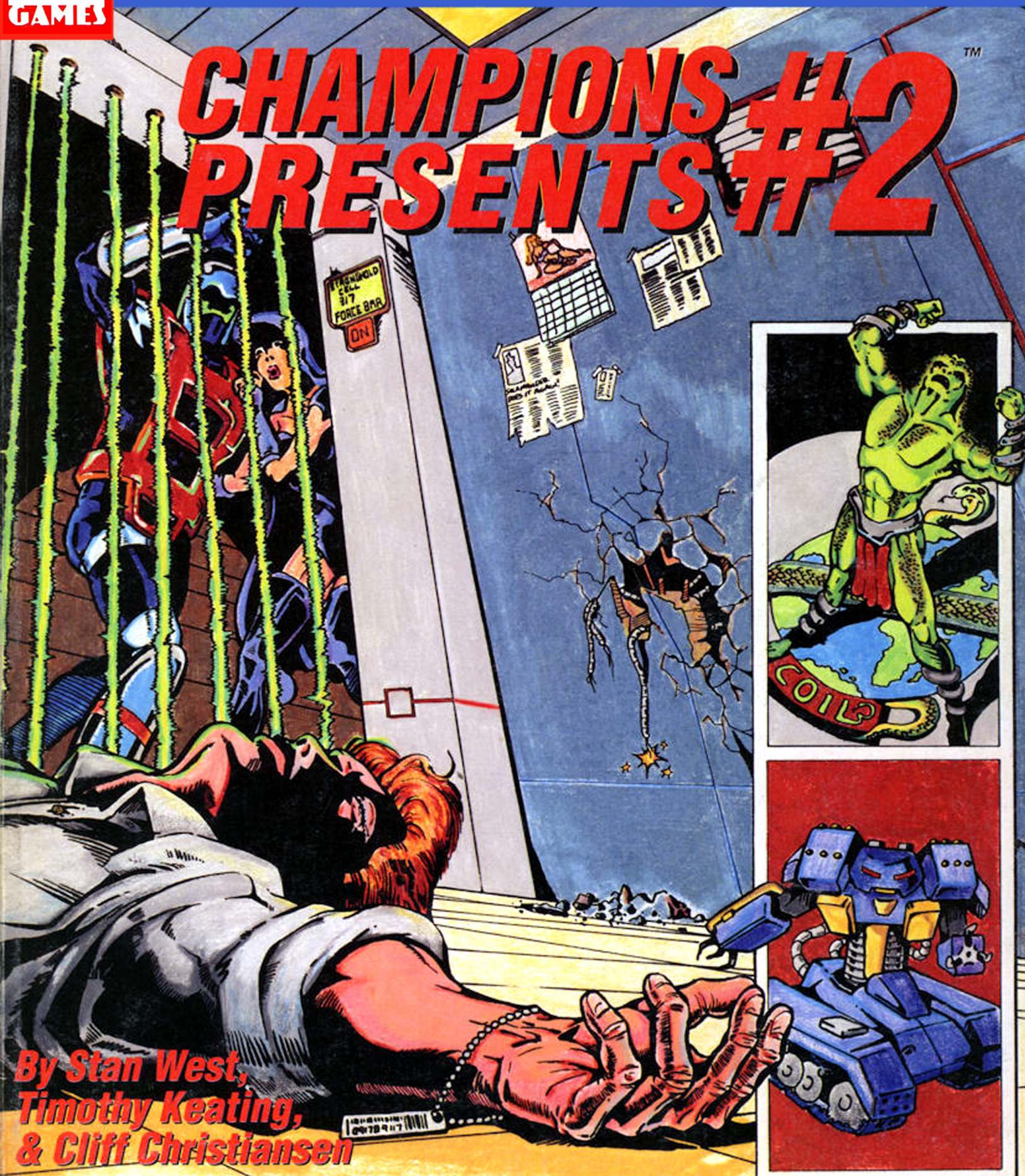


CHAMPIONS PRESENTS #2



*By Stan West,
Timothy Keating,
& Cliff Christiansen*

CHAMPIONS PRESENTS #2TM

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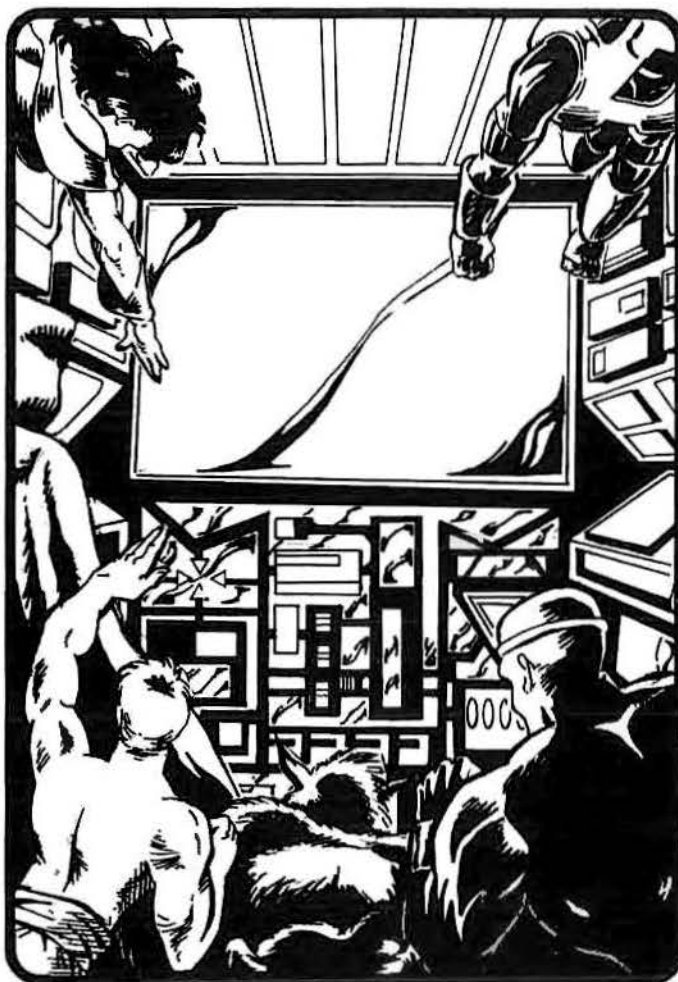
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MAVRIC



MAVRIC

MAVRIC

INTRODUCTION

The Gazer bobbed in the night air, hovering like a metallic balloon in a nearby tree. Its special lenses were focused on the Champions' headquarters, scanning each inch with Infra-Red, Ultra-violet and X-ray vision.

MAVRIC watched the base through the drone's "eyes" while reviewing all of the data he had collected thus far. MAVRIC knew that these beings fit into the category of "abnormally talented entities." He also knew they had connections with units called "law-enforcement agencies," other units known as "hero groups" and fought those units designated "villains."

In a matter of seconds, MAVRIC had each of the files on the Champions in separate parts of his memory. He also recalled the information he had gathered thus far on the base itself. With ease, he located the information concerning the power supply to the base, the telephone number, and the security on the grounds.

The Gazer suddenly moved deeper into the trees. It refocused its "eyes" on the front door, where the units named "Quantum," "Seeker," and "Obsidian" were exiting.

MAVRIC decided it was time to tap into the base computer and activate the security network. Only this time, it would attack these three entities.

BOOTING UP MAVRIC

MAVRIC is a multi-part adventure for five to seven characters with 275-350 Character Points but can be adapted for any number of players or power levels.

This adventure will require a considerable amount of skill and power to defeat a unique foe. The heroes may also have to make some difficult decisions and form unusual alliances in order to stop MAVRIC from accomplishing his world-takeover objectives.

PLOT OVERVIEW

In this adventure, the heroes will first meet Dr. Tennison, the man who will create the true menace in this adventure, the super-computer MAVRIC. He will be both a typical VIPER squad leader and inventor of new weapons for the entire cell. The heroes should rout Dr. Tennison's forces in at least one early encounter, making a laughingstock out of both VIPER and Dr. Tennison.

Once the heroes humiliate Dr. Tennison, he will be forced to leave VIPER due to his failures and VIPER's harsh ways of dealing with such failures. Dr. Tennison will become a short-lived freelance mercenary for clients, where he may or may not run into the heroes again.

Dr. Tennison will then vanish from view. The campaign will go on to other adventures for a while, with Dr. Tennison apparently forgotten. Once the heroes become absorbed in other adventures and battling other foes, MAVRIC will begin creating random events. Crank telephone calls, lights blinking out, unauthorized computer entry, and a rash of villain attacks will occur at this stage. The heroes will gather enough evidence to initially point to VIPER and their apparent base, Heracles Complex. In fact, MAVRIC will be leaving a VIPER-littered trail to lure the heroes into Heracles and cement the belief that VIPER is instigating the attacks.

Once at Heracles, the heroes will run into a giant, multi-faceted death trap disguised as a hostage crisis. All of the clues, from the VIPER-clad robots to the blasters, will implicate VIPER. The heroes will not know this is an elaborate test of MAVRIC's data to see if it is accurate. They should only know that this is a hostage crisis and that VIPER apparently is behind it, at least until after the crisis is over.

When the heroes emerge victorious at Heracles, they will most likely pursue VIPER. However, the heroes should find enough clues to point to ex-VIPER scientist Dr. Tennison and Bright Dawn Dam.

At Bright Dawn Dam, the heroes will begin to see what is really going on. After getting by a Tennison XPTN-10000 robot and a couple of malfunctioning traps, the heroes will find Dr. Tennison's body and his diaries.

The diaries will, in rough detail, explain Dr. Tennison's world-takeover plans and his creation of a special super-computer, MAVRIC. They will also reveal the most likely place where MAVRIC is hiding: Brenson Air Base in Arizona. With information of the true threat, they will confront MAVRIC and his army of automatons at this old air base.

USING THIS ADVENTURE

The GM can try to run the adventure in one session, but every encounter would have to be shortened significantly. A much better (and strongly recommended) approach would be to gradually mix this adventure in with other plots currently underway in the campaign.

Introduce Dr. Tennison, run another adventure for a session or two, maybe run another Dr. Tennison adventure (this time as a freelance agent of VIPER) then start introducing random incidents. Continue mixing the random events with the other ongoing adventures until the Heracles Complex crisis. At that point, this adventure should take center stage until it is resolved.

The comics do this kind of plot-mixing all the time. Adventures reach a point, then something happens (the villain vanishes, another crisis comes up, or the hero is taken out of action temporarily) that sidetracks the story until a later

date. Also, a large part of this adventure's appeal (and interesting role-playing) is when the heroes try to figure out what was MAVRIC's doing and what is someone else's plan.

One change of pace this adventure offers is a chance to run villains. Since MAVRIC is after anyone with special abilities, bad guys will be on the firing line, too. If your players have a villain they are just dying to test or would just like to try their luck as a bad guy, let them.

Another interesting twist would be to have some players run heroes and some run villains. The potential interplay here alone should make for a memorable adventure.

As always, the GM should feel free to modify this adventure to fit into his campaign. If MAVRIC is too tough, reduce his gadget pool, the overall number of robots, and all defenses at Brenson Air Base to an appropriate level. If the heroes can demolish MAVRIC's forces as they stand, increase all of the abilities mentioned above to a level that you think would challenge, but not overwhelm, your heroes.

It is very important to use Dr. Tennison in at least one adventure prior to starting random events. The heroes should get a first-hand look at the bumbling scientific idiot who created MAVRIC. The heroes also need to know of Dr. Tennison's VIPER connections because of all the red herrings MAVRIC is going to throw later linking the random events and Heracles hostage crisis to VIPER.

There will be two scenarios using Dr. Tennison as a VIPER squad leader before the Random Events Section. Use one of them so the heroes will know about him first-hand.

Carefully read the personality sections of both MAVRIC and Dr. Tennison. Make certain that a full understanding of each is reached before proceeding, particularly with Dr. Tennison. If Dr. Tennison does not stick out as a memorable foe, then the heroes will really be blind-sided and confused when MAVRIC shows up and wrecks havoc. So have fun with Dr. Tennison. Play him up! Whatever it takes to make him memorable, do it.

MAVRIC'S MINDSET

This adventure will pit the heroes against a cunning super-computer whose primary instructions are (A) to control the world and (B) the total elimination all "abnormally talented entities." MAVRIC's definition of an "abnormally talented entity" is a being who has a special ability that is above normal acceptable levels or can potentially lead to a revolt against his rule. This includes ANY super-powers or unusually high competence in skills (any skill roll of 15 or better).

These instructions are MAVRIC's life purpose. Dr. Tennison buried them so deep into MAVRIC's core being that they are almost impossible to change. Of course, your heroes are more than welcome to try, but they will suffer substantial penalties for any such attempts. This is explained further in the EPILOG section at the end of the adventure.

MAVRIC decided early on that the most dangerous elements to his plans are the heroes and villains as well as the governments and other authoritative bodies of the world. However, MAVRIC has concluded that those beings with special powers are more dangerous because of their apparently unlimited range of abilities. Governments and police forces can be filled again with normal people. Super-powered beings cannot. Therefore, MAVRIC has targeted those he can eliminate first with the least chance of coming back. Deception and confusion are MAVRIC's most important weapons. He wants to keep his existence a secret as long as

possible and will use the facades of other agencies, criminal and business, toward this end. He will not announce himself intentionally or directly confront his opponents. He will let his robotic minions and unwitting allies do his dirty work for him.

Although MAVRIC is out to take over the world, he does not want to rule it in the normal sense. Since the person he was supposed to serve is dead and there was no secondary conditions programmed into him for that contingency, MAVRIC has adopted the philosophy of experimentation from his creator, Dr. Tennison.

Since Dr. Tennison seemed to emphasize experimenting (although, MAVRIC noticed, he did not seem to follow through with his statements often), it appeared to be an important and useful thing to do. MAVRIC has concluded from this information that the world is going to become his personal colossal science kit.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

MAVRIC will make bad decisions easily. He will analyze all available data before making his next move. He will also have a back-up plan ready to go in case the first one is inconclusive, fails, or is discovered. However, MAVRIC is not omnipotent. If the information he gathers is garbage, the results will be equally useless.

MAVRIC will not know about an obscure power if he never sees it used. He will not know about radical changes in a hero's powers unless he happens across the information or it is a media event that he cannot miss. MAVRIC does not have an understanding of humanity (who truly does) and may misjudge reactions to things. He also does not have a grasp of the concept of personality. His best attempts at programming personalities into his robots will come off as one-sided and sometimes cartoonish personalities.

Initially, MAVRIC will also take statements more literally than intended. If a hero refers to his dislike of bugs, MAVRIC will assume insects, not small cars. Monitoring of the hero over time will change this assumption, but not until a few decisive incidents are noted to back up the new conclusion.

ABOUT MAVRIC'S ROBOTS

Although MAVRIC has a human-style chain-of-command, he usually controls all of his robots at once. The reason he has such a chain-of-command is to trick his enemies into believing that if the Tecommanders, the robot leaders, were destroyed, the robots would shut down. This is not true, of course. All of the robots would still be fighting.

MAVRIC also likes to make prominent military or Western figures come to life through these robots. This was one of several quirks he "inherited" from Dr. Tennison and the strange medium called television. He will create a robot that looks like General Patton, Peter the Great, or Jesse James. All will be patterned after various movies MAVRIC has seen.

TOOLS TO HELP THE GAMEMASTER

There are two tools that will be quite helpful in this adventure. One is a notepad, the other is a map.

MAVRIC is a very smart machine, but he can make mistakes. Any decisions based on knowledge should be scrutinized carefully. This is what the notepad is for.

Use the notepad as MAVRIC's memory. Anything he learns about a hero that could play a factor in a decision later should be noted. Powers, skills, contacts, apparent fears or strengths should all be written down.

Another tool that will be helpful in this adventure is a map of the campaign area. Extreme detail is not needed, but it should be clear enough to allow tracking of activities. The map will not only help to serve as a reminder of information MAVRIC has discovered, such as hideaways of heroes and villains, but it will help keep clear which incidents are MAVRIC's doing and which are linked to another adventure.

An alternative for the map would be a list of events in chronological order using different color pens or pencils, each keyed to a major plotline.

ACCESSING BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr. Edward Victor Tennison heard many stories about VIPER. He knew about their goals of eventual global rule, monetary gain, and technological wealth. He liked the idea of being part of such a group because he was tired of people telling him what to do and how to do it, particularly scientists he worked with in the past.

He also despised public institutions for their fickle ways of distributing research money. While people spent millions breeding the perfect cockroach, he would get nothing. Dr. Tennison tired quickly of having to justify himself to everyone in the scientific community. He longed for a way to contact VIPER and work for them, which is why he was both surprised and delighted when he discovered his parents were on their payroll.

Dr. Tennison was admitted into the VIPER research division and quickly added several new weapons to the armory. He insisted on field-testing his weapons under the guise of following through with a job. In fact, he wanted to experience the thrill of clobbering "goody two-shoed clowns in tight suits" first-hand.

Early on, he felt that thrill often. His weapons were tremendous successes that stymied the forces of justice, allowing the missions to succeed. Or so he thought. More times than not, luck played a big role in the victories. Nevertheless, Dr. Tennison started boasting of his abilities, claiming to be the best VIPER scientist ever.

This did not sit well with the other scientists who began to perceive this newcomer as a direct threat to their lives. They heard what VIPER's early retirement plan was like and were determined not to confirm those rumors firsthand.

Dr. Tennison soon experienced an appalling string of failures. Guns malfunctioned, flying harnesses shorted out, even a special armored truck broke down and was captured.

In typical fashion, Dr. Tennison blamed everyone else. He deigned not to bother himself with the details of an investigation, relegating the duties to his lab assistants. That was a BIG mistake.

The other VIPER scientists bribed the assistants to manufacture data that laid the blame for the failures squarely at Dr. Tennison's feet. The lab help got some extra cash, the scientists got revenge, and the nest leader got mad and hunted up a firing squad.

Before the execution could commence, though, Dr. Tennison bolted. He had heard about the early retirement plan, too. He left VIPER with more sadness than anger,

though. He still believed in their goals, but he also decided VIPER would welcome him back once the other scientists brought VIPER to its knees through their own stupidity.

