traction among the faculty. Intramural sports remain popular on campus.

As Stark City University grew, it developed a full curriculum and founded departments in other areas beyond pure science. The University's economics, political science, and English departments are among the best in the nation. The economics and political science departments have provided many advisers to government agencies and presidential campaigns. Stark City University also has the largest faculty of Nobel laureates in the world. Laureates include prize winners in chemistry, physics, medicine, literature, and economics. Stark City University alumni include many Fulbright awardees and Rhodes scholars.

Despite the success of its non-science departments in the last 50 years, SCU is still known by many as a scientific research powerhouse. Undergraduates and graduate students alike know that a degree from Stark City University is a ticket into the cutting-edge tech companies of Tesla Industrial Park. The two groups have a symbiotic relationship, with many Tesla Industrial Park companies contributing millions of dollars every year to the University. Stark City University funnels this money into basic research and spends more than \$500 million in support of faculty and post-doctoral researchers, who perform innovative research and experiments on campus. Graduates of the University then take this knowledge and expertise to work for Tesla Industrial Park companies.

The most recent controversy to hit Stark City University is a proposal to create a Department of Magic and Metaphysics. The University has classes on the historical, sociological, philosophical, psychological, or anthropological aspects of magic in their respective

departments. For many years, the Anthropology Department has also offered a focus on magical traditions for its students. Part of the reason for the backlash surrounding the proposal is that it would allow not just the mundane aspects of magic, but also the possibility of teaching and researching the practical uses of magic. Obviously, this would require Stark City University to recruit a faculty of mages.

Necrovore

Real Name: Wallace Geofferey, Ph.D.

Origin: Gimmick

Abilities

Prowess 2
Coordination 3
Strength 3
Intellect 7
Awareness 7
Willpower 7

Stamina 10
Determination *

Specialties

Occult
Science (Archaeology)

Powers

Cosmic Power Device 7 [Mind Control; Extras: Force Field, Servant (summon the spirits of the victims of the skull); Limit: Ability-Linked (Intellect)] - Crystal Skull
Energy Drain Device 8 [Extras: Life Drain, Ranged] - Crystal Skull
Teleport Device 6 - Crystal Skull

Qualities

"Your soul will make an excellent addition to my collection!"

Mediocre Academic Turned Supervillain
Seeks to Increase His Magical Powers

Challenges

Opposed by Liadan, the Grey Lady
Without the Crystal Skull, All Mental Abilities Drop to 3
People Are Nothing but Potential Minions
Corpse-Like Appearance When Holding the Crystal Skull

Background: Wallace Geofferey was an associate professor of archaeology at Stark City University. He had little hope of tenure and needed a discovery to make a name for himself. While examining an old aviator's journal, he found an obscure reference implying there might be some undiscovered ruins in the Peruvian mountains. Geofferey traveled near the site and tried to hire a guide, but the locals refused to accompany him and made dire warnings to avoid the area.

Geofferey dismissed their superstitious fears and trudged into the wilderness alone. He soon encountered a temple complex which, instead of being in ruins, was immaculately preserved. He entered the central temple, where he found a perfectly shaped crystal skull. The skull was flawless and could not have been carved by human hands. Geofferey picked it up and felt the arcane energies pulse through him. As Geofferey exited the temple complex, he saw the villagers amassed before him. The village elder told him to return the skull to its resting place and go home. He warned that the skull's power was too great and not meant for mortal man. When Geofferey refused, the peasants fired upon him. Their bullets fell harmlessly aside. The Crystal Skull reached out and siphoned their life energy from them. It left behind only shriveled, dessicated corpses. The feeling of absorbing their souls was euphoric. Geofferey took the name "Necrovore," from the Latin for "eater of the dead."