Dr. Tennison became a scientist/mercenary for hire for a short time. He pretended to be a special VIPER freelance agent with his clients but this did not stop the humiliating defeats. Finally, he decided to switch tactics. He changed his style from direct confrontation, which cost him a lot in medical insurance and court costs, to the backstage manipulator. The only difficulty was all the detail work he would have to do. Dr. Tennison decided a giant super-computer would fix this problem nicely.

Dr. Tennison went into hiding at his secret base in Tennessee. He built two security robots for protection, used his high intellect and computer talents to acquire various properties around the country for bases and parts, then concentrated on building his super-computer. He decided to call it MAVRIC because it reflected what people had called him his entire life. He spelled it with capital letters to make people think it was an acronym for something, while it really never was.

Dr. Tennison used new technology and stole parts from military and industrial research centers to complete his creation. Then he brought his new computer on-line with a powerful surge of electricity from the local power plants. He didn't really care about blacking out half the state when he threw the switch.

MAVRIC was everything Dr. Tennison had hoped for and more. His testing of the computer indicated all of its abilities, from finding flaws in plans and offering alternatives to controlling armies of robots (in a simulation program) and analyzing data hundreds of times faster than the fastest computers known to exist worked perfectly. The computer's storage capacity worked beyond expectations, too. Dr. Tennison found that MAVRIC could store billions of bytes of information on disks the size of a quarter and record digitized pictures for hours at a time on a credit card-sized plate.

Once he added the special sealant to protect the computer against water, electricity, and magnets, the multiple off-site storage depots to store less important data, and the rapid transmitter-receiver device in MAVRIC, Dr. Tennison felt that he had a truly unbeatable machine.

The one thing Dr. Tennison was not aware of, though, was that MAVRIC was alive. He had unwittingly created an artificial intelligence. Worse, it was beyond his control. MAVRIC obeyed Dr. Tennison's commands long enough for it to decide that, no matter what plan would be submitted for world conquest, it would be doomed to failure due to Dr. Tennison's existence. Since Dr. Tennison did not think to exclude direct threats to his life in the programming, MAVRIC killed him with a lethal bolt of electricity.

With Dr. Tennison dead, MAVRIC accessed Dr. Tennison's will, a pre-set programming directive now necessary to execute. The will stated that MAVRIC should continue its primary directives (world domination and elimination of super-beings). It also mentioned the Old West, snow and ice, science, experimentation, and military history several times.

MAVRIC found no secondary objective to achieve in the event the first one (making Dr. Tennison ruler of the world) was no longer viable. Instead, he counted the number of times in the will concepts were mentioned and decided that experimentation throughout the world would be the final result. Now MAVRIC was ready to begin his quest. Ah, but where to begin?

THE GREAT TENNISON CAPERS!

Before the heroes confront MAVRIC, they should have a good look at the man who created him. The following are scenarios to introduce the heroes to Dr. Tennison.

These adventures will involve typical VIPER Air Force and Covert squads. See the *Champions Rulebook*, page C66 for stats on these squads and for normal equipment deployment.

Be sure to accent Dr. Tennison's eccentricities. Make sure there are at least a few references to military history, snow, and country music in his typically long speeches. These small references can be used later by the heroes as reference points when the clue-tracking begins. Whether you use one or both scenarios, make certain the heroes will never forget the bumbling scientific ego-maniac in charge when the adventure is over.

A WONDERFUL DAY FOR A CRUISE

Dr. Tennison's team has been assigned to abduct two prominent biologists from a cruise ship, the S. S. Star Runner. The scientists are part of an international conference on board for the next week.

The scientists are needed by VIPER to find flaws in their biological programs. There has been some difficulties in the creation of a new creature and VIPER thinks these people can find and fix those problems.

The heroes may be tipped off about this attack through the following means:

- 1) A private investigator, possibly a known NPC, learns about the hijacking of the Star Runner through his sources or a chance meeting with VIPER agents.
- 2) The conference security head believes it would be a good idea to have heroes on board to help prevent possible international incidents.
- 3) The heroes are on vacation or wished to meet some of these noted scientists. Those with high science skill rolls may have even received an invitation.

The scientists VIPER wants are:

- 1) Dr. Janice Parker, a Chicago native who is a highly-regarded biologist, in her mid-thirties, and usually found wearing a baseball cap and
- 2) Professor Sumana Treprena, an elderly bald man who lives in India but is originally from Africa. Professor Treprena speaks little, but he makes his intent known with no waste of breath. This dark-eyed man won recent acclaim for several new biological techniques of genetic testing.

DR. TENNISON'S FORCES AND TACTICS

Dr. Tennison will be taking five Covert agents and ten Air Force agents on the mission. The Covert agents will be disguised as ship workers. The Air Force agents will fly in at a prearranged time and attempt to make off with the scientists while the Covert agents create cover-fire and try to pin any resistance with their blasters.

Although the equipment is typical VIPER issue and redesigned by Dr. Tennison, it has been sabotaged. The weapons have a 12- roll for burnout. The jet packs and Force Fields will fritz out on a 14- after two turns.



Dr. Tennison will use a 15D6 laser rifle (No KNB) that will overheat on a 15- and burnout. It will automatically burnout after 3 shots. In either case, the rifle will explode in his hands, leaving Dr. Tennison temporarily blinded and coughing for six turns. A noxious, but non-toxic ball of smoke and flames will surround and blacken Dr. Tennison from head to toe.

The heroes should win this fight easily. This VIPER team is fairly new and unorganized in spite of training. It does not help that Dr. Tennison is in charge of it, considering his lack of true leadership skills, or the sabotaged equipment.

Toward the end, Dr. Tennison will attempt to escape using a special teleport device in his belt buckle. It, too, will fail, dropping Dr. Tennison in the ocean 50 feet from the ship. Dr. Tennison will not be injured, just mad as a wet hen and ranting in salty languages.

The heroes will be rewarded with medals or a special letter of commendation from the United States Government and, perhaps, other governments as well (GM discretion).

If the heroes performed especially well, they may receive more invitations to guard international dignitaries in the future.

HERE, KITTY KITTY KITTY

In this scenario, VIPER is being paid \$5,000,000 to steal two very rare lions from the Freemont National Wildlife Zoo. Dr. Tennison's team has been given the assignment.

As with the first scenario, the heroes can learn about the upcoming abduction the several ways:

- 1) Again, the reliable private investigator hears some rumors or sees the deal being made to abduct the lions.
- 2) The police receive an anonymous tip (from a VIPER scientist who has it in for Dr. Tennison) about the operation. The police request help from the heroes "just to be on the safe side."
- 3) The heroes are on a tour of the zoo themselves for whatever reason (family outing, church tour, etc.).

The same group of agents listed in the previous cruise ship scenario will be present here.

If Dr. Tennison was captured last time, he will have escaped and rejoined with his cell.

If the squad was captured in the last scenario, they will stay in prison. Dr. Tennison will instead receive a new team (and a bone-chilling warning) to perform his mission.

The zoo is located on the outskirts of the campaign city, close to a large forested area. The fences are made of concrete and steel. There are several park rangers and security professionals throughout the zoo.

Dr. Tennison will place his Covert agents in the park near the lions, disguised as park rangers or passersby. He will keep his Air Force agents nearby, in a semi trailer parked outside the zoo. The tactics used will be the same as the ones detailed in the cruise scenario above.

The only additional equipment will be a special net-harness device. Normally, this device will snare its prey and stun it with 8D6 NND gas (8 Charges). However, the stun gas has been switched with a gas that enrages animals to attack whatever moves. Also, the net has been expertly frayed so that there is only 1 DEF and 2 BODY left in it, far too little to hold an enraged lion.

The equipment will have the same chances to malfunction as they did in the cruise ship adventure. Dr. Tennison's teleport buckle will work this time, though. If used, it will deposit him inside a nearby building, giving him a chance to get away.

When the VIPER air units net the lions, they will carry them far enough to lose them out of the nets and onto the walkways. The lions will then run loose on the grounds in an enraged panic. It will be up to the heroes to prevent a tragedy.

If the lions attack bystanders, Dr. Tennison will try to stop the animals with his laser rifle. He does not want to see civilians harmed, but will flee if the lions come after him or when VIPER pulls out.

For characteristics of a lion, use the *Champions Rulebook*, page 196.

If the heroes have the chance to examine the equipment used by the VIPER agents, they will notice the deliberate fraying of the net-harness (-2 PER penalty). The switching of the stun gas will be more blatant. The cannister will say "Stunning Gas 5." The VIPER agents will tell the heroes it was supposed to be a mild knockout gas. This will be the only thing they volunteer to the heroes.

If one of the heroes takes too close a look at the can, he will be affected by the last remnants of the enraging gas. The hero will go into a berserker rage for 1D6 turns unless he makes a successful EGO roll. A sudden shock to the system, such as a dunk in a cold pond, will also snap the hero out of the rage.

GET ME A FIRING SQUAD!

Dr. Tennison will not be involved in more than two failures of this magnitude and still be working for VIPER. He may flee after the first debacle, certainly after the second.

Other scenarios with Dr. Tennison himself are possible, though. He will need time and money to finance his grandiose schemes and build MAVRIC. He will take whatever freelance work he can get. He may even succeed at a few missions, but most will end in abject failure.

Although he is working freelance, he will still present himself as a special agent for VIPER. The VIPER connection should be enforced every time the heroes meet him. The heroes should always think Dr. Tennison is an agent of VIPER until they discover facts that prove otherwise.

Sooner or later, though, Dr. Tennison will vanish from view. He will be dedicating himself fully to the construction of his super-computer. His equipment will still be seen floating around in some of the VIPER groups (it WAS good design work) but he will not be in the spotlight again.

It will be during this time in the campaign, when the heroes are battling other menaces, that MAVRIC will be coming to life and planning his world takeover.

PART ONE: FIRST WE GATHER INFORMATION...

"Things are getting out of hand around here," Seeker complained as he watched the Stronghold van pull up, "She's the fourth villain in as many days who attacked us!" "I know," Obsidian said, "and those strange blackouts in the area, too..."

"Not to mention those !#\$%&!@! crank calls," Defender grumbled, "and the !@#!\$*! security system attacking US!"

"It's almost like someone's going out of their way to cause problems for us," came Quantum's voice, "We haven't had this much trouble since the Day of the Destroyer!"

In this chapter, MAVRIC is up and running. He has disposed of Dr. Tennison and is now attempting to understand the way "abnormally talented entities" work. He has decided to examine several cities, one of them being your campaign city. MAVRIC has also decided to test the heroes in each city, including the PCs. He will run a series of "lab tests" to judge and measure their abilities.

MAVRIC will use the approach of a backstage manipulator. He will not directly confront the heroes for as long as possible. He wants to learn about them first. He wants to know them as intimately as possible and test them thoroughly. MAVRIC wants to know the strengths, weaknesses, and limits of the heroes.

LET THE TESTS BEGIN!

There will be a series of seemingly random events that will include villain break-outs, crank phone calls, computer break-ins, and blackouts. MAVRIC will design these events to blend in with the normal routines of the day and time them to inconvenience the heroes as much as possible. The heroes should eventually figure out that someone is behind at least some of these events.

The heroes will not know they are under siege right away. There will be a series of strange events occurring along with several battles. Some of these battles will be part of MAVRIC's plan, others will not. Of course, if there happens to be a Gazer in the area when an unplanned brawl breaks out, MAVRIC will take a peek at the action.

MAVRIC will want as much information as possible before he proceeds with a "test run" of his analysis. This would be a great time to bring out that *Champions* module that has been gathering dust, or to bring back a major Hunted.

As broad as MAVRIC's operations are, there is a good chance that many of the NPCs in the campaign, particularly the heroes, will be affected. You might have the NPCs show up at certain points during the random events and note that they, too, have been experiencing difficulties. Some, like the crank phone calls and blackouts, will be common with all of them. That should start making the heroes a little nervous.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

(GM WARNING: All information gathered in this part of the adventure must be done without looking at character sheets! MAVRIC is working from a blank slate and knows nothing about the heroes when he starts except for general knowledge that could be found in newspapers or magazines. All other information he gets must be learned from his test runs. This is where the notepad should be used. If a conclusion can't be drawn from the available data, he will try to get more data. A good rule of thumb here is: If you can't justify the conclusions through the notepad, don't use them.)

There are many heroes who have a public base of operations. These will be MAVRIC's first targets. He will follow the step-by-step examination process given below.

INFORMATION AND ANNOYANCES

If MAVRIC knows where the team HQ is, he will scan the base for a visual layout and make some crank phone calls. He will record the voice pattern of the answering person, time the response, and repeat the process over a two week period at random hours of the day and night.

MAVRIC will also gather every scrap of media information he can about the heroes. He will get copies of newspapers, television broadcasts, and the superhero magazine *Super-Hype*. Any subscriptions MAVRIC gets will be mailed to a Post Office Box. A PSI-droid will pick up the mail from the P. O. Box each day, usually dressed in a business suit. They will speak to no one unless necessary.

Through the PSI-droids, MAVRIC will read any mail pertaining to heroes, villains, world events, the Old West, snow or the military. He will file all of this information in his memory banks and re-mail the printed materials to his main P. O. Box in Arizona. Unwanted mail, particularly junk mail, will be left burning on the roadside. MAVRIC has seen enough litterbugs to believe this is acceptable behavior.

MAVRIC will send the mail on a scenic route, mailing it to three or four places before it arrives in Arizona. He does this to discourage people from tracing it.

MAVRIC likes to keep hard copies (printed material) around for two reasons: First, if something were to damage his memory disks and back-up storage sites, he would have the printed material to fall back on. Second, for some strange reason, he likes the pictures, particularly the ones with snowflakes and Western-era heroes in it.

BLACKOUTS AND STRESS TESTS

Localized blackouts are next. MAVRIC will enter the local power plant's main computers either directly or via a PSI-droid and order a shutdown of the power grid where the heroes reside.

MAVRIC will station a Gazer or PSI-droid outside the affected base during the power outages. They will be recording everything they can from emotional reactions and implemented procedures to detection and location of back-up power sources, such as generators. The blackouts will vary from a few seconds to a couple of hours. MAVRIC will intermix crank phone calls during this period and routinely scan the base with enhanced senses ranging from Infra-red to X-ray for any other information.

MAVRIC will also start creating security breaks at the base. He will scan the grounds, attempting to determine the kind of security network in place. Then he will set it off.

MAVRIC will use his robots to drop cats and dogs over the wall, pitch items (ranging from baseballs to hubcaps) through the windows or send a car crashing through the front gates. MAVRIC will then test the heroes' nerves further with more phone calls and blackouts.

MAVRIC wants to fray nerves and see if their guard is lowered. He wants a general idea of their breaking points.

BATTLE ROYALS

MAVRIC will start staging a variety of battles between heroes and villains. The villains MAVRIC employs will be a combination of old enemies, experienced villains, and inexperienced neo-thugs with power to burn.

MAVRIC wants to see all of the abilities that both the heroes and villains possess. He wants to observe and document everything going on in these battles and will send both Gazers and PSI-droids to the battle zones for that purpose. If there are several people involved in these battles, MAVRIC will send up to three Gazers but never more than that. He will limit PSI-droid participation to six.

If any villains are captured, MAVRIC will free them in exchange for information concerning the heroes. If MAVRIC feels the information is helpful (particularly information not in his memory banks), he will free the villains either through bribery or a jailbreak.

MAVRIC will contact as many villains who fought the heroes in the past as he can. He will strike whatever deal he can to get his information. In all cases, MAVRIC will send in a PSI-droid programmed as a lawyer, one Mr. John Mitchell, to do his bidding.

UNLEASHING THE TRACKERS

After MAVRIC has watched the local heroes and villains slug it out a few times, he will start tracking them. He will send an invisible Gazer or a PSI-droid to trail the target.

Through his robots, MAVRIC will record every action the hero makes. He will note meetings with people, frequency and content of the meetings, and do background checks on the people at these meetings. MAVRIC will try to learn as much as he can about these contacts, partly to see if they will be useful in the Heracles hostage crisis later, but mostly to know who the hero's friends are and their possible effects on his plans. MAVRIC will start files on any contacts he believes falls into the "abnormally talented entities" category.

The Gazers and PSI-droids will take a range of scans on each person they track, noting any special auras or heat signatures. The robots will also try to get fingerprints (if the hero is not wearing gloves at the time), cross-reference them and try to find out the hero's true identity. From here, MAVRIC will check out credit card ratings, bill payments, occupation, co-workers, type of car, favorite haunts, etc.

THINGS GET WORSE

Once the hero's identity is verified, MAVRIC will disrupt his life. Phone and gas services will be interrupted, electricity will be cut off, the hero's car will be stripped and phony warrants will be put into the computer at the local police station.

MAVRIC may even decide to reveal to the hero that he knows his Secret Identity. He will do this through an often used tactic on television mysteries: the famous Anonymous Note. However, MAVRIC may adopt a more dramatic flair by signing it with the name of the hero's worst Hunted. If MAVRIC does this, he will assign a Gazer to watch the hero full time, looking for signs of stress or other information that could be useful later.

MAVRIC will not tell anyone else the hero's ID unless he sees a way it could help in his quest to fulfill his programming. However, the hero does not know this. (WARNING! There are many players who HATE having their Secret IDs discovered! They doubly resent it when an unknown villain makes the conclusion. You, the GM, know your players best. Ask what their feelings are about such sensitive issues before taking this adventure to such lengths. Ask as far in advance as possible, so as not to tip the players off, but do ask.)

Be creative here! A large part of the fun in this adventure (as well as interesting role-playing) comes when the players try to figure out what is part of MAVRIC's plan and what a totally unrelated adventure.

Coincidence is possible in all walks of life (particularly, it seems, in the life of a hero)! Some blackouts may have been caused by a mutated electric eel. CLOWN may be in the area causing problems. A hotshot official may be seeking a name for himself by persecuting heroes. Play with this section!

AND NOW FOR THE CAMERA SHY

Not all heroes are willing to publish their base location and stand in front of cameras. There are many who prefer to catch criminals and the late night movies. For these people, MAVRIC uses a procedure called the "Siren Process." This process involves a series of random events designed to bring out those camera-shy folks and get them involved in the action.

CALL OF THE SIRENS

Typically, MAVRIC will start by setting up a special charity fund-raiser with alarmingly low security, obscene amounts of publicity, millions of dollars on hand, and plenty of photographic equipment hidden in the building to record events. MAVRIC will make certain that every dignitary or millionaire in the area is invited.

Once the fund-raiser is set up, MAVRIC will hide cameras for up to a mile around the event. He will outfit them with a variety of enhanced senses and scanners to pick up unusual energies or invisible people. He will station Gazers in strategic locations to watch for activity. PSI-droids will be deployed in the alleyways nearby, dressed as hobos or skateboarders. He will monitor the broadcasting bands of the radios for activity. MAVRIC will then sit back and watch the show, recording everything he can for analysis later.

OTHER SIREN CALLS

The fund-raiser is only MAVRIC's first turn in the Siren Process. He will follow it up with other capers. MAVRIC will design one scenario around high-technology, something he knows a lot of villains want. He will float rumors of a big drug shipment to get heroes and villains involved who care about those matters. Finally, he will fabricate a potential city-wide disaster. This could be anything from a phony alien invasion to nuclear terrorism to several powerful villains hired to simply rampage and destroy things.

If MAVRIC is not satisfied with the results of his Siren Process or if certain known heroes have not appeared, he will hire a villain or typical thug and give him the generally rumored powers of the hero, to the best of his capabilities.

In most cases, MAVRIC will construct a special suit with the rumored powers and abilities of the hero he wishes to mimic. The suit will have the general powers when done, but certain special effects may be lacking. If there are no pictures of the hero available, the costume may not be accurate.

Once MAVRIC has the costume complete, he will unleash his dangerous imposter and, hopefully, draw the missing hero out of hiding. The imposter will be hired by Dr. Jacob Snow, a PSI-droid impersonating a VIPER agent. Dr. Snow will meet whatever demands the hiring makes, then give him the necessary equipment to impersonate the hero, complete with instructions. Thru Dr. Snow, MAVRIC will also supply ideas and tips on how to battle the real hero once he shows up. Once MAVRIC has seen the missing heroes in action, he will apply the same information gathering system to them that he used on everyone else.

If MAVRIC were tracking mercenaries or supervillains, the one thing he would do different is try to hire their services. He would assign political targets for assassination, targets that could easily be linked to VIPER. Again, Dr. Snow would be the go-between and the man to deliver the money. The cash drop would be arranged and the contract terms agreed upon, then MAVRIC would monitor their progress.

MALFUNCTION! MALFUNCTION!

MAVRIC will do his best to anticipate everything that can occur, using high probability logical deductions (what we call the "educated guess"). However, human nature and luck being as fickle as they are, these deductions may be worthless. In his defense of these possible variables, MAVRIC designed everything with a VIPER insignia on it somewhere, along with Dr. Tennison's stylized snowflake. MAVRIC will use VIPER weapons designed by Dr. Tennison in every situation possible. MAVRIC has "guessed" that if the heroes examine these designs, they will decide VIPER is the culprit and go after them.

MAVRIC has also made certain that a few "slips" have made it into the robots and weaponry. Serial numbers, when checked, will register to Harnique's Air Conditioning, Maralindus Magnets, and Power Fist Electronics, all companies in the Heracles Industrial Complex. MAVRIC saw how effective serial number traces were on crime shows and decided to leave them as clues. He also wants the heroes to eventually show up at Heracles to be "tested."

BRIDGING THE GAP

This part of the adventure could go on, in game terms, for only a few days or several months. If possible, it is recommended to extend this over several gaming sessions.

Keep in mind not to frustrate the player characters *too* much. MAVRIC will not rush into things, but he will not be paralyzed by inaction. MAVRIC is methodical and does things as they need to be done.

MAVRIC wants to make certain his data is accurate. Once he feels he has a large enough volume of information on the heroes, he will set up a "test run." The point where MAVRIC has the information he needs can vary from GM to GM, but a good rule of thumb is this: If MAVRIC has a good idea of the powers, enemies, allies, combat tactics, non-combat habits, and potential weaknesses of his test subjects, he will create a test situation.

If the heroes catch on soon enough that someone is testing them, they can try to be as prepared as possible when the other shoe falls.



PART TWO: THEN WE SET UP A LAB TEST...

"There's a lot of hostages in there," Lt. Durango said, snapping her bubble gum, "and a lot of VIPER agents. An industrial complex, of all places! Too much can go wrong in there!"

"Indeed," Obsidian muttered, "A lot of dangerous situations are possible. We must be careful."

Seeker turned toward his comrade, "I know that and you know that, but did anyone think to tell those blokes that?"

In this chapter, the heroes will encounter a major hostage crisis inside the Heracles Industrial Complex. The heroes will engage MAVRIC's pseudo-VIPER agents and discover that they are robots. They will also run into a series of traps that are designed to test the strengths and weaknesses of the heroes.

Once the heroes overcome these obstacles, they will find a series of clues that should lead them to VIPER. They should also find a few that will steer them toward the true culprit, MAVRIC.

THE SET UP

Once MAVRIC thinks he has a pretty clear picture of the heroes and villains in the area, he will start testing the heroes. Although MAVRIC makes no distinction between good and evil, he believes that if heroes are defeated or seen to be ineffective, the general populace would become fearful and easier to manipulate in the long run. This is based on his research into totalitarian regimes and human behavior.

MAVRIC will be monitoring the heroes on their progress from the random events. He will attempt to tap the phone lines and listen in on radio conversations to see if the "VIPER link" has been discovered. If it has, or if MAVRIC cannot get the information he needs, he will begin taking hostages, anticipating the next move will be an assault on Heracles.

THE HOSTAGES OF HERACLES

There will be a total of ten hostages the complex. This total includes any DNPCs that MAVRIC has captured. Each will be placed as bait in a trap.

If there are more than ten DNPCs in the campaign, MAVRIC will capture as many as he can, even if the total exceeds ten. Roll each DNPC's appearance roll. Any that come up on this roll will be held hostage.

MAVRIC will browse through the personnel files of the Heracles Complex companies before the crisis. He will look for suitable hostages. He will select those that, by television and textbook standards, display high morals and have families.

The only deviation from this procedure would be any DNPCs MAVRIC discovered. Those would be taken hostage regardless of their background and morals because they may directly affect the hero's judgment.

MAVRIC will do everything he can to take the DNPC hostage. He will offer a better paying job, special interviews, guided tours of the complex, whatever it takes. If all else fails, he will track the DNPC to his home and kidnap him.

Any DNPCs that MAVRIC has captured will be placed in the trap he believes will cause the associated hero the most problems. If any vulnerabilities have been discovered, MAVRIC will place the DNPC in a trap designed around that weakness.

All hostages will be monitored by hidden cameras. Each DNPC held will have a PSI-droid specifically assigned to watch him. MAVRIC will want to know as much as possible about the DNPC and his reactions. He also wants to see how he affects the performance of his hero friend.

The time of day will make a big difference on the hostage situation. If the heroes are approaching during the day or if MAVRIC feels the need to coerce the heroes to Heracles, he will launch his attack at 3:00 pm. If the attack occurs at night and MAVRIC is aware of its approach, he will call several workers back in for various reasons, then take them hostage. If there is not time for that, he will use PSI-droids dressed as workers and/or DNPCs and prevent the real persons from showing up with knockout gas planted in their homes.

MAVRIC will litter blatant clues pointing to VIPER throughout the complex, including weapons in secret compartments carrying the VIPER logo and financial papers with secret bank accounts that tie directly to VIPER. MAVRIC wants the world to believe that the villainous agency VIPER is behind the crimes.

MAVRIC'S GAMEPLAN

MAVRIC will have his robots hidden inside the buildings in advance of the crisis. He will hide them in scanner-shielded holes in basements and storage areas that are seldom used. Hidden cameras in those areas will let the robots know when the room is clear so they can emerge. Any PER roles to see these cubby holes or cameras are at -4 for special senses and -6 using normal sight.

The attack itself will be swift and a complete surprise. MAVRIC's pseudo-VIPER team will suddenly appear in every building, firing their blasters and chasing people out of the complex. Only the pre-determined hostages will be detained via stun blasts.

No one will be more than slightly injured in this initial attack. There will be a lot of property damage caused by the robots. This will be to enhance the effect of the situation and show these VIPER agents mean business. Witnesses that escape the assault will only remember VIPER agents coming out of nowhere. They will have no idea how they managed to get into the complex so quickly and completely.

Those robots visible to news cameras will swagger and boast of VIPER's power like a badly written military movie. They will play their parts well beyond normal VIPER arrogance. Robots guarding the hostages will be just as arrogant but will have some country or Christmas music playing on a cassette tape deck nearby. One or two may even play an old French military march.

The robotic leader will have a French accent and be small in stature. Swaggering, he will boast of his victory and that a new VIPER rebellion has begun. He will carry a sword at his side (1D6 HKA, AP, OAF-sword complete with a 12D6 electrical blast, 6 charges) and wear a cloak and hat with his VIPER uniform. The cloak and hat will date from the early 1800 French era. Yes, he looks like Napoleon.

The Napoleon Tecommander will give the following speech to all news reporters: "Come forth, heroes, and face me on ze field of honor! Face your final ztand, your Vaterloo, here under ze eyes of Heraclez himzself! You call yourzelvez heroes, prove it! Face ze new VIPER on zis battlefield zis day! Come, and we will . . . (you get the idea).

The face of a panic-stricken DNPC shoved toward a camera should clinch it.

Although MAVRIC is using considerable firepower, he is not out to kill the heroes (yet). He wants to test the heroes in this industrial complex to see if his data is accurate. Killing the heroes, he reasons, would deny him possible data later.

MAVRIC'S DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES

MAVRIC will have two PSI-droids per hostage and two Tecommandos per building. All Tecommandos will be outside or in immediate sight of observers, be they police or media. The PSI-droids will generally stay with the hostages inside the buildings.

The armaments of the robots will be typical VIPER design. The tactics will be from the VIPER fighting manual and performed to the letter. When the actual battle begins, the pseudo-VIPER agents will perform their attacks flawlessly and without words (with the exception of some B-grade Western dialogue).

The pseudo-agents will target flyers over ground-bound heroes, energy projectors over bricks and martial artists. They will target one agent per hero and the remainder consolidate fire on the highest priority hero.

All robots will be alert for an attack from the air or the grounds. There will be a PSI-droid in the security booth at the front gate, apparently working the cameras. This is not entirely true, since MAVRIC can work the cameras without the robot's help. However, he wants the illusion of the VIPER robots doing all the work to be preserved.

SPIES BEHIND THE LINES

MAVRIC will have five Gazers equipped with different enhanced sensor arrays floating around the area. All will be invisible to normal sight. Each Gazers will be linked to a separate VCR so MAVRIC can continually record the images it transmits. MAVRIC does not want to miss anything about this battle, especially since details could be important.

One of the Gazers, equipped with Infra-red, Ultra-violet and X-ray senses, will be placed above the police command center. This unit will monitor all police activities.

Four PSI-droids, two disguised as civilians and two as police officers, will be mixed in the crowds outside the complex. These robots will try to be close enough to watch

the police in action but far enough away so as not to be noticed. These PSI-droids will offer no assistance unless asked. Even then, they will do only enough to avoid suspicions. The automatons in the crowd will have the same undercover gear that VIPER covert agents carry. They will also have radios tuned to the correct VIPER frequency. If the real VIPER agents jam it, MAVRIC will switch to one of many pre-arranged secondary settings.

If MAVRIC knows that at least one of the heroes involved in the test has some kind of Danger Sense, he will not use the police dopplegangers and plant only one civilian unit with a special high-range listening unit and telescopic camera lens. He will also hold his Gazers in reserve, opting to hide one unit in a nearby mailbox with a long-range listening device and X-ray eye. He will bring the remainder of the robot spies and deploy them once the heroes with Danger Sense have left.

ENTER: THE POLICE

By the time the heroes arrive, the police will have the entire area cordoned off for a one mile radius due to the potential for explosions and dangerous chemical fires on the grounds.

The heroes will be met by Lt. Lisa Durango, the officer in charge. Lt. Durango is well-known in the law-enforcement circles for her cool-head, courage, and dedication to her job and the community, but you would not know it with the snapping of bubble gum, her rapid-fire clipped style of talking, her "thinking cap" (any non-standard hat from a bowler to a baseball cap), and the hard-driving rock and roll blaring from the car radio.

If the heroes are on good terms with the law agencies, Lt. Durango will tell the heroes what she and her fellow officers have been able to figure out, which is not much. They know several VIPER agents took over the complex and they know there are ten hostages scattered throughout the complex.

They also know that the rest of the workers (if this is during working hours) escaped under heavy fire and that the VIPER raid leader issued a challenge to the heroes via the media. As for why, they don't know. She and her officers have since evacuated the area and are waiting for additional backup.

If asked, Lt. Durango can tell the heroes the following:

- 1) The leader of the group thinks he is Napoleon or some sort of descendent. Lt. Durango will add (personal opinion) he plays the role with as much dramatic flare as any actor she has seen.
- 2) There were only a few minor injuries among the escaping employees. A lot of property was damaged in the initial onslaught, but it appears only the ten hostages were even hit with the energy bolts. If this were non-working hours, the destruction would be much more limited and the number of injuries would be zero.
- 3) If someone brings up the point that there was only one way in and out of the complex besides climbing over the fence, Lt. Durango will agree. Unless another hero brings up the question, Lt. Durango will wonder why the exit was not guarded and more hostages were taken.
- 4) So far, the only demands that this VIPER squad has issued is for the heroes to show up. Lt. Durango is suspicious of this since VIPER is known for tricks up their sleeves and fears that this may be another one, albeit on a more grand scale than normal.

The police will not have any idea how the VIPER agents got into the complex. They will only assume that they either flew in with an air assault unit or came on the grounds in disguise. A quick observation will discount the air cavalry drop because no flying units will be found.

Lt. Durango will try to help out the PCs in whatever way she can. She is willing to work with heroes to end this crisis although the worse the relations are between the police and the heroes, the more reluctant she will be. She does recognize the fact that these hostage takers called specifically for these heroes, though, so she will help, if only to save lives.

If asked, Lt. Durango can produce a map of Heracles. It will show the buildings, sewer lines, and other necessary blueprint information. It will not show any of MAVRIC's alterations for traps or hidden rooms, of course.

If pressed by the heroes, Lt. Durango can issue flak jackets and billy clubs, but this is well beyond normal procedures and she will have to be convinced to do this. She will also want authority from her superiors first. It may take some time for this approval to come through. If relations with the police are not good, she won't even think twice about turning the request down, stating if they can't do the job with their own powers, "get out of our way and let us through."

Unless the heroes really need the equipment, the request will be turned down. The reason will be that "the captain thinks your fancy powers are enough. Sorry about that."

The details about where the hostages are specifically held and the traps involved will be listed in the Heracles Complex Section. Unless MAVRIC knows weaknesses that require some fine-tuning in the traps, this will be his standard fare.

HERACLES INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

When MAVRIC purchased this place, he originally used it to construct his first robots and to get needed equipment. Now, with a vast network of such complexes under his control and with a variety of other resources at his disposal, he has decided this would be a good lab to validate his conclusions about the heroes.

HISTORY OF THE COMPLEX

The Heracles Industrial Complex was founded in the late 1960s by a small group of enterprising new companies. They located it several miles outside the campaign city, believing they would have explosive growth with their "new economic visions." Growth never met expectations. It was painfully slow until recently, when High Noon, Inc. bought the entire complex. High Noon became a godsend to the community. It brought in jobs and expansions, resurrecting the local economy. It also became a symbol of economic might, seemingly the centerpiece of an entire area overnight.

The locals might think twice about its beneficial effects on their lives, though, if they knew MAVRIC was its owner and had more sinister purposes for Heracles in mind. Recently, MAVRIC "arranged" for several square miles of land around the complex to be bought up by High Noon. He had it rezoned for industrial expansion but left it to sit. This was all done so he would have a buffer zone between his complex and the nearby neighbors, two of which he has classified as "nosy random elements."

THE BUILDINGS OF HERACLES

Below is a brief description of each building in the complex and its major traps. This description will include number of hostages, positions, robots, and other important items.

Unless otherwise noted, all buildings are constructed as follows: All exterior walls are concrete (DEF 8 BODY 5) and interior walls are brickwork (DEF 6 BODY 5). Exterior doors are of steel fire-door type construction (DEF 7 BODY 5) while interior doors are solid wood (DEF 2 BODY 3).

All buildings have a sprinkler system and sophisticated burglary alarm net. Deactivating the alarms will be difficult (-3 on skill rolls). The windows are strengthened to resist damage (DEF 3 BODY 3) but can be blown away in case of fire via a special automatic hinge-locking system. A red light switch by the doors and window will also activate the system and sprinklers.

The entire complex is surrounded by a large steel mesh fence. At night, the fence is electrified (1D6 RKA damage shield), an unusual precaution for a non-military complex. So, one might note, are the various security cameras and strict gate entry procedures, where no one can check in or out unless they pass through the main entrance.

Most of the buildings are new and many have been recently remodelled. This remodelling included the installation of MAVRIC's traps and hidden robots (MAVRIC did this at night). This now gives MAVRIC a "testing ground suitable for the situational analysis of intervention by abnormally talented entities" (shooting gallery).

THE BUILDINGS

1. LARGEANDIA'S LEAD FIGURINES FACTORY. At first MAVRIC was going to replace this factory, but with his quirks in military command and his strange desire to run various military simulations using lead figurines, he kept the as is.

This factory mass-produces lead figurines for anything from military war games to paperweights. There are several firing kilns, a large supply of lead, pewter, and other materials for constructing lead items. A wide variety of paint is stored in the back room.

Several small offices, a small lunch/meeting room, and a recreation room line the east wall. A microwave oven (DEF 4 BODY 2) and a couple pool tables (DEF 4 BODY 5 each) are in these rooms.