Necrovore returned to Stark City University and rose quickly through the academic ranks. He used the skull to convince his superiors to promote him, write journal articles for him, and even teach his classes. With the Archaeology Department as his own private fief, Necrovore set about attempting to increase his magical powers. He used his powers to convince the curators of Stark City University's museums to acquire as many artifacts with purported magical powers as

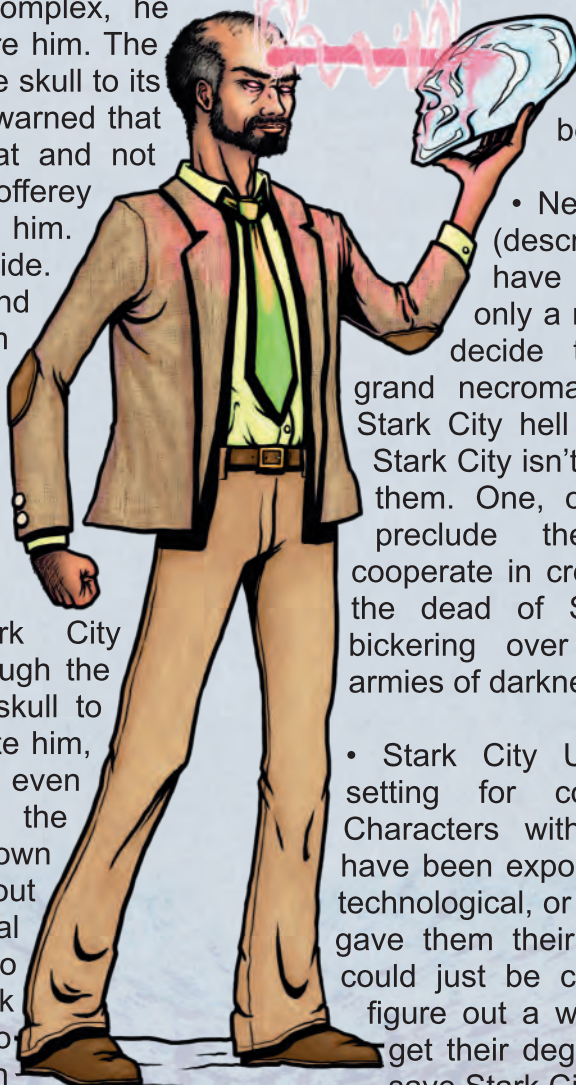
possible. He has also sent the department's graduate students and professors to excavate various locations with magical potential. Necrovore is growing frustrated with his lack of success, and he is the impetus for the creation of a Department of Magic and Metaphysics. Necrovore believes that he can dominate any faculty recruited for the new department, and can force them to divulge their secrets or steal their artifacts.

Using Necrovore and Stark City University

- Characters could come into contact with Necrovore while enrolled in classes at Stark City University. Academic or magical characters may come into conflict with Necrovore in his role as villain or as Department Chair. Professor Geofferey readily uses his mind-control powers to enforce his will and get his way in academic turf wars. Characters displaying magical powers or using magic devices will eventually be targeted by Necrovore.

- Necrovore and Gravedigger (described in the Catacombs) have much in common. It is only a matter of time before they decide to cooperate for some grand necromantic ceremony to make Stark City hell on earth, or decide that Stark City isn't big enough for the two of them. One, of course, one does not preclude the other. They could cooperate in creating a ritual to raise all the dead of Stark City and fall into bickering over who should lead the armies of darkness for greater conquests.

- Stark City University is the natural setting for college age characters. Characters with common themes may have been exposed to the same magical, technological, or biological experiment that gave them their powers. The characters could just be college students trying to figure out a way to pass their classes, get their degrees, pay for school, and save Stark City.



Player One Restaurant, Arcade and Bar

Aspects

It's Like An Arcade . . . with Beer
Innocent Bystanders Galore
Techie Hangout
Secret Lair of Super-Mercenary

Description: Player One is an arcade, bar, and restaurant that caters to the geek crowd. Originally, it was a single restaurant, but as its popularity and business have grown, it now occupies the first and second floors of a large office building. The restaurant and bar are separate, and the game rooms are differentiated by the types of games featured. Player One features more than fifty vintage arcade games, all from 1988 and earlier. Player One has a dozen lanes of Skee-Ball, a bowling alley, and over two dozen pinball machines. The most popular area is a large gaming area full of vintage home-game consoles, each one sitting under a flat screen television in front of a couch. There are hundreds of video game cartridges available for rental.