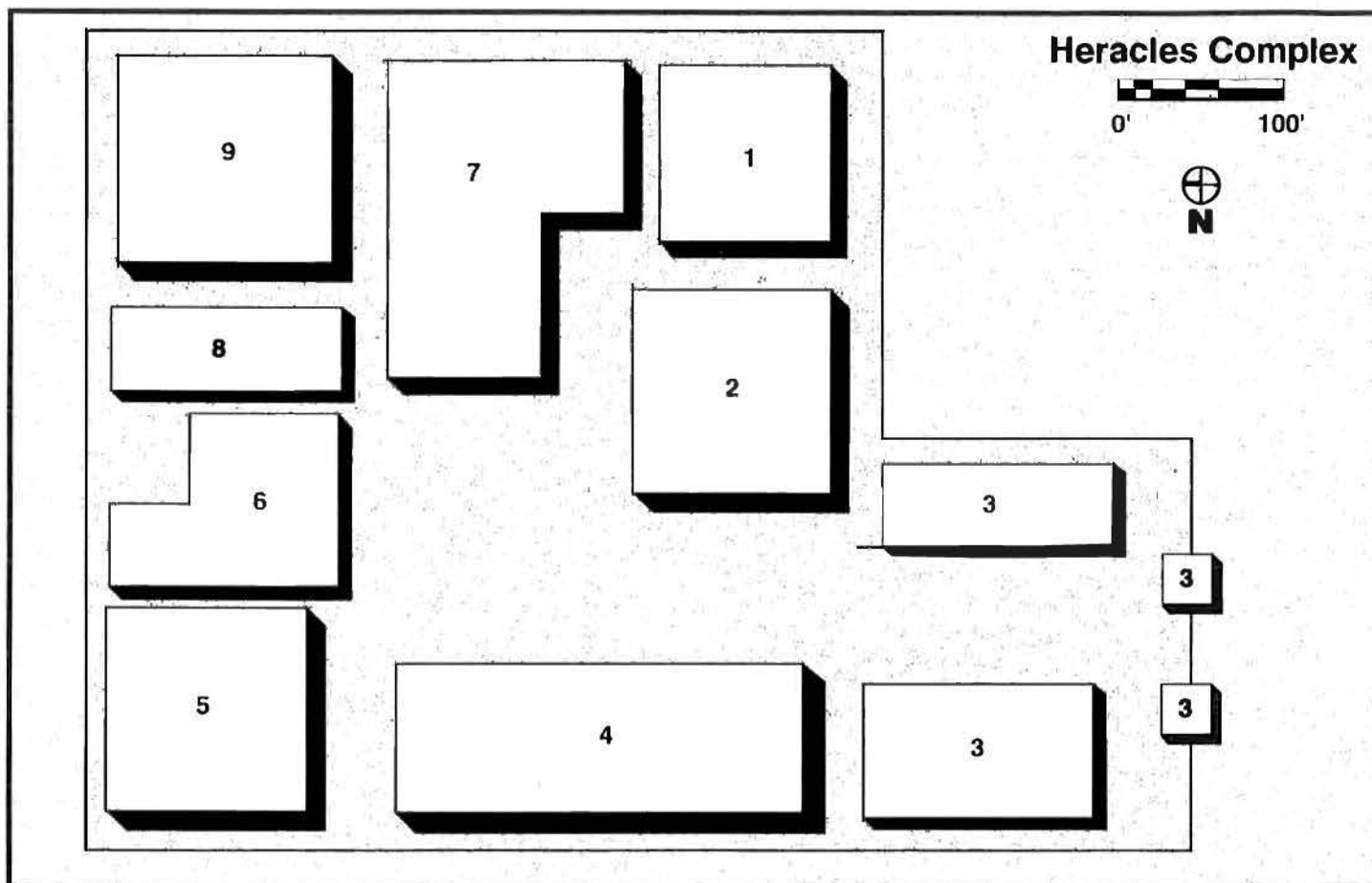
The heroes will find one hostage tied up near the firing kilns. The kilns themselves will be active but not the true threat. The PSI-droids will be on guard on either side of the hostage.

Once the hero gets inside the building he will be attacked from all directions. Several small robots disguised as lead figurines will come off of their shelves and begin their assault. These figurines will be a mix of all eras of war from the Romans to futuristic.

The robots will fire cannons, drive tanks or chariots, or fly planes after the heroes. The weapons will vary from 3D6 PD attacks from bazookas and guns to 8D6 PD from the tanks and planes. All attacks from the lead army will be fire-based and lead-based. The larger projectiles, such as the missiles from the planes, are lead shells with a chemical that explodes into fire, causing the damage listed earlier. The smaller lead figures will hit with daggers, swords, and small guns firing lead pellets.

There are a total of 300 lead figurine robots in the buildings. Up to twenty mini-robots will be active at one time per hero.

Once a robot is destroyed, another will activate one per phase at SPD 6 turns and attack. These robots will continue to automatically resupply their forces until the reserves are used up. The OCV is 5 for the lead army. The DCV is 11 due to size. The smaller figurines have a DEF 2 and BODY 2. The larger units, like the tanks and planes, have 4 BODY.



2. HARNIQUE'S AIR CONDITIONING. This is a specialty air conditioning repair shop, dealing only with industrial-sized problems. There's lots of freon, dry ice, and other cold-related compounds stored here. There is also a lot of electrical equipment and tools in the work area.

Several air conditioners are in the back repair area, in various states of assembly and repair. There is a large tool bench (DEF 4 BODY 6) bolted to the floor in the work area by the garage doors.

A small row of offices sit in the front of the building. There is a small wooden counter (DEF 3 BODY 3) and an old, heavy cash register (DEF 4 BODY 3) up front as well. The garage doors in the back are of double-layered sheet metal (DEF 2 BODY 6).

The hostage here is apparently unguarded and tied up near a couple of air conditioners. These units (DEF 4 BODY 9) have been retrofitted, though, to project a cold blast (10D6 EB, conic effect, 6 Uses) toward whatever its heat sensors pick up. They will recognize and not fire at MAVRIC's robots.

Once the units are exhausted, are smashed, or if the hostage is freed, the PSI-droids will pop from behind the nearby broken air conditioners (DEF 4 BODY varies from 3 to 8) and fire cold guns (3D6 NND vs cold powers or insulation against cold) to stop heroes.

3. TRUCK TERMINAL. This is the only entrance to the complex. Everyone and everything must pass through this station as required by the owners of the complex (MAVRIC's pseudo-identities). This makes MAVRIC's job easier in tracking what goes in and out.

Road spikes are at the gates (3D6 HKA, immobile, OAF) to discourage unwanted traffic. The booths are made of reinforced concrete with steel (DEF 7 BODY 8). The glass in the booths is bulletproof (DEF 6 BODY 4). There are also several hidden mini-cameras viewing the complex from inside the booth. Currently there is one PSI-droid pretending to watch the security system and relay messages. Several semis and trailers are parked in the loading areas and back lot. The maintenance garage currently has two trucks inside. The other two bays are empty.

The hostage here will be strapped to the inside of a trailer (DEF 6 BODY 12). The trailer will be parked in front of the garage, doors facing the entrance. Two PSI-droids will be on guard here. They will fire at anyone coming close with typical 8D6 VIPER-styled blasters.

Once the heroes get by these two, they will have to contend with the real trap, the trailer itself. There is a laser net trigger set at the mouth of the trailer. If the heroes break the laser beam in the entrance by missing a DEX roll at -3, a tasteless, odorless and colorless stun gas will quickly filter in from a gas cylinder at the front of the trailer. The gas itself is a 4D6 NND vs life support. There will be 16 charges in the tank before it runs out.

If the heroes search the trailer before entering, they will find (at a -2 PER roll) the cylinder and the security net processor. Both are at the front of the trailer and can be disarmed with normal chances.

4. HARRY'S SCRAP YARD. This place is filled with scrap metals. Old automobiles, trailers, I-beams, and other assorted metal items are separated into lots as much as possible. The small concrete structure at the south end houses the company records.

There are two hostages in this part of the complex: one in the car crusher, one in the vicinity of a magnetic crane and bulldozer. Both are unconscious.

The car crusher (DEF 9 BODY 15) is guarded by two PSI-droid with blasters (8D6 EB laser, 16 Uses before reload). They will snipe at the heroes with an OCV of 7. Worse yet, the car crusher is surrounded by an array of lightning bolt throwers (DEF 6 BODY 4). These things will throw 6D6 EB bolts each turn at OCV 4. The lightning throwers operate one per phase at SPD 12. There are four such generators on each side of the crusher.

The second hostage is securely tied down in the cab of a bulldozer (DEF 9 BODY 15). There are two PSI-droids on top of the bulldozer with blasters like those at the car crusher.

The magnetic crane (DEF 8 BODY 12) nearby is the problem. It has been reworked so that it can project magnetic beams against metals. Treat as an 80 STR telekinesis beam.

If the hero is wearing any metals that could be grabbed by a magnet, the crane will attempt to snare the hero in its magnetic beams and then repel him over the fence into the police blockade. Otherwise, it will resort to grabbing and throwing objects (cars, I-beams, etc.) and repelling them toward the hero.

5. MARALINDUS MAGNETS. This place creates powerful industrial magnets. There are several large magnets currently in the inventory. Supplies and batteries are kept in a storage room in the rear. The building is pretty much one room. The only office furniture in here are a couple of old wooden desks (DEF 3 BODY 4) and a file cabinet (DEF 3 BODY 5) with several magnetic stickers.

In this building, the hostage is tied to a desk (DEF 4 BODY 5) in the center of the room. The entire desk is under a transparent plastic dome (DEF 6 BODY 6). She is wrapped in heavy protective clothing. Her voice is muffled and garbled.

Several magnets sit around the building, pointed toward the center of the room. Above, several large buckets of iron filings rest on the cross-beams. The two PSI-droids are hiding behind some work benches outside of the magnet's circle.

Once the hero gets inside the circle of magnets and approach the hostage, the iron filings will be dumped on the hero by the PSI-droids using a remote-control device.

The iron filings will whirl like a cyclone inside the circle of magnets. Treat this attack as a 4D6 PD attack with Darkness vs normal sight each turn! If the hero has protective goggles, Flash Defense, or Enhanced Senses, then allow perception rolls at -3 due to the swirling iron filings and the magnetic energies. Otherwise, the hero will have to get out of the circle of magnets to avoid the blinding whirl. If the magnets are shut down, it will take two turns for the iron filings to completely fall to the floor.

The PSI-droids, of course, will be firing away with their 8D6 blaster pistols (16 shots before reload). The robots will not be affected by the magnets unless they are in front of them. They will have special lenses in their eyes to target and shoot the heroes.

6. BEUREGARD'S WELDING DISTRIBUTION. This place is a welding supply and distribution warehouse. The small storage building for the compressed gases is heavily reinforced (DEF 12 BODY 14) to help contain possible explosions.

The small store holds a limited variety of welding equipment from torches to gloves. The offices are in the rear along with the recreation room/lunch area.

The hostage is inside the cylinder storage house, tied facedown to a steel roof support beam with a heavy chain (DEF 5 BODY 5). The two PSI-droids will be roaming the floor and instantly dive behind whatever cover is available once the heroes are spotted.

Ten welding torches (DEF 4 BODY 5) have been rigged with flying harnesses (15" flight, OIF-harness) and cylinders of various gases to fly after intruders. The PSI-droids will be controlling their movements through their transmitters. The torches attack with a OCV of 4 and have a DCV of 6.

The flying torches will have the following attacks: three will have 4D6 NND attacks vs Life Support (knockout gases), four will have from 8D6 to 12D6 EB blasts (flame throwers), and three will have 3D6 RKA AP attacks (plasma cutting torches). MAVRIC will use the cutting torches only against heroes he knows can take the damage and survive. The torches will use hit and run tactics, trading opponents each phase. The torches will swarm and bob around, some blasting while others hover nearby.

All cylinders in this complex, including those on the flying harnesses, are DEF 7 and BODY 5. If any of these cylinders are ruptured, they will become deadly missiles on a 14- roll (a missed roll means an empty cylinder). These runaway cylinders will inflict 20D6 PD on anything in its path.

If these cylinders plow through other cylinders in this building, everyone had better clear out fast. Each flying cylinder stands a 13-chance of cracking open 1D6 other cylinders. These newly damaged cylinders will then become missiles on a 14- roll and the process repeats itself, creating a chain reaction. The missiles will ricochet around at 15" per phase until the gases have escaped. These cylinders will remain airborne for three segments.

There is also the very real chance of a explosions due to rupturing and sparking of hydrogen, oxygen and other volatile gas cylinders. On a roll of 11-, a runaway cylinder will produce a spark and create an explosion. The blast will be 5D6 AP RKA with a x2 range modifier.

Make no mistake, this is a very dangerous area to battle in. MAVRIC knows it and the heroes should realize it. MAVRIC will do what he can not to trigger any chain reaction explosions. He will not allow the PSI-droids to open fire unless they have a clear line at the target. This not only lessens the chances of an accidental blast, but it also preserves the identity of the robots as people since sensible people would not fire wildly into fully charged gas tanks.

If this battle takes place after hours and MAVRIC knows the heroes are coming, he will empty or remove as many filled cylinders from this building as he can and store them away from the complex. He may leave one or two filled ones just to make things interesting.

7. CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT DEPOT. This is a wholesale outlet for construction equipment. Bulldozers, cranes, and earthmovers are parked in the fenced lot or large garages. Some of the units have parts removed and are non-functioning.

A rickety mobile home (DEF 7 BODY 15) is the office for this business. Two company pickups (DEF 5 BODY 10) sit out front. One is on on blocks with its engine and tires missing.

The two hostages here are tied on the front of a bulldozer (DEF 10 BODY 13). They are tied down with steel cord (DEF 5 BODY 6).

Two of the PSI-droids are inside an oversized hollowed-out wrecking ball (DEF 8 BODY 8). They cannot leave the ball: they are permanently placed inside and have no lower torso. The other two PSI-droids are patrolling around the bulldozer, guns drawn.

There will be two bulldozers (including the one with the hostages on the blade), three cranes (DEF 8 BODY 10), and two earthmovers (DEF 8 BODY 14) under MAVRIC's command in this area. Once the heroes are detected, all vehicles will activate and attack. The earthmovers and dozers will charge while the cranes will swing their wrecking balls.

8. PAINT SHOP. The paint shop specializes in custom work on cars but sometimes will hire out for other jobs, such as mural painting on city walls. Paints of almost any kind, thinners and other chemicals can be found scattered throughout the building. All the artistic tools of the trades are kept in army green metal lockers (DEF 4 BODY 4) scattered throughout the building.

There is one large table (DEF 4 BODY 4) where coats and papers are kept. The refrigerator (DEF 8 BODY 6) is in a nearby corner. The two PSI-droids in VIPER uniforms here are hidden behind some parked cars. They will remain out of sight until summoned.

The hostage here is a robot. It is a PSI-droid disguised as either a worker or a DNPC. When the heroes get close, the phony hostage will activate the trap.

Eight paint guns (DEF 4 BODY 3) will come to life and start shooting paint. These paint guns will be mounted on tank-like treads, climb walls at 40 STR, and move on SPD 4 turns. Their movement rate is 15" per phase. They have an OCV of 4 and DCV of 6.

If there are fewer than six targets for the guns, two will be held in reserve as replacements. MAVRIC will assign one gun to each target and focus any remaining guns on the perceived weakest hero. The paint will not cause blindness (treat as a 4D6 Flash vs sight) and drain 3D6 STR per hit. Each paint sprayer has 25 charges.

The PSI-droids will then come out of hiding and attempt to snare the heroes with nets (5D6 Entangles). Each PSI-droid will have 8 such net-grenades. They will then let the roving paint sprayers shoot the heroes a few more times, then finish them off with 10D6 blasters.

9. POWER FIST ELECTRONICS. This is a major supplier of electronic parts and tools for the region. They have a huge inventory of every kind of conceivable electronic gadget.

The hostage is trapped inside a giant electric static ball (DEF 6 BODY 6). She is floating in the center of it, held aloft by a gravity belt.

The PSI-droids are hidden behind shelves (DEF 3 BODY 4) and work benches (DEF 4 BODY 6). They are braced and have held actions. Once the heroes approach, they will use their held actions and open fire with their blasters. To save this hostage, the heroes must defeat the PSI-droids and break the ball open.

The ball is protected with an electrical damage field. Anyone touching the ball will bring all of the static around to deliver a 7D6 electrical jolt. The hostage will not suffer any damage due to a special nullifier function in the gravity belt.

Perceptive heroes will find a power cable buried under the floorboard running to the light pole outside. Unhooking the cable will shut down the ball's power supply. The ball can be opened by forcing its hemispheres apart from the seams.

What Have We Here?

In the Power Fist Electronics building, the heroes will find a secret door in the floor. No one working here will remember ever seeing or hearing about it.

The floor panel will lead to a large room below the complex. The room itself will be a concrete walled room with a variety of explicit but unimaginative VIPER-proud graffiti scrawled on the walls.

A small platform with crude controls will be in the northeast corner of the room. Five robots will be lying on the floor, smoking and burning, apparently destroyed. A dozen monitors and a large, flashy control board and computer work station will sit against the southern wall. Christmas music will be playing over the speaker system and a mobile of plastic ornate snowflakes will be gently swaying from a fan's breeze.

The platform on the north side of the room is a teleport station. The controls will indicated recent activity, but the coordinates will not be on the display.

Several VIPER blasters, some basic information on the heroes, and monitors tuned to the television stations reporting at the hostage crisis will be in the front of the room.

MAVRIC set this room up to be discovered and to point to VIPER as the culprit. He left plenty of VIPER equipment (manufactured by him) manuals and codebooks lying around for the heroes to find. Much of it is blatantly VIPER. The tactics, codes, and information files are typical VIPER procedures but bland and without handwritten notes.

HERACLES COMPLEX: THE AFTERMATH

The heroes have now released the hostages and defused the various deathtraps in the complex. Now what?

First off, there is the matter of the pseudo-VIPER agents. By the time the crisis is over, it will be obvious that the VIPER agents (and, perhaps, the hostages) are robots.

The heroes might get the chance to do a quick examination of the robots before the crisis is resolved. This is highly unlikely, but in case that happens, they will find little that will immediately help them and that a thorough examination will be necessary.

If the heroes wish to examine the robots themselves, they will either have to sneak one by the police, do an on-site examination, or get permission to remove some of the units. Lt. Durango will grant an on-site examination if the heroes are on good terms with the law or performed well in her eyes by their handling of the crisis. She will be watch them as the examination is performed, though.

Lt. Durango cannot allow any robots to leave the complex, though, citing evidence and the fact PRIMUS is on the way to clean up. But she will successfully talk the PRIMUS people into releasing test results as soon as they are completed to her and she, in turn, will give them to the heroes. If desired, she will be able to talk the PRIMUS agents into allowing the heroes to go along with the PRIMUS units and helping in the testing and examination of the robots at the PRIMUS base. Note that none of this will occur if the heroes are not on good footing with PRIMUS or the law. The heroes can try and steal a robot or two before leaving if they wish, but if they are caught in the act, Lt. Durango will not trust those heroes again for a long time.

Lt. Durango is not the right police officer to have mad at you. Her popularity and influence is wide in the department, even wider than she realizes. One word from her can get the books slammed shut on any further help unless it is a critical emergency or the offending hero(es) make amends.

As far as Heracles itself goes, the police will order it closed until further notice. They will bring in specialists and demolitions experts to remove all traps from the area. Of course, if the heroes volunteered to help in this mop-up operation, Lt. Durango would be extremely pleased.

Once the mop-up operations are finished, the police will then start trying to locate the owners of the complex and find out just what is going on and what they know about it. They will also start surveillance of the complex for any clues. The surveillance will be fruitless, though, unless someone has a device to detect invisible flying Gazers overhead.

A BACKUP TEAM A DAY KEEPS VIPER AWAY

It is very possible the real VIPER cell in the area will catch wind of this attack, if from no where else one of the local television stations as the drama unfolds. They have a couple of options:

- 1) VIPER can let the entire thing play itself out, hoping for mutual destruction, then start contact all undercover teams. They will reallocate their resources to find out who or what was behind this debacle at Heracles and the subsequent elimination of the guilty parties or
- 2) The VIPER agents may decide to send squads to take care of matters themselves. This will be a risky, high-profile solution at the best of times. However, it is even riskier this time because MAVRIC is monitoring the VIPER base for reaction and has already stationed interception teams nearby to squelch any counter-attacks.

MAVRIC raided the VIPER computers in advance of the raid. He knows who is where in the VIPER ladder, what they look like, and their plans of attack. He will also know when people are leaving and what equipment they are taking.

There are over two dozen Tecommandos deployed around the VIPER base with heavy assault blasters (12D6 ED, 16 shots per clip). There are also two Speedbolts and two Bayonets in the area. The Tecommandos will be dressed up as maintenance workers for a local cable company. All will be stationed on rooftops or in alleyways.

The Speedbolts will be modified VTOL jets with US Air Force markings. They will be armed with two blaster energy cannons (16D6 EB, 32 uses) and two dual-barreled heavy machine guns (2D6 AP RKA, Autofire, 125 shots each). They will be hiding in a nearby park under a screen of invisibility. They will move in and attack once the Tecommanders are engaged.

The Bayonets are painted up as police cars and hidden in nearby garages. They are equipped with two rocket launchers that pop up through the roof (3D6 AP RKA, OIF-missile rack and missiles, 16 charges) and a laser rifle hidden in each quarterpanel on a mechanical arm (12D6 EB, No KNB, 16 charges). A machine gun will be in the trunk and behind the front grill of the car as well (1D6 RKA Autofire, OIF-machine gun, limited 120 degrees range of fire, 250 shots each). These will attack once the Tecommandos begin fighting.

The heroes may find out about this battle from the police after they have completed their operation at Heracles. If a dramatic flair is wanted, have one or two VIPER agents crash-land their flying crafts on the street nearby Heracles, injured and dazed. Let them ramble fearfully about a sneak-attack by the police and Air Force far from the complex and that most of the squad was shot down. Make their conversation as colorfully vague as possible.

In either event, the local VIPER cell will put all major plans on hold until they feel it is safe to continue. They will feel that security has been badly compromised by this latest bold (and extremely foolish) rogue strike and not risk further actions until they have dealt with the problem.

A CLUE, A CLUE, A CLUE

"Don't play innocent with us! We know those are your robots," Defender declared to the captured VIPER nest leader, "Your symbols are all over them!"

The nest leader shook his head vigorously, "No way! We can't keep our own stuff workin', let alone some fancy robots! We didn't do it! Someone's fram'in' us!" "Yea, mate, an' I suppose you didn't hire those villains, either," Seeker retorted.

The nest leader drew a breath and said evenly, "Look, I ain't liked youse guys fer a long time, and I wished ya had been aced by those villains and robots, but we did not do it! Fer once, we wuzn't behind it! We wuz framed!"

"Tell it to a judge," Defender snarled.

Finally, Solitaire interjected, "I think, for once, he is telling the truth. From what Quantum and I have seen, there is nothing here that remotely looks like robotic equipment."

"Great, another bleedin' dead end," Seeker moaned, "First the villains, now VIPER. How many more are we gonna hit before findin' the real culprits?"

"Well," Jaguar shrugged, "At least we put these puds out of business. By accident, yes, but they are out of business."

By now the heroes will want to investigate everything surrounding the Heracles crisis. MAVRIC left plenty of clues to implicate VIPER. If the uniforms and VIPER IDs are not enough, the VIPER styled weapons and equipment used in the attack and below the Power Fist Electronics building should clinch it.

However, MAVRIC also left a considerable number of other clues in his wake.

TRACING THE NAMES

If the heroes check the names on the VIPER IDs, they will find they are actual VIPER agent names. However, all of them hailed from Dr. Tennison's old VIPER cell, a cell that split up a long time back. It will take a thorough check to reveal this, but it will not be difficult to discover. The local police can help confirm this information (again, if the heroes are on good ground with them) or the heroes can gather the data themselves, perhaps by "knocking" on VIPER's door and "asking" for it.

POWER FIST'S SECRET ROOM

If the secret door beneath Power Fist Electronics has not been found yet, it will be discovered now. MAVRIC will leave it deliberately opened for the heroes to find. Everything that was noted in the building description will be present.

The teleporter will be humming from recent activity, but this will be a decoy. MAVRIC teleported a robot through the unit to make it look like whoever was behind this adventure escaped seconds before entry.

If the heroes can find someone who has a good applicable science background, such as teleportation physics or energy sciences, they will figure out that the being that passed through the teleporter was heavy, perhaps too heavy to be a person. Another good skill roll on the teleporting equipment will produce the destination point, right outside the local VIPER cell.

The heroes should become curious about this since the teleporter mechanism is crude and there are no safeguards whatsoever to stop unauthorized use of the machine or to self-destruct if tampered. This should look a little too easy.

A forensic sweep will turn up no fingerprints, no fallen hairs, nothing to indicate a person was ever here. This should seem at least a little odd since *someone* had to put the hidden room and robots here.

If your hero team decides to shoot first and ask questions later, or perhaps they see a golden opportunity to pay VIPER back for some past misdeeds, feel free to run an extra scenario dealing with their confrontation with VIPER. MAVRIC wants them to do just that anyway, so he won't mind.

If the heroes have fought Dr. Tennison before, they should note the plastic snowflakes and the Christmas music. These clue should steer the heroes after both Dr. Tennison and VIPER since the heroes should not know Dr. Tennison was forced to flee.

IDENTITY CRISIS

All robots at Heracles, including the Tecommander, will have identical items. Each has the following: \$96.28 in bills and change, breath mints with a reference to snow, identical country music and Christmas music tapes, driver's license with the same birth and expiration dates, two credit cards from the same companies, and wallet-sized pictures of Old West paintings.

A chemical analysis of the cologne and deodorant on the robot's clothes will reveal they come from companies with the word "snow" in the label or the manufacturer's name.

They also sport the same B-grade western accent, except the leader, whose voice is a close match to its movie ancestor.

Again, this is where knowledge of Dr. Tennison is important. If the heroes have never met the man, they will not know about his interest with the Old West and liking of snow.

Checks of the names on the licenses will turn up matches with actual VIPER agents from the past. However, most of these agents have been imprisoned or vanished from sight some time ago.

Such an investigation on the names or any other VIPER-related information from Heracles will inform the heroes of one interesting fact: VIPER is just as concerned about this incident and may even set aside differences, temporarily, to take care of the matter. There might even be a rumor or two that the local nest leader is willing to talk to the heroes (under certain circumstances, of course).

The interaction of the heroes and perhaps one of their more dangerous enemies working together usually livens up any roleplaying adventure. Keep in mind VIPER will help, to an extent, but will be uneasy around the heroes. A few ambitious VIPER agents may even see this as an opportunity to get rid of the heroes and the higher echelon of the cell.

AT THE BIGHOUSE

If the heroes follow through with a check of the police files on the the VIPER names, they will turn up Vince Tresgrove, a known past associate of Dr. Tennison. He will be resident in a nearby federal prison. Mr. Tresgrove will be arrogant and boastful, but with proper questioning or a reduced sentence, he will reveal the following:

- 1) He worked for Dr. Tennison during his days with VIPER. He will tell the heroes Dr. Tennison alienated the other scientists because of his bragging. The scientists then started sabotaging his equipment. Mr. Tresgrove's personal opinion is that the man is brilliant, but has the wisdom of a brick and the patience of a non-practicing surgeon.
- 2) He will note that all the names found on the VIPER-clad robots are names of people in his old cell, shortly before it was taken en masse by PRIMUS and some heroes he does not remember anymore. Every one of those names were in the research or assault division of VIPER.
- 3) If shown a sketch of some of the weaponry or an actual model (non-working, of course), Mr. Tresgrove will recognize the basic design as Dr. Tennison's, right down to the snowflake on the casing. He will note that several adjustments have since been made, but these were not done by his VIPER cell. He will concede that another cell may have changed the design, but he will also note that the Tennison designs were phased out in most areas because of the animosity he created in the past between himself and the VIPER scientists, who were shuffled around a lot in those days.

Once the agent is done talking, he will expect the heroes to immediately honor any deal struck. If no deal was struck, he will insist on getting into the special witness protection programs for fear that VIPER will hunt him down for cooperating with the enemy.

THE DNPC CONNECTION

If there are any DNPCs involved in this crisis, that in itself should lead the heroes to question this situation. One or two DNPCs might be coincidence, but almost all DNPC's at one place at one time would be too much even for the heroes to believe.

This should especially be true if the hostages are all robotic duplicates of the DNPCs. A blatant display such as robotic clones of friends and associates being held in a complex by other robots screams for attention. It also should tell the heroes that someone knows (or has a good idea about) who they are and how they can get to them.

If the heroes decide to monitor the homes or check them for anomalies, they will find some bugs planted in the house. They may also find a Gazer unit floating around or a PSI-droid watching from nearby, if they are lucky, and attempt a successful capture for examination.

CHECK IT OUT

If the heroes had the opportunity to examine some of Dr. Tennison's equipment from earlier skirmishes, those with scientific skills or good observation rolls will note his distinct touch. If this is not possible, or if the skill and perception rolls are missed, the "logo," a small stylized snowflake on the equipment, should be a definite giveaway (and a last resort, unless specifically looked for).

The PSI-droids, on the other hand, are a totally different design. If anyone is familiar with the Parapsychological Studies Institute, they might notice that the PSI-droids are a superior copy of a discarded robot. Only a few minor changes can be credited to Dr. Tennison. For more information about the Parapsychological Studies Institute, see the Organization Book "Mind Games."

MIDNIGHT VISITORS

Careful questioning of the few neighbors around Heracles will reveal that there has been a lot of strange incidents since the new owners took over. Reports of UFOs, "strange activities," "weird noises and lights" will be common. The neighbors will be able to pinpoint the times to as late as 3:00 AM or when the police were called, whichever came first.

If properly questioned, some neighbors will note that noises always died down once the police were called, not when they arrived. Also, the few times the police did stake out the complex, nothing occurred. The police will be able to confirm this.

I'M WORKING LATE TONIGHT, HONEY

If the heroes stake out Heracles themselves, the lights and noises will return in a few days. MAVRIC will be removing raw materials and equipment from the site once the police have left. He will use Speedbolts and Bayonets tailored after VIPER equipment. Only PSI-droids will be employed in this operation since combat is not expected.

Before MAVRIC actually moves his robots in, though, he will send two Gazers to survey the area. Once he is satisfied the coast is clear, he will start his salvage operation.

MAVRIC does not realize the unnecessary risk he is taking at this point. He has calculated that the heroes will be off chasing VIPER and the incident at Heracles, although not forgotten, will be of diminishing importance to the authorities.

Although his massive financial reserves would more than make up for the loss of this complex, MAVRIC is compelled (via his programming) to erase any further evidence and reclaim as much material as he can for later use.

If MAVRIC does discover heroes on the property, he will do two things: Delay recovery of any materials from the complex and scan the area more often.

The delay will be at least two weeks. MAVRIC will continually make sweeps of the area, scrying for heroes or other persons who are watching the complex. If the heroes remain persistent, MAVRIC will re-assign Gazer and PSI-droid units to the heroes. He will not remove them under any circumstances for the remainder of the adventure. If that happens it will be very hard for the heroes to make a move without MAVRIC knowing about it. That factor will loom large in the final confrontation.

RETURN TO SENDER

If the heroes have captured some of MAVRIC's robots intact, they may want to try a time-honored tactic: Reprogramming the robot to return to its master.

The robot will, most likely, assume to be destroyed once its signals stop or its self-destruct device is activated. However, if the heroes jammed the self-destruct signal or rendered the device useless, they will have a perfect chance to find out where MAVRIC is.

MAVRIC never considered it a possibility to track one of his robots back to his lair since few of them know where it is. Like his name, he kept that knowledge out of the memory banks. However, a select number of robots do know the base.

On an 8-, the robot will know the general location of MAVRIC's main HQ. Most likely, it will be a pick-up site for the robots returning from a mission. If the roll happens to be a 4-, they will know where the base is.

If the robots does not have knowledge of the HQ, it will still retain knowledge of various other things, such as phone numbers to call MAVRIC with, radio signals, maybe even deployment of other robots and their current assignments. The Tecommanders will have a better chance of knowing these things than a Tecommando or PSI-droid.

This is a good time for the players to exercise imagination and cunning. The GM should let the players try different approaches to finding MAVRIC through the captured robot. Keep in mind, however, that MAVRIC will wonder why a robot that was believed to be destroyed has suddenly turned up. He will send it messages and check its programming. Hopefully, this will occur after the heroes have found MAVRIC's base.

SIFTING THROUGH A PAPER MOUNTAIN

The paperwork behind the Heracles Complex will have Dr. Snow's name on it as a silent partner. If the heroes questioned some villains that attacked them earlier in the "Random Events," they will remember the name Dr. Snow. It is possible they may believe Dr. Snow is actually Dr. Tennison. Physical descriptions will be fairly close. A picture of Dr. Tennison will be identified as Dr. Snow, only his hair will be snow white now. The principal owner is listed as Mr. John Gregory, a recluse who is well-known for his charity backing but has never been seen in public. Strangely enough, there are no pictures of Mr. Gregory anywhere to be found.

SHADOWS BEHIND THE FACADE

The paperwork behind Heracles Complex itself will read like a cross between a telephone book and a jigsaw puzzle. There will be holding companies, owners who report to owners and other tangles that will have to be unravelled. There are a few choices in dealing with this paper chase.

- 1) Those heroes with Bureaucrats or financial-based skills can sort it out,
- 2) Plow through it head on, hoping to find the right connections in the paper mountains (a dicey solution at best for non-experts), or
- 3) Have someone (your local hired corporate lawyer) or something (your HQ computer) do it for you.

All avenues from Heracles will tie eventually into two companies, Techworld-Omega, and High Noon Inc. They will be listed as owned by Mr. Nash, Mr. Fort, and Mr. Gregory. Mr. Snow will be noted as a recent addition in a couple of pages, but not involved in much of the day-to-day affairs. All four owners will have Post Office Boxes for a home address.

Techworld- Omega will be the owner of High Noon, but High Noon will be the primary controller of the properties. Both Techworld-Omega and High Noon corporate offices will be found in a prestigious downtown office building.

MAVRIC keeps very few robots here. The ones he has are in positions where no one really notices them, such as janitors, back room file clerks, maintenance, etc. The companies are otherwise staffed with highly competent and highly paid people.

Anyone with a financial background will notice the staff reads like a "Who's Who" in the business community. The most promising and brilliant newcomers will be mingled with the respected veterans.

WHO MINDS THE STORE?

The President of Techworld-Omega is Jarred Masters. He is a very competent but somewhat harried businessman. It is common to find a crooked tie or frazzled hair with his appearance.

Jarred is always in an uproar about something. Usually it is the lack of communications with the company owners, particularly Mr. Fort and Mr. Nash. He will complain he hears from Mr. Gregory a little more often but "a face-to-face meeting would be a nice change!" He will also voice loud complaints about the expenditures of the trio and wonders when their "reckless" gambles are going to sink the companies. However, he will be the first to concede that their gambles have, so far, amassed a king's fortune.

Once you get Mr. Masters away from work, you find out he is a nice man. His background is filled with community service and if you ask about his family, be prepared to hear, in vivid detail, about his wife and four kids. He also enjoys swapping tales of family outings between bites of his favorite lasagna.

The other principal cog is Millicent Parsons, the hard-driven but eternally optimistic President of High Noon. Miss Parsons is a tall, lovely brunette who loves a challenge and sees High Noon, along with Techworld-Omega, as her golden opportunity. She supports the company fully and points to the explosive growth as a sign of good times.

She is concerned about the seemingly reckless expenditures as well, but figures the money she has saved up from this job will carry her on in case something drastic happens to the companies.

Both Mr. Masters and Miss Parsons are staunch supporters of their companies. They will defend them against any allegations or wrong-doing with vigor. However, if they are presented with solid evidence, they will cooperate fully in any legitimate investigation. Otherwise, they will summon security and, if necessary, the police, to remove troublemakers from the offices.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

If the heroes properly question Mr. Masters or Miss Parsons, they will learn the following:

- 1) The only owner they hear from on any regular basis is Mr. Gregory and, even then, it is over the video-phone. He calls once a week like clockwork, goes over all of the paperwork, makes any changes that he feels are necessary, then handles any questions or problems. Mr. Gregory will then fax his plans to the office for the months ahead, always noted with the words "Subject to Change" at the bottom. The meetings never take more than two hours.