The food is better than that of most chain restaurants, but is not gourmet. The bar features an impressive display of microbrews and imports from across the world. It's a favorite hangout for scientists and engineers from the various Tesla Industrial Park firms and students from Stark City University. Nightly events are held to boost attendance. These events range from happy hour drink specials to ladies' night to the ever-popular single-elimination Pac-Man, Centipede, Defender, and Galaga tournaments.

With its "geek chic," one would expect Player One to attract a predominantly male crowd, but this is not the case. The demographics of the tech sector are changing, and many Stark City women know that if they want to meet successful, single men, Player One is an excellent place to go. Player One capitalizes on this perception and does all it can to encourage women to patronize the establishment through reduced cover charges and drink specials. Player One also promotes mingling with various icebreakers and social games.



The Tangler

Real Name: Joe Roberts

Origin: Gimmick

Abilities

Prowess 3
Coordination 4
Strength 4
Intellect 6
Awareness 3
Willpower 4

Stamina 8
Determination *

Specialties

Computers
Electronics
Martial Arts
Mechanics
Science (Chemistry)

Powers

Gadgets Device 6 [Extra: Arsenal (Absorption - Battlesuit, Binding - Tentacles, Swinging - Tentacles); Limit: Ability-linked (Intellect)] - Tangler Battlesuit

Qualities

Greedy
"I always get my target."
Super-Mercenary
Works in the Catacombs and with the Mafia

Challenges

Quiet and Brooding

Background: Joe Roberts is the owner and operator of Player One. He has a large workshop in the basement where he repairs and reconditions old arcade games. Player One provides a excellent HQ for Roberts. It gives him the opportunity to hide in plain sight without fear. No one would suspect his real career when he's a very public (and high-profile) entrepreneur in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Stark City. Roberts is a bit of a tinkerer, and twice a year hosts Robot Battles at Player One, where he and his customers pit custom made robots they've built against each other.



Roberts is also a high-priced mercenary who fills a very special market niche: for a very large fee he will capture any superhuman (villain or hero makes no difference). Once he is hired to retrieve a target, he never quits. He assumes different costumed personas and devises different inventions depending on the target, although he is rather fond of the versatility of the Tangler's signature gadgets and uses that persona most often. Despite his affection for the Tangler identity, he is not overly sentimental. He is a professional and strives to come up with the right gadgets to bring in his target. Some of his more well-known previous personas include Mecha-Shrike, Daytripper, and the Atomic Arachnid.

Roberts is motivated only by profit, and is utterly untroubled by the morality of his actions. He captures heroes and villains without hesitation. His clients include a diverse assortment of metahumans, supervillains, and government agencies (who use his services covertly and pay in cash). His government clients range from the BMA contacting him to bring in a criminal who has been eluding them to a shadowy operation that is known only as "the Agency" asking him to snatch a particular metahuman with mutations they find worthy of study.

Using The Tangler and Player One

- If a player is absent from a game session, his or her character could have been captured by the Tangler. The remaining characters have a limited period to discover the identity of the kidnapper and rescue their comrade before he or she is turned over to the Tangler's employer.
- Player One is constantly filled with innocent bystanders. If the gamemaster needs a location where the characters are limited in using their powers, this is an ideal location. Should the characters cause too much damage to the

structure, harm customers, or otherwise annoy Roberts, he might decide to exact some revenge in one of his personas by capturing the offending character for free or taking a greatly reduced fee from the character's nemesis.

Group of Interest: Research and Advancement in Idea and Design Aspects

Driven By Science!