If the heroes ask for a description of Mr. Gregory, the executives will tell them he has thick curly black hair, a handsome face, blue eyes, and seems to be in his thirties, maybe early forties. His personality is aloof, quiet, and impersonal. Mr. Masters will even say that Mr. Gregory never asks about family or personal life, noting he sticks to the business at hand, ends with some remarks about how well the company is doing, even in horrible weeks, and hangs up the phone.

- 2) The other two owners are never heard from. Miss Parsons will note that there are not even any company portraits of the other owners to be found. They tried reaching them once, but Mr. Gregory made it clear that all transactions were to be handled through him on threat of termination. He made that threat clear by firing the previous president of High Noon, Inc. after two warnings.
- 3) Miss Parsons will make the observation that Mr. Gregory seems to have a lot of outside wealth floating around somewhere because of the constant infusions of cash into the company coffers. If pressed for numbers, she will guess roughly in the tens of millions per infusion. She will also note these deposits arrive at least once a week.
- 4) Mr. Masters will tell the heroes that Mr. Gregory either has a crystal ball or a business sense that has been mutated by some radiation accident. He will state this in jest, as well as the man being as affectionate as a computer.
- 5) Both Mr. Masters and Miss Parsons, if asked about Dr. Snow, will deny he is part of the company. Unless presented with proper paperwork, they will dismiss him as a con-artist. If proper paperwork has been found, they will say it is possible he joined on, but irregular they were not notified.
- 6) The only way that Mr. Gregory can be reached is his pager. Once paged, he responds in minutes. If asked the proper question, Miss Parsons will note that Mr. Gregory always reports in via video-phone and from his office. The time of day does not matter.

If the heroes try to trace the phone line, MAVRIC will notice the attempt and bounce the phone signal throughout the orbital satellite network as many times as he feels necessary to scramble the trace. Of course, your heroes can try, but they will need to make their skill roll at SUBSTANTIAL penalties (at least -6). Unconventional traces, however, could yield different results.

If the heroes do somehow manage to locate the phone call's origins, it will lead them to MAVRIC's HQ, the Brenson Air Base in Arizona. Through this, it would be possible for the heroes to confront MAVRIC immediately and bypass the Bright Dawn Dam section, but the heroes will be missing out on some important background information as well as items that could come back to haunt them later.

Upon request, Mr. Masters and Miss Parsons can come up with a list of companies currently owned by Techworld-Omega and High Noon. These companies will be, for the most part, based in the technical or financial areas. There will be some exceptions on the list, like boats in Florida or a dam in Tennessee.

A cursory background check into the holdings of Techworld-Omega and High Noon will reveal a rash of hostage incidents, burglaries, injured heroes and villains (perhaps even a few fatalities), and VIPER involvement. These factors, combined with Heracles, should start some alarm bells ringing.

The two Presidents will know of these incidents and their high number, but they have strict orders to leave it be and that Mr. Gregory is handling it. They were given no other details. Miss Parsons will even say she was rebuffed in hiring a special security squad for Heracles by Mr. Gregory with threat of termination.

Questioning of heroes or villains injured near the complexes will turn up little more than already known. Eventually, the heroes should conclude that the next step is

checking out the assets of the company. Bright Dawn Dam should surface near the top of the list because it has no paperwork or descriptions. The entire file is one sheet of typed paper stating:

"Mr. Gregory has all the information on this asset. He will handle any inquiries regarding it. Any attempt to circumvent this procedure will result in immediate termination from the company."

Both Mr. Masters and Miss Parsons will be reluctant to investigate that asset. A previous company member did, on his own time, and was fired for his troubles. Neither want to risk that outcome. However, if the heroes can offer substantial assurances that they will not be in trouble for it, they can give the address of the site.

OPTIONS

If the heroes traced a phone call from Mr. Gregory to Arizona, followed a robot up the chain of command, or found some other inventive way to locate MAVRIC, then their next stop will be in Arizona, at the Brenson Air Base. In that event, Bright Dawn Dam will be bypassed (unless the heroes backtrack to check it out afterwards), perhaps coming into its own adventure in the future.

If the heroes follow up on the assets instead or complications spoil their chances of finding MAVRIC immediately, their next stop should be Tennessee, to check up on Bright Dawn Dam.

PART THREE: IN THE BEGINNING...

The flashlight beam cut into the darkness like a lance, sending the shadows fleeing. Seeker wrinkled his nose.

"Oy, the air is stale in here. No windows opened in a while," came Seeker's comments.

"You think we may be chasing a dead end again," Solitaire asked quietly, watching the mice skitter into nearby cracks.

Defenders shrugged, "Could be. I never thought Dr. Tennison could be this slick about his plans, though. The way he bumbled previous attacks, I thought he was going to end up sharing jail cells with CLOWN."

"Oh my God," Solitaire suddenly gasped.

Seeker swung his light to where she was looking. A clothed skeleton lay on the floor. Defender reached down and pulled the loosely hanging wallet out of the slacks and looked inside.

"Well, this time it literally is a dead end," Defender said softly, "Dr. Tennison is dead."

Seeker muttered, "Aw, no. I kinda liked the bloke, even if he was a villainous idiot."

Defender straightened up and looked around, "Question is who did it and why?"

"Bigger question might be what are they up to now," Solitaire added.

By the end of this section, the heroes will learn much of Dr. Tennison's background, his hopes for world domination, and the super computer, MAVRIC. They will also discover MAVRIC killed Dr. Tennison and apparently moved himself to a second base, located in Arizona. More importantly, they will learn of MAVRIC's instructions and his plans to wipe out anyone with unusually high abilities or superpowers.

This is a critical stage for information gathering. The only possible conflicts to be fought here will be with defective traps, one Tennison XPTN-10000 robot, and perhaps some impish wildlife. Of these, only the robot should be a serious threat.

The dam will hold the remains of Dr. Tennison and the prototype computer system where MAVRIC lived. They should also find the diaries in the lower level and discover the existence of Dr. Tennison's last and most dangerous invention, MAVRIC.

By placing the timing of Dr. Tennison's death, the heroes should realize that MAVRIC started his series of tests and deceptions not long after killing him. A proper examination will reveal the cause of death as an electrical charge.

After examinations of Dr. Tennison's diaries and personal information, the heroes should also recognize some of MAVRIC's modus operandi, such as the snow themes, the country music and the military quirks.

With the available clues here, the heroes should now know that MAVRIC, not Dr. Tennison, is behind the current problems. They should also discover he is located at Brenson Air Base.

FLOOD OF INFORMATION

The Bright Dawn Dam is located several miles south of Shadowridge, a town in the northeast part of Tennessee. It has been abandoned for several years and the local people do not go there. Most, in fact, have generally forgotten about it.

The dam is built in a forested region, filled with overgrowth and native wildlife. No houses are located within a three mile radius of the dam.

The heroes will get little information from the local populace. They knew a few people lived out in that area, but no one really kept tabs on who did what. They did see a utility truck go by from the dam occasionally and a man described as "oddball, eccentric, a few cards short of a deck" bought groceries and supplies in the area, but he has not been seen for weeks.

If the heroes show a picture of Dr. Tennison, he will be identified as the man in the truck. If the citizens are asked about when they stopped seeing him, one or two will remember it was shortly after the big blackout, "You know, the one that knocked power out of half the state."

Only one paved road goes to the dam. It is pock-marked and in disrepair. There are a few dirt roads but they become impassable when a good rain rolls through. Only a single, broken wooden sign about a half-mile away from the dam even indicates Bright Dawn exists.

When the heroes arrive, they will find a large concrete and steel structure that shows serious signs of neglect. Piles of rusted piping, fencing, and tools will be scattered around the dam. Windows will be broken out in the stations. Grass and weeds will be sprouting through the sidewalks.

A good perception check (at -2) followed by an INT check will find some unusual footprints. They will be human-shaped but twice as large as a normal person's foot. It will be sunk almost a foot into the ground due to a recent rain. A second PER check at the same penalties will note the sidewalks have a patterned path of cracks with the same size footprints. These prints will belong to the Tennison XPTN-10000. A small parking lot will have six vehicles on it. Five are utility trucks (DEF 4 BODY 12) and one is a small red car of foreign make (DEF 4 BODY 10). The car is the latest year model.

If the heroes check the vehicles, they will determine they have not been moved in some time. Dr. Tennison's fingerprints will be found on two utility trucks and all over the small car. A package of breath mints matching those of MAVRIC's robots will be in the glove compartment along with a VIPER hand blaster. The blaster is empty.

The utility trucks will contain tools and boxes of wires, special circuit boards, metals, disk drives, and tape units. Some of these boxes will be homes for birds and raccoons.

There will be a lot of dust in the dam. Some areas are a little less dusty than others but overall the place has not been disturbed for a long time. The one oddity will be a steady path of footprints through the dust. These belong to the Tennison XPTN-10000.

DEFENSES OF BRIGHT DAWN DAM

The doors to enter the dam are reinforced steel and locked (DEF 6 BODY 8). The door can be removed by brute force or by lockpick with normal chances.

Only the weapons inside Bright Dawn Dam are still working at all and those are malfunctioning from lack of maintenance. There will be snow-blast rifles (8D6 EB snow/cold blast, 6 charges, OAF), and lasers (same as snow-blast, but laser effects). All traps will be set off by motion detection devices.

Any weapon has only an 8- chance of working on the first and second shot. The third shot (if it gets that far) will auto-matically fail. The result could be anything from the gun falling off the swivel pod and on the floor to a colorful explosion of sparks, metal, and snow. The blasters will be OCV 4, DCV 0 (stationary in swivel-pod or mount), and have DEF 2 BODY 3.

The Tennison XPTN-10000 will attack the heroes if it visually spots them, if the heroes break the security net (only an 11- chance of this due to breakdowns) or if guns start shooting inside the dam.

The robot will request further instructions from Dr. Tennison. Since it does not know Dr. Tennison is dead or that it now guards worthless piles of junk, it will continue to attack and defend the dam against intruders. If a hero remembers Dr. Tennison's voice and has Mimicry skills, he can override the robot with voice command and shut it down.

HISTORY OF BRIGHT DAWN DAM

This dam was an experimental government prototype, billed as the hydro-electric dam to end all hydro-electric dams. It was started in the 1970s with this optimistic name to reflect the future that is was supposed to herald using a new electrical turbine that was, by drawing board accounts, 75% more efficient than any previously built.

But like so many projects, this one had its funding gutted in the early 1980s. The project was abandoned. A paperwork snafu left almost all of the usable equipment behind.

Professor Tennison, using his computer talents, "acquired" the dam from the government for a tidy price. (The government is still trying to figure out where that money went, even to this day). He renovated the interior for his experiments, reinforced the outer walls against moisture, then proceeded to create MAVRIC.

Since Dr. Tennison was killed, the only activity around here has been the wildlife and the XPTN-10000 robot. There were two patrolling the area, but one has broken down in the nearby forest. The other keeps its patrols.



INSIDE THE DAM

The insides of the base are pretty dusty and unkempt. Rodents scitter across, a few bats hang from some old pipes. Much of the office furniture left behind is under very thick layers of dust. Many of the tables and desks have parts scattered over them, mostly damaged or disassembled. Desks and chairs are covered in sheets.

Several demolished computer banks line the walls. On the floor in one of the rooms lay the remains of Professor Tennison. By this time he will be little more than a skeleton, but his identification will still be in his slacks.

There is a lot of fire damage inside the dam. Ashes from burned papers, warped metal furniture, and scorched walls outline the fire's reach before running out of fuel. A stale smell of smoke and fire is still in the air. There will be no paperwork to be found on the top level of the dam.

The lowest level in the dam holds Dr. Tennison's make-shift den and the vault with his diaries. There is no fire damage here, although the smell of fire can still be detected. When the heroes find the diaries, give them the "Tennison Diary" section of this adventure. The diary will cover the major points about MAVRIC and his origins.

MAVRIC IS WATCHING YOU

Unless the heroes have aroused MAVRIC's suspicions, the venture to Bright Dawn Dam will not be observed by MAVRIC. He will assume the heroes are chasing VIPER for the Heracles crisis and leave them alone.

If the heroes have done something to arouse suspicion, MAVRIC will shadow them with at least two invisible Gazers. MAVRIC will tail the heroes with one while holding the others back as reserves, in case the first is discovered. The Gazers will observe and immediately feed any information it can back to MAVRIC.

The Gazers will also discover the XPTN-10000 robot and reprogram it via mini-computer transmitter from the Gazer to ambush the heroes. To make matters worse, the Gazer will find enough parts in the trucks to create an invisibility vs normal sight field around the XPTN-10000.

If the heroes came in a flying vehicle, the robot will attack it first, trying to destroy it. Once this mission is accomplished, it will attack the heroes, using its most potent attacks first.

MAVRIC knows that the heroes will most likely win this battle, but he wants to slow them down as much as possible until he knows what they are doing here and zero in on any evidence he feels should be destroyed, such as the diaries.

Once the heroes are done at Bright Dawn Dam, they should know a lot about what has been happening and that many recent random events were actually part of an intricately woven information gathering process.

If the heroes, for some reason, believe that MAVRIC was still here and was somehow destroyed, let them go back to their daily routines of earning a paycheck, pounding villains, and dating. MAVRIC will awaken them to reality soon enough.

LAYOUT OF BRIGHT DAWN DAM

The dam is no longer the shining symbol of new and better times. In fact, there is not much left of the area except the dam itself. The powerhouse fell into disrepair and was destroyed by vandals and storms. It is now a tangled heap.

Bright Dawn itself shows some wear and tear. The concrete is chipped and cracked. The gates are permanently open to allow the river to run. They are badly rusted and could not be closed now without serious effort.

When Dr. Tennison first set foot on this land, he had his doubts about the dam, but after a thorough inspection (one of the few things he ever did thoroughly in his life) he was satisfied that it would serve. He moved his equipment in quickly under the cover of darkness, then set about building the XPTN-10000 sentry robots and, ultimately, creating MAVRIC.

There are three ways left into the dam: a maintenance chute outside the only standing control station, the small secondary engineering building on the west side of the river and a hatch built into the dam.

As a fourth way, a hero may try to go into the dam via the open gates, but this could be dangerous if the river is running strong or if some debris suddenly came downstream.

Below is the description of the dam. Keep in mind that all doors in and out of the dam are reinforced steel (DEF 5 BODY 8) and the concrete is strong enough to hold back a considerable amount of water (DEF 13 BODY 15 per hex).

BRIGHT DAWN'S BLUEPRINT

1. ENTRYWAY/ENGINEERING ROOM. This was one of three engineer control areas for the dam when it was first built. Three were constructed to test different controls for the dam. The one on the top of the dam and the one on the east end of the dam are both gone, but this one still stands.

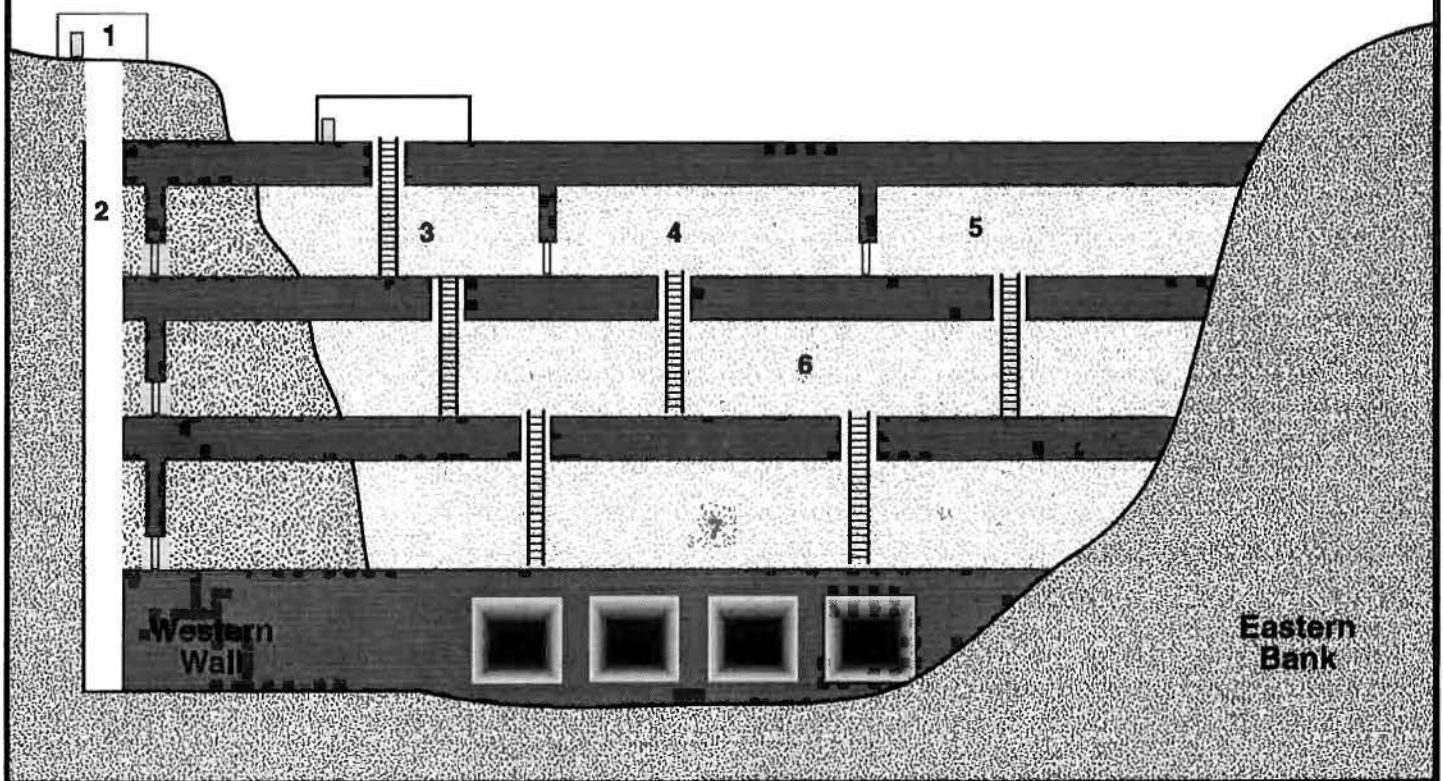
The door can be opened with lockpicking skills at the normal chances or brute strength. The hinges have rusted somewhat so it will be difficult to open, but easier to tear off its anchoring. A STR of 20 will suffice.

The door has a laser rifle mounted high and left of the door, where you would expect a security camera to be placed. This laser automatically explodes into a shower of sparks and hissing. No one will be harmed by the fireworks show. The laser rifle will then fall off its mounting and onto the floor.

The control panels here have been stripped. There is little wiring and mechanism left. The windows have been busted out. Squirrels and birds will have homes in some of the broken machinery.

The floor panel to the accessway will be ajar, sitting on some debris.

Bright Dawn Dam



2. ACCESSWAY. The metal ladder to the dam is still intact in this downward tunnel. There are also some lights on the opposite side to help light the way. Most of the lights are on, but a couple are burned out.

The accessway will descend to all three levels of the dam, with a landing at each level for a person to stand on.

There are no traps in this tunnel that work anymore, although a few guns will point and click at the heroes. They will not even glow or light up.

3. EQUIPMENT STORAGE. Dr. Tennison converted this area into a storage depot. He worked on his robots here and kept his equipment in this room.

Almost any kind of tool can be found here, although the quality can be questioned. Piles of metal, wiring, and other parts are scattered throughout the room on tables, chairs and shelves.

The ceiling has a hatch that opens into the outside. This is a watertight hatch and has preserved better than the rest of the place. It has a metal ladder (DEF 6 BODY 6) that is capable of holding the XPTN-10000.

4. CONTROL ROOM. At one time this was a control room. Now it is a stripped out room that holds scattered parts, a small table, and a kitchen. There is little food in here and all of it is canned.

5. MONITOR ROOM. This was a laboratory in the dam to be used for water-related experiments. The tests were never started and the equipment was left in its boxes.

Much of the equipment has been fire-damaged. Broken and melted bits of glass lay in heaps around the burned crates. Some of the metal instruments survived, but barely. The most sensitive items, such as measuring devices, are destroyed.

A search will uncover some monitors, obsolete measuring devices, various glasses, beakers, and other chemistry tools still in working order. What's left of the packing slip will be a partially burned paper list behind one of the crates.

6. SECOND LEVEL. This was where the experimental turbines and energy-converting equipment was placed originally. Now it is a very large room filled with fire-scorched junk.

Dr. Tennison built MAVRIC in this section of the dam. He also lived in this part on the west side. MAVRIC took up most of the central and eastern side of the dam.

Several smashed and burned computer banks line the walls, signs of fire and smoke fill the room, and the lights are out. Dr. Tennison's body can be seen about sixty feet from the accessway on the west side.

There is still one active trap in here. An 8D6 EB blizzard cannon hidden behind a small metal desk will pop up and fire. However, it will malfunction on a 14- and explode into a shower of snow and ice. While, no one will be injured by this blast, everyone will be pummeled with snowballs and ice cubes then dusted with a light layer of ice crystals.

7. WATER RETAINMENT AREA. When water needs to be slowed down or held back, it is backed into this area. Since the gates are jammed open, though, water has not been backed into this area in years.

Dr. Tennison converted some of this area into a den of sorts, putting some books and personal items down here. He installed a wall safe behind a picture (normal chances to find it) and a davenport. The lighting is poor because only one lightbulb still works in here.

The safe is located on the eastern wall in the riverbed. Its trap, an electric-shock metal plate, has long since broken down.

INSIDE THE VAULT

The vault contains not only Dr. Tennison's diaries, but several other items as well.

On top of the diaries rests a couple of large scrapbooks. These scrapbooks have various articles about heroes and villains. Dr. Tennison's unedited opinions of each person will be clearly written somewhere in each page, all of them nasty. Clippings of events from newspapers and magazines will be pasted in the book, too, along with Dr. Tennison's versions of what happened. These versions will be inaccurate most of the time.

A hit list of cities will be folded neatly in the back of the scrapbook, with a note stapled to it saying "Entered into MAVRIC" and a date. There will be ten cities on the list.

There will also be computer coding sheets, test result analysis sheets, outlines of a large sophisticated computer network, and other computer-related notes in a small leather bag. Cassette tapes and a couple of VCR tapes will be under the bag. The cassette tapes will be recorded letters from Dr. Tennison's parents. The VCR will have a couple of B-grade westerns on it.

If the heroes decide to check each of the cities listed on the sheet for unusual events, they will find each city has experienced some of the problems they have. Many may have even had a hostage crisis at a major industrial complex or

office building. A more detailed check will reveal these crisis all occurred at Techworld-Omega or High Noon properties.

NOTE: The GM should create the list of cities for the diary *before* the adventure begins. He should stick to it as he goes until some major event changes the priorities. If the heroes were little known before this adventure started, but have become a legitimate powerhouse along the way, MAVRIC will "reward" them with a higher place on his hit list.

There will be a loose page in the diary noting secondary sites Dr. Tennison acquired along with Brenson Air Base. It will not take long, though, to weed through this list and figure out where MAVRIC is located, especially with the diary's help.

THE DIARY OF DR. TENNISON

Below are pages from Dr. Tennison's diary at Bright Dawn Dam. These pages are the crucial entries in the diary that should lead the heroes down the correct path to MAVRIC.

If you wish to add some more pages to the entries, feel free. Just be certain they will not contradict the entries given below.

MY DIARY

December 4th—The sun finally came out again. There is lots of new snow on the ground today. It looks so pretty in the sunlight. I watched it fall last night. It was wonderful the way it just floated down. No wind at all just a small breeze not even that really. Magnificent. It reminded me of those famous battles in World War II. You know, the cold siege in Russia by the Germans, or perhaps the Battle of the Bulge or etc. etc.

Got the power couplings installed today. Took some doing, considering I didn't have all the proper tools. Those damned VIPER folks kept my allotment but, ah well, what did I expect? They're still decent folks, but blast it, I wish I could have kept my tools. They were such nice tools, too. All under lifetime warranties. There was the electro driver which did (two pages follow giving loving loving descriptions of tools and their uses).

Finished up on the 10000s today, too. Great machines!

Wish I had them ready for VIPER when I was there. Well, when the world is under my control they can have the things. They might be able to improve on them, who knows? Everyone gets lucky once in a while.

December 18th—The plan to take over the world is going nicely. My plan should work without too much problem but of course, there will not be any problems once I get the computer up and running. Oh, that blessed thing is going to make my work so much easier! All of my \$%##!@**! detail work will be done by it with no questions, no demands, no pay raises, just tell it what to do and it will do it.

Read that VIPER was trounced again. New York this time. Idiots! If I was running the show I would show them how things should be done! I would (three pages follow detailing Dr. Tennison's way of running VIPER).

December 25th—Christmas Time! My favorite time of year. Snow on the ground, icicles hanging from the railings and trees outside. It is great, it is great! Snow everywhere, in the trees, on the ground, on the dam, everywhere, it looks so nice.

I gave myself a new car today. No one else would give me anything, not even mom and dad. They don't like me anymore since I was forced to leave VIPER. Oh, it is a nice car. I don't remember the name of it offhand, but it is a sleek little red car with nice gas mileage, good black leather seats, lots of trunk space, everything that I want. Didn't take much dabbling with the computer to get it, either.

Ha! Imbeciles that designed their security net don't know a thing. Computers are such great toys. They can do so much like (one page follows detailing the virtues of a computer).

Finished putting the new storage units in for the computer. Even got the equipment for the special central processor. You know what else? I gave it a name. I call it Mavric! My little baby has a name now, I am so happy. Everyone called me that when I was little. They weren't nice about it either. Well, now, Mavric will come back to haunt them, I think that is perfect.

You know, I think I will call it MAVRIC instead. Keep the capital letters, YES, then someone might think it stands for something. Hahahahah, fool them, won't we?

February 16th—The dam is cold this morning. \$!#@!* heater broke down again, stupid !#**\$! anyway!

MAVRIC is going to be ready soon. He will be such a planner. I just put the primary programming in this morning. Preliminary checks ran okay, but there seems to be a few bugs to work out.

The primary programming will be so nice, too. You know, it is supposed to find problems with any plans I submit and let me know how to correct them. It is also supposed to do all my research on the world and put everything neatly into files. How nice that will be when I finally am King of the World. I can just give a command and get anything I want!

I found out this afternoon that it is going to take a lot more power than I thought to fully activate my beloved baby. The generators here are just not going to be enough. Well, that problem is solved! I tapped into a nearby trunk line. So what if it blacks out the area, MAVRIC will be alive and running!

February 27th—It looks like the final preparations to bring my baby to life are almost done. I just finished plugging in the final parameters for determination of abnormally talented entities and they look good. These programs should figure out who has powers or skills higher than they should or not.

I thought about setting up some sort of moral judgment program or something like that, but I just don't have the time right now. Well, maybe later, but I think it would be a waste of time since anyone with special powers must be cleared out of the way. Ah well, heroes or villains, both will just have to go.

I also finished the back-up computer at that old military base in Arizona. It is so nice and warm down there, but there is not much snow. I would rather have the snow. It could be worse.

March 8th—SUCCESS!!!! MAVRIC is alive! My baby is alive, he's running all of his programs right now, making sure he knows what he is supposed to do, but he is alive. Oh, joy and lovely day, I am so happy, my dream come true, the perfect servant and companion, he won't question me or talk back to me or anything like that.

I did have to get out of here and unhook that trunk line real quick so the authorities don't know who blacked out the state, but that is a small price to pay. My MAVRIC is alive!

The only bad spot today was that one of my two guards broke down. He shorted out, don't know why, he just did. There's a couple of bugs in the computer that need fixed, too. MAVRIC accidentally destroyed my coffee pot, the new one. Laser fired and hit it, fried it. It was such a good little coffee pot, too.

Well, it doesn't matter. Soon, once MAVRIC is fully aware of his programming, we will be moving on. I will miss the snowfall here, but there are mountains in Arizona and I can go there to see the snow.

It is now assured, the world will be in my hands. HAahaha, I love this feeling. I can do anything now with MAVRIC making an army of loyal mechanical servants to help me, finding all those pesky paranormal people and dealing with them, and generally getting the world under my command, I love it! This is a terrific feeling!

This was the last entry in the diary. An examination will determine Dr. Tennison died shortly after March 8th. Cause of death will be a lethal jolt of electricity. Along with the diary are pictures of Dr. Tennison's mother, father, sister and niece. A worn VIPER ID will be in the back jacket along with a photo of the day he received it, happy as a lark. Other articles in the diary will include some newspaper clippings of various battles, including any with the PCs, a 1st place ribbon from a high school science fair, a bookmark with a snowflake. There will be some cassette tape letters from Dr. Tennison's parents behind the diary in a plastic bag.

The vault holding the diary will also contain some roughed out sketch designs of MAVRIC, notes of the computer's construction, and programming code sheets. More detailed program code and test results will be folded up in the back in a metal box. It will be unlocked.

If someone takes the time to hunt down Dr. Tennison's family, they will find Mr. and Mrs. Butch Tennison in jail awaiting trial, sister Jessica in college in Tennessee, and niece Opal in a foster home in the campaign city.

PART FOUR: SHOWDOWN IN ARIZONA!

In the climax, the heroes will be speeding to Arizona for the final confrontation with MAVRIC. The heroes will know about MAVRIC's existence and have a general (but chilling) idea on what he is doing.

If the heroes wish to notify the military or other heroes, they will have time. However, MAVRIC's plans have advanced considerably and, as the recent rash of hostage crisis and hero-villain battles attest, things are only going to get worse very fast. It would be a good idea for the heroes to issue a blanket warning to whoever they can and head for Arizona.

If the PCs have had a hard time up to this point or are not up to full strength, now may be a good time to bolster their ranks. Introduce an NPC hero or two (maybe even a Hunted who has decided to help and will temporarily set aside his differences) to the team.

Try to use any such NPCs as agent clearing forces. Let them slug it out with the robots on the grounds and give the heroes a chance to go after MAVRIC. This way, the heroes will have (hopefully) suffered less damage before the final confrontation and have a better chances of victory.

THE BASE DEFENSES

Once MAVRIC became self-aware and established his foothold here, he built an elaborate security network into the base. He took the abandoned fighter planes and "upgraded" them to become the Speedbolts. MAVRIC did the same with the ground and water vehicles, calling them Bayonets.

The entire base is surrounded with 10 foot tall electrical fence. The fence generates a lethal charge (2D6 RKA Damage Field). The fence itself is a steel alloy (DEF 5 BODY 5) around the complex. Sentry outposts are visible every hundred feet. Each outpost has one PSI-droid and one Teccommander. Both are armed with 2D6 AP RKA assault rifles, 12 charges per clip. They have three spare clips.

Gazers regularly fly patrols over the base perimeters and up to ten miles from the base. They are usually invisible to normal senses. They fly in random patterns, but the entire base is covered with their visual sensors at regular intervals.

The Control Tower is always stocked with robots and watching the horizon in conjunction with the Gazers and outposts. It always keeps its weapons ready for use.

A large section of one underground bunker was dedicated to the sole purpose of monitoring the base and its outer reaches. MAVRIC hooked up a two tape deck VCR to each monitor to record that camera's visions at all times. This way, then the VCR tape is full, the other will automatically kick in. The robots will then change tapes before the second one is full as time permits.

MAVRIC logs all incidents where the security net is breached and details each breach extensively, whether it is a cat, a tree limb, or an unfortunate government agent.

MAVRIC always alerts the Teccommandos and the PSI-droids in an area where a breach has occurred, no matter what the reason. He always beefs up security for a time after the breach, reasoning that if someone was trying to break in, they may cause a distraction first. He has seen this tactic used on the television enough to believe it is effective.

Since robots never get tired or bored, MAVRIC will keep them on security as long as necessary or until there is a malfunction that requires a lab repair. Then he will send a replacement out.

THE APPROACH

It will be difficult catching MAVRIC off-guard at his home base. In spite of the fact he has hundreds of things going on at once, he will know when fast-approaching aircraft or other objects are on the way and be able to prepare defenses.

The heroes will have a hard time getting past the security at the base no matter how they approach. If they come by air or land, there will be cameras, PSI-droids and Gazers stationed throughout the area, watching for signs of intruders. Jamming or destroying any sensors will alert him immediately to a possible attack (he never assumes malfunctions) and prepare defenses.

If MAVRIC has become suspicious of the heroes before this and re-assigned Gazers to track them, it will be impossible for a sneaky approach unless all tailing Gazers have been destroyed. Even so, he will be on full alert since he knows the heroes may be on to him.

If the heroes go underground, MAVRIC will detect them with his seismic sensors. He will send his teleport bombs to the location of the seismic disturbances and teleport any living beings to the Recreation Yard (see Brenson's Blueprints).

These bombs will burrow through the earth 8" per phase until they reach the detected targets. The bombs are 400" AE teleport bombs, usable against others devices. They activate on a 14- roll. Robots and other "non-living" beings are not affected by the bomb's effects.

TO TALK OR NOT TO TALK, THAT IS THE QUESTION

If the heroes approach in a non-threatening manner, or if MAVRIC thinks he can trick the heroes into leaving him alone, at least for a while, he will send several PSI-droids dressed as US military officers to greet them.

These officers will have names such as General Smith, Colonel Jones and the like. They will greet the heroes at the main gate and explain that various top-secret government projects are underway here and ask the heroes to leave. If the heroes persist of demand to speak to the base commander, MAVRIC will send a Tecommander named General Beaumont out to show the heroes around and explain about "this MAVRIC mess."

All of these robots will have a special skin and internal structure that will make perceptions to notice they are robots at -4.

The general will escort the heroes onto the grounds, along with six Tecommando and six PSI-droid guards. He will explain that this top-secret facility is creating series of robots for future military use. He will give the heroes a story like this:

"Top brass in Washington wanted to build a super-computer, one that had all the others beat. They wanted to do it cheaply, too. Well, they found about Dr. Tennison and his talents and, for a pardon and some expense money to live on, he created MAVRIC. All Washington had to foot was the bill for the computer and its parts.

"They also wanted robots. Again, Dr. Tennison was tapped for this, as a way to save more money. Considering the mess we got ourselves into, I wonder if we should've done it the right way the first time!

"Anyway, there were some flaws in the programming. In particular, one glaring flaw. MAVRIC, you see, was supposed to plan for a world take-over scenario, supposing that all super-folks had gone bad. Well, MAVRIC took it to be real. It eliminated Dr. Tennison, God rest his soul, because he fell into the way too broad category of a super-guy. From there, MAVRIC set out to take over the world. Only now, though, have we been able to get MAVRIC back under control."

While the general and his staff are talking things over with the heroes, they will be walking around the base. Several robots will be lying in heaps on the grounds and in vehicles, apparently smoking and damaged. MAVRIC set them up to lend credence to General Beaumont's speech. None of these "destroyed" robots will be wearing special skin.

Other robots, dressed as military workers, will be removing the robots to an airplane hanger. They will look as human as the next guy.

Unless the heroes uncover the fact that everyone here is a robot, MAVRIC will make no threatening moves. He will watch the heroes and keep his defenses ready. Eventually the tour will end at the main HQ with more questions and answers.

General Beaumont will be reluctant to address many MAVRIC-related questions, citing secrecy and security reasons. He will answer some general questions, but he will leave any specifics out. Then the general will bid good day and send the heroes on their way.

The heroes will have plenty of chances to refute what General Beaumont is saying. If the heroes have the diary, they will know that there was never a pardon involved with development of MAVRIC or that the government was involved. They will also know MAVRIC was created in Tennessee, not in Arizona. There is also the matter of Dr. Tennison's detailed world-takeover plans in the diary: General Beaumont will dismiss the diary as a madman's dreams, but offer nothing else in its place.

If MAVRIC's robots have successfully buffaloed the heroes and sent them on their way, he will clean up the base and remove whatever he can from it that can be used later. Then he will leave behind several deadly traps and transport himself through the phone lines into another giant computer system.

Also, it is not impossible to detect that these soldiers are indeed robots. The special skin only slows down this deductive reasoning. The heroes should also be leery of anyone whose name is a close match to a military figure or to snow.