Utopian Ends Justify Violent Means
Machiavellian and Devious

Background: RAID (Research and Advancement in Idea and Design) is a mysterious super-science terrorist organization that plagues Stark City (particularly the Tesla Park area) frequently enough to be familiar to most citizens, but very little is known about their motives or goals. An obligatory manifesto has been published online and contain florid language about how they aim to forcibly evolve human society through enlightened leadership and technological innovation. But to the casual observer, RAID looks like nothing more than another group of thugs (albeit equipped with bleeding edge gear) out to enrich themselves through crime and terrorism.

One thing that can be said with certainty is that they're devious. The hallmark of a RAID operation is a plan within a plan, with misdirection being their favorite tactic.

- A grand scheme to seize Tesla Park, isolate it behind a force field, and enslave the scientists employed there to work as a slave labor force failed. However, while the US military's resources (and a preponderance of costumed vigilantes) were focused on stopping them from walling off Tesla Park, RAID succeed in stealing an orbital spy satellite.

- They failed in their stated threat to hijack and ransom an entire US naval squadron in during recent war games in the Atlantic, but they succeeded in stealing a top-secret cloaking device that was being tested on the one destroyer they did briefly occupy.

RAID is not just a problem for the legitimate research companies of Tesla Park. They've also attacked criminal factions. Usually these attacks are done to seize technology that interests RAID. For example, RAID hijacked one of the Anarch gang's vehicles when they heard that the gang was using teleporters in their cars to escape pursuit. (The Auguste Anarch is still plotting revenge over that slight.) However, their motives aren't always scientific. RAID recently pulled off an elaborate heist in which they cleaned out the vault of the Centennial Casino. Analysts speculate this was done simply to raise operating capital for the terrorist organization.

MAKO and RAID have an uneasy relationship. The two terrorist groups have very similar goals and tactics, and have allied themselves in the past on mutually beneficial operations. (For example, a foiled plan to assassinate the Secretary General of the UN when he visited Stark City was carried out by MAKO and RAID agents working in tandem.) However, there's a lot of distrust between the two groups — MAKO, specifically, doubts the sincerity of RAID's revolutionary rhetoric — and they have traded shots on more than one occasion.

RAID agents wear distinctive black and yellow "encounter" suits that provide limited protection from various environmental conditions and small arms fire.

Organization

Each RAID cell is a self-contained group comprised of a Prime, several research scientists, and a host of RAIDer agents. Each Prime reports directly to the Alpha Inquisitor (the supreme leader of RAID), and the cells coordinate their efforts through him. While there are at least three active RAID cells operating in Stark City (and primarily Tesla Park) at any given time, the organization has expanded to a worldwide operation that, if left unchecked, could topple the balance of power throughout the world.

RAID Headquarters

Aspects

Hidden Under Dry Cleaner
Sprawling Complex
Super-Science Labs
Uniformed Minions on Standby

RAID cells are independent and usually operate out of discreet safehouses or business locations established as fronts for their criminal activities. The central RAID HQ in Tesla Park, for example, is in an underground bunker underneath Sudsy Malone's, a laundry and dry cleaning business that caters to the techie crowd in Tesla Park. Sudsy Malone's specializes in delivering clean clothes to customers' offices (which allows RAID operatives who work as delivery drivers a chance to scout out prospective targets).

The HQ is the heart of RAID's criminal and scientific operations. Dozens of super-science labs are hard at work expanding the organization's wealth of bleeding-edge scientific knowledge. Squads of uniformed RAID agents are on alert, ready to provide backup to field operations.

The Big Secret

While former supervillain and current leading Stark City industrialist, Mr. Mayhem (aka Reginald Coakley), has apparently reformed, his associates from his previous career largely have not.

The Inner Council of RAID is the guiding leadership behind all of the cells. They are Mr. Mayhem's old henchmen from his criminal days. The supreme leader of RAID (the Alpha Inquisitor) is an android with a sophisticated prototype AI that Mayhem was working on before he was arrested.

After realizing that Mayhem's arrest left a power vacuum, the android took control of Mayhem's organization and reshaped it by hiring an army of covert operatives and recruiting dozens of disaffected scientists from all fields of study.

While many RAID operatives are passionate about the party line about "tearing down the old, oppressive global hegemony and replacing it with a utopia that enriches all of its citizens through the bounties of technology and science," it is just a convenient cover story concocted by the Alpha Inquisitor. The Inner Council is interested only in their own financial gain, while the Alpha Inquisitor, the driving force behind RAID, has his own separate agenda.

His goal is simply to construct a criminal organization that's sufficiently wealthy, dangerous, and influential to be worthy of its "father," Mr. Mayhem. However, perhaps due to a flaw in his AI, that point always seems to be beyond the horizon, after the next big heist.

Alpha Inquisitor

Origin: Artificial

Abilities

Prowess 6
Coordination 4
Strength 8
Intellect 7
Awareness 4
Willpower 4

Stamina 12
Determination *

Specialties

Computers
Drive
Martial Arts
Mechanics
Science (as needed) Expert
Pilot
Weapons (Gyrocom)

Powers

Damage Resistance Device 3 - Encounter Suit (Armor)
Life Support Device 7 [Breathing, Cold, Heat, Pressure, Radiation, Toxins, Vacuum] - Encounter Suit (Environmental Protection Suit)
Binding Device 5 - Gyrocom (Hand-Held Micro-Missile Launcher Sample Ammo Type 1)
Blast (Shooting) Device 5 - Gyrocom (Hand-Held Micro-Missile Launcher Sample Ammo 2)
Blast (Shooting) Device 3 [Extra: Burst] - Gyrocom (Hand-Held Micro-Missile Launcher Sample Ammo 3)
Interface Device 5 [Extra: Broadcast] - RAIDER-COM Wristband
Machine Control Device 5 [Extras: Machine Assembly, Machine Shaping] - RAIDER-COM Wristband Transform (People) 5 - Mimic People

Aspects (Qualities/Challenges)

Sometimes the Only Way to Save Something Is to Start Over
More Human Than Human
No One Must Know My Secret

Prime: The leaders of the individual RAID Cells, the Primes use their charisma and influence to ensure that the rank and file follow their lead. They not only lead each cell, but are responsible for the research that is carried out under their watch. One part scientist, one part strategist, each Prime is a force to be reckoned with.

Prime

Abilities

Prowess 3
Coordination 3
Strength 3
Intellect 5
Awareness 3
Willpower 3

Stamina 6
Determination *

Specialties

Computers
Leadership
Mechanics
Science (as needed) Expert

Powers

Damage Resistance Device 3 - Encounter Suit (Armor)
Life Support Device 7 [Breathing, Cold, Heat, Pressure, Radiation, Toxins, Vacuum] - Encounter Suit (Environmental Protection Suit)
Interface Device 5 [Extra: Broadcast] - RAIDER-COM Wristband
Machine Control Device 5 [Extras: Machine Assembly, Machine Shaping] - RAIDER-COM Wristband

Aspects (Qualities/Challenges)

For Science!
Loyal to RAID

RAIDer Agent

Raid Shock Troops

Abilities

Prowess 3
Coordination 3
Strength 4
Intellect 4
Awareness 3
Willpower 3

Stamina 7
Determination *

Specialties

Athletics
Drive
Science (as needed) Expert
Pilot
Weapons (Gyrocom)

Powers

Damage Resistance Device 3 - Encounter Suit (Armor)
Life Support Device 7 [Breathing, Cold, Heat, Pressure, Radiation, Toxins, Vacuum] - Encounter Suit (Environmental Protection Suit)
Binding Device 5 - Gyrocom (Hand-Held Micro-Missile Launcher Sample Ammo Type 1)
Blast (Shooting) Device 5 - Gyrocom (Hand-Held Micro-Missile Launcher Sample Ammo 2)
Blast (Shooting) Device 3 [Extra: Burst] - Gyrocom (Hand-Held Micro-Missile Launcher Sample Ammo 3)

Aspects (Qualities/Challenges)

For Science!
Loyal to RAID



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