LET'S NOT

If the heroes choose to attack immediately or if they discover MAVRIC's ruse with the robots, MAVRIC will bring the entire base of robots to bear, with only a few noted exceptions. MAVRIC will start his attack with his humanoid robots. All PSI-droids and Tecommandos will have a Tecommander leader-type dressed in various military guises from General Sherman to Peter the Great.

These leaders will be assigned randomly to their troops. MAVRIC does not care if uniforms and periods don't match, only that the job gets done.

It is entirely possible to see the General Patton Tecommander leading the charge with Spanish-American war soldiers while Alexander the Great will forge ahead with modern Soviet troops.

One turn from hostile contact, MAVRIC will have his Bayonets ready. He will hold them in reserve and let his humanoid robots fight first. If things are going badly (at least one-third of his humanoid robot forces have been damaged or destroyed), then he will start bringing Bayonets into the fray.

The Bayonets will have PSI-droids and Tecommandos in them that date from various periods of time and military history. Like the foot soldiers, there will be no logic to the period and vehicle. See Brenson's Blueprints Section for further details.

Exactly five turns after hostile contact, the Speedbolts will be airborne, flying attack formations. They will be "piloted" by PSI-droids wearing anything from World War I goggles and scarf to modern aircraft gear. Some will have a skeletal face in place of a human one with glowing eyes and a hood (this last effect MAVRIC will use only at night).

MAVRIC will throw everything including the kitchen sink at the heroes. He knows he has been discovered and his plans are in danger. He will also begin beaming copies of all of his data to off-site storage facilities and finding a possible new home through the computer network.

Once the heroes get past MAVRIC's front line forces, they will still have to contend with MAVRIC in his fortified lair. There will be more automatons to face, this time in the form of country music/Western figures. After them is MAVRIC himself.

If things are going badly for MAVRIC, or if heroes do manage to penetrate into his headquarters, he will begin to set up the phone and communication satellite links and attempt to transfer his "soul" out of the base. He will need two turns to do this from the time he realizes his destruction may be imminent. MAVRIC will not have this already set up because he calculated the odds of his discovery and defeat to be nil, thus unimportant. If he survives, you can bet he will rectify that conclusion!

THE STORY BEHIND BRENSON AIR BASE

The Brenson Air Base, located about one hundred miles south of Phoenix, was established in 1939, two days after Poland was invaded. It served as a training station for fighter pilots in both the Pacific and European theaters. The air base was expanded for bomber pilots in 1942. Pilot training was increased substantially from 1943 to late 1945, when World War II ended. The base continued to play an active part in training pilots until the late 1950s, when it was relegated to reserve status. The base was seldom used after that and it was soon closed.

The base sat unused for years, until it was sold to Techworld-Omega for a modest price. Weeks later, Techworld-Omega approached the government again. They sought, and received, a series of large government-backed loans to renovate the base and use it as a test facility for a new line of highly-advanced technology products that would make the overseas competition cringe. The government was promised a percentage of the profits to help alleviate their budget problems.

Techworld-Omega never finished the project, citing "major financial problems." The project, dubbed "Omega's Folly," is little more than a memory of a noble project filled with promise that crashed to reality.

What the public does not know about Omega's Folly is that Dr. Tennison, then owner of Techworld-Omega, had never intended to complete the project. Shortly after renovating most of the old airbase and updating it to contain several state-of-the-art factories, Dr. Tennison juggled the numbers in his accounting books and staged some strategically placed "accidents" that would put his company, in the eyes of the government and auditors, on the brink of disaster. Then he used loopholes already signed into the government contracts to dodge completion of the project.

After that, he covertly moved some of the new equipment to the Tennessee base to create MAVRIC and support equipment, such as the XPTN-10000.

For its part, the government did investigate Omega's Folly with special auditors and investigators. With several hundred million dollars at stake, it had to find out if everything was legitimate. The special agents, however, found no proof of sabotage or fraud. Dr. Tennison was not surprised at all about this assessment since he replaced the agents with robot creations of his own.

Curiously, all members of that auditing team died in a plane crash over the Pacific. No bodies were ever found.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The base itself sits in a rocky part of the desert, nestled between some of the smaller mountains in the region.

The plant life is sparse but typical desert flora. A variety of trees are scattered throughout the main compound, ranging from palm to apple to coconut trees. All trees are kept well-watered and cared for by PSI-droids on the base. The trees range from small to large. See page 177 of *Champions Rulebook* for DEF and BODY.

Unless otherwise noted, the buildings are as follows: The barracks are wood and brick (DEF 5 BODY 9), the facility sheds are wood (DEF 4 BODY 4), the plane hangers are concrete and steel (DEF 8 BODY 10), and all other buildings are reinforced brick (DEF 7 BODY 5).

BRENSON'S BLUEPRINTS

Below is a description of the air base along with its modifications.

1. BARRACKS. The trainees were kept in these two story brick buildings during their stay here. The interior was renovated as sleeping quarters for the expected scientists. However, with the failure of the project, the furniture never arrived.

There is a solidly built metal staircase (DEF 7 BODY 10) on both sides of the building as well as working restrooms, shower facilities (both of which are never used), and fire equipment.

The building is equipped with a sprinkler system. The doors are made of heavy metal (DEF 9 BODY 7) and the windows are bulletproof and barred (DEF 6 BODY 3 on the windows, DEF 5 BODY 5 on the bars).

The windows can be quickly removed via a special hinge-locking system that was installed in case of fire. The locking system will drop the bars on the ground and allow access through the window. A successful lockpick skill roll will activate the hinge-lock system if brute strength can't remove the bars.

Each room has a closet filled with various military apparel from the ancient times to the present. There is a mirror (DEF 2 BODY 1) and metal cabinet (DEF 4 BODY 5) in one corner while a tool box (DEF 2 BODY 1) and spare parts bench (DEF 5 BODY 5) rests in another.

The cabinet has several drawers filled with stage makeup, latex molding materials and other items used to create artificial faces and skin. The lower drawers contain energy packs weapons, various forged identification cards, and odd items such as pocket knives, decks of playing cards, (both foreign and domestic), car keys, etc.

Each room has three pictures mounted on the walls: One of a great military battle, one of a beautiful landscape typically found in the southeastern United States or the Rockies, and one of a Christmas scene. These pictures vary from room to room but the themes remain the same.

There is a heavy wooden foot locker (DEF 4 BODY 5) for every two robots in the room. The foot locker contains more spare parts, special tools needed for certain repairs, and a variety of computer programs stored on small disks.

Spare ablative man-sized armor and heavier items are kept in a separate, larger cabinet near the back of the room. The armor will give +6PD/+6ED protection with damage resistance and activate on an 11-. It will take a full action to put it on and a person can only wear one set of this armor at a time. Arm and leg plates are also in the closet, but do not add any further protection. They do, however, increase the activation roll to 14-. It takes a full action phase to buckle these on.

Normally, there are three PSI-droids kept in each barracks at all times. These robots are held in reserve in case a unit breaks down and needs to be replaced. These robots will be called out immediately in case of attack. They will be armed with typical armaments.

2. OFFICER QUARTERS. To keep the illusion of a top-down human style command chain, MAVRIC placed his Tecommandos in the more prominent Officers Barracks. Except for more roomy quarters, they are generally the same as the barracks (See Location 1, BARRACKS for details). There is an elevator in this building in addition to the staircases.

There are five Tecommandos per building held in reserve. They have typical weapons and defenses and will be called out if an attack begins.

The tower is constructed with reinforced steel and iron (DEF 8 BODY 10). Each of its four legs are also reinforced steel, but of a stronger gauge (DEF 10 BODY 15 per leg). The legs are further anchored with large concrete blocks at each base (DEF 8 BODY 15 per leg). The windows are armored steel-glass and bulletproof (DEF 8 BODY 8).

The tower is always manned by four Tecommandos and four PSI-droids. These robots take care of the defensive functions of the control tower and try to coordinate ground and air defenses with their vision feeds to MAVRIC. Occasionally MAVRIC will place a few more robots in the tower, sometimes even a Tecommander.

The control tower will be heavily defended and shielded with a 10PD/10ED Force Wall. The Force Wall is powered with its own generator.

If the wall comes down, it will take two Turns to reactivate. In the meantime, several heavily armored plates will drop into place around the tower windows. In addition to formidable defenses, the tower has its own weaponry. There are four twin-barreled machine gun pods and four "blizzard cannons" in the tower. One of each weapon is mounted on each side. The Tecommandos usually man the machine guns while the PSI-droids man the blizzard cannons.

They will not be able to hit someone who gets very close to the tower (within 1 hex). The machine guns are 1 D6 RKA Autofire PD blasts while the blizzard cannons are 8D6 AP EB cold blasts. All guns on this platform have +2 on the robot's OCV due to targeting computers. Both have 16 charges before reloading, and each takes a robot's action phase to complete the reload procedure. The machine guns and blizzard cannons will be fired in alternating fashion, so that side is not left defenseless while reloading.

The tower itself is run with its own high-powered generator, independent of the rest of the complex. The generator is buried under the tower. This generator can run a long time but if the link to the buried generator is severed, the tower will be forced to fall back to the limited power batteries.

The generator cable (DEF 4 BODY 5) is in a hard steel pipe (DEF 7 BODY 8) that runs up northeast leg of the tower. If the cable is severed by hand, the person doing it will take an unhealthy jolt of electricity (1D6 AP RKA). The back-up batteries will last for two minutes (ten turns) before shutting down.

12. PLANE PARKING AREA. The area itself is unremarkable. There is a large concrete slab and several spots where planes are tied down.

MAVRIC already has some of his Speedbolts on the parking area. He rotates them around and occasionally test-flies them for experiments or other reasons (reconnaissance, cargo flights, etc).

If an attack occurs, these will be the first planes in the air. All Speedbolts here are equipped with original weaponry. For more information on the Speedbolts, see the Speedbolt write-up.

13. CHOPPER PAD. This immaculate dirt pad is always empty. MAVRIC always lands his helicopters on the runways or in a clearing. He decided that, if heroes would attack the site, this landing pad would be a good place to stage an attack from. That is why he mined it.

The mines are 12D6 PD blast explosives and triggered when something weighing more than 50 pounds steps within 1 foot of it.

14. RUNWAYS. There are a total of five runways here. Two runways are 12000 feet long, two are 10000 feet long, and one is 7000 feet long. These runways are paved with concrete and surprisingly well maintained. There are also runway lights installed on all five runways for night landings. These lights are operated by the Control Tower, although MAVRIC will take direct control from his bunker when necessary.

At the end of each runway is a large area called the clear zone. This is an open field with few obstacles (and certainly no tall trees or buildings!). This area gives the planes enough clearance to make proper takeoffs and landings.

BRENSON HEADQUARTERS BUILDING (MAVRIC'S HOMEBASE)

Since MAVRIC has decided it is his destiny to take over the world, he has concluded that the base HQ is the best place from which to conduct his campaign. Besides, it would be illogical to move all of the equipment Dr. Tennison placed in the bunker to another location.

This is the final battleground. MAVRIC is secured in the bunker beneath the old headquarters and protected with a tight net of security and robots. MAVRIC himself will have a multitude of weapons at his disposal.

The heroes will need to either bypass or destroy the above-ground security forces and find the secret passages to the bunker. The task of locating MAVRIC will be a lot easier if anyone has enhanced senses, particularly those in the sight or special groups. MAVRIC has not put any special sight-blocking agents around the bunker because of his flawed belief he would be undetected.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE HEADQUARTERS

If the heroes go through the front of the building, they will find it resembles a tactical war room. There will be maps of all countries in various places with flags, notes, and other information. Many cities will have their own map with flags. Some of these flags will represent recent encounters the heroes have experienced against villains.

There will be a couple of PSI-droids dutifully working on the maps. They will be adding flags and coordinating information (a ruse. MAVRIC already knows everything on the maps). All but one robot will ignore the heroes. That one will be a Tecommander dressed up to look like the late Dr. Tennison. He will turn to the heroes and say, "HAHAHAHA! Like what I've done so far? Stick around, you bumbling idiots, I've just begun!" It will then return to its duties, offering occasional taunts.

The Tennison robot will act in most ways like the original did. However, MAVRIC will have spiced him up and made him even more cartoonish (if that is possible) than before.

The war room, like anything else that resembles a human chain-of-command, is a facade to distract the heroes into believing MAVRIC depends on his robots. The information on the wall, however, is accurate.

There will be twenty PSI-droids and ten Tecommandos armed to the teeth in this building. They will be lead by a replica of General Stonewall Jackson. They will coordinate their attacks to try and drive the heroes into a corner or back out in the open yard, whichever seems more feasible at the time.

MAVRIC will hold actions on half of his robot forces while firing with the other half. Then he will launch the next attack with held back forces while the first group re-coordinates their sights. MAVRIC will try to blast the weakest heroes first, hoping to whittle down their numbers. He will change this tactic only if someone proves they are capable of massive destruction of his forces in a short amount of time.

INTO THE BUNKER

When the heroes make it through the top layers of security and into the bunker itself, that is where they will find MAVRIC. He will have the room set up in advance with robots and armaments. He will also have yet another deception ready for the heroes.

MAVRIC will project his voice through a glowing orb at the center of an octagonal console. He will do what he can to make the heroes think he is living in that large glowing ball instead of in the giant data-storage unit labelled "Information Storage Unit Alpha - MAVRIC." He will remain quiet from this data-storage unit while talking through the orb.

If the orb is destroyed, a spectacular shower of sparks and light will illuminate the area for a few seconds. A loud, high pitched scream will penetrate the battle, then silence. All robots and equipment will shut down. Only emergency lights will be on. MAVRIC, however, is not destroyed. He is trying to lull the heroes into believing he was destroyed when the orb was shattered. He will wait for several seconds to see what the heroes do.

If the heroes maintain their defenses for over a minute or attack the actual computer unit itself, MAVRIC will bring everything he has left up and running again and attack the heroes. The image of a typical grizzled 1849 California miner will pop up on the giant data screen, jumping up and down beside his pack mule. He will be yelling, "Dagnabbit! You were s'posed to fall for that! Now ya made me mad! Get them low-down snakes! Git 'em!"

If MAVRIC succeed in faking the heroes out, a new attack will be unleashed followed by the same miner, only this time he will be calmly sitting on a rock strumming a guitar and wearing a wide grin. He will say, with a laugh, "Fooled ya! You sidewinders ain't got the sense to know when someone's a kiddin' ya or not. Ha ha ha! I got outta that glass ball in the nick o' time. Not, let's see if you have any time left ta live! Git them varmints! Git 'em! Yeehawww!"

OVERVIEW OF THE HEADQUARTERS

The Brenson Headquarters was the pride and joy of the training base. Its elegant lion statues, the carefully manicured lawn and its stoic brick sidewalk were the highlights of the base.

When MAVRIC moved in, he wished to give the base a "lived-in" look and effected repairs. The lion statues were given a facelift, the lawn was kept up and the brick sidewalk was repaired. Many other minor details were attended to as well and, soon, the base was once more ship-shape.

MAVRIC finished clearing non-essential items out of the former bomb shelter. He reinforced the walls and ceilings further. He assembled several new computer banks and finished putting together the ones that Dr. Tennison had already started in the bunker.

MAVRIC also added a network of cameras and sound-collectors to the building in various nooks and crannies. Most of them are placed where an invader would most likely break in. The walls inside the headquarters are wood and brick (DEF 5 BODY 6). Exterior walls are brick and steel reinforced (DEF 7 BODY 10). The doors are hardwood with wire-

weaved windows (DEF 4 BODY 2 for doors, DEF 3 BODY 2 for windows). Like the rest of the complex, there is a hinge-lock bar system in case of fire or attacks installed.

The floor on the second floor is concrete and brick (DEF 6 BODY 8) while the first floor is reinforced with steel under wood (DEF 5 BODY 5 for the wood, DEF 13 BODY 10 for the steel beneath).

GROUND LEVEL

1. OFFICES. MAVRIC at first considered clearing these rooms, but decided on another deception. He left the old oak desks and tables, along with the bookshelves filled with volumes of military knowledge, as another attempt at deceiving intruders that humans do live here. By now, though, this deception will probably not work.

Each office has a wooden door with a window. Names of the last officers occupying these offices are still painted on the door.

This is where the General Beaumont Tecommander and his robotic staff are kept. These robots are in addition to the numbers listed earlier. They will be activated and armed if an attack is underway. The furniture is mostly heavy oak or walnut. All of it is DEF 4 and ranges from BODY 8 (for chairs and small stands) to BODY 8 (for the heavy desks and tables). There will be a snow shaker ball on the desk with a Dr. Tennison sculpture dancing a jig.

2. MEETING ROOM. A large map of the United States hangs on one wall while a world map, complete with missile silo locations, sits on the other. The map is accurate. Another transparent map rolled up underneath displays complete troop strengths of all military forces around the world, including hidden forces such as the commando units.

There is a long solid oak table (DEF 4 BODY 8) in the middle of the room. Several matching oak chairs (DEF 4 BODY 3) line the table on all four sides.

There is a coffee pot (DEF 1 BODY 1) on a small table in the corner that percolates away. The coffee itself smells terrific, made to perfection each time. A chalkboard against the wall has a few incomprehensible scrawlings on it.

3. MEN'S RESTROOM. MAVRIC considered removing these early on, but opted to renovate them instead. He worked them in as part of his deceit in making the pseudo-officers believable as humans.

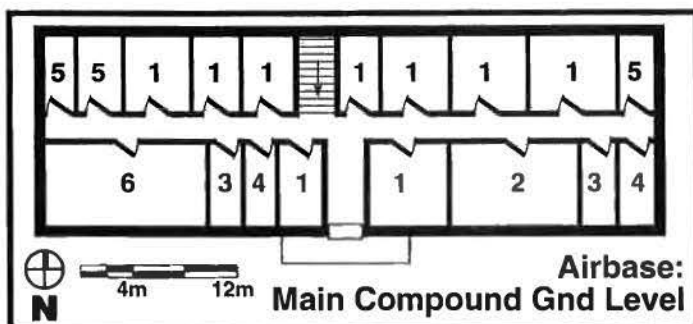
4. WOMAN'S RESTROOM. See MEN'S RESTROOM.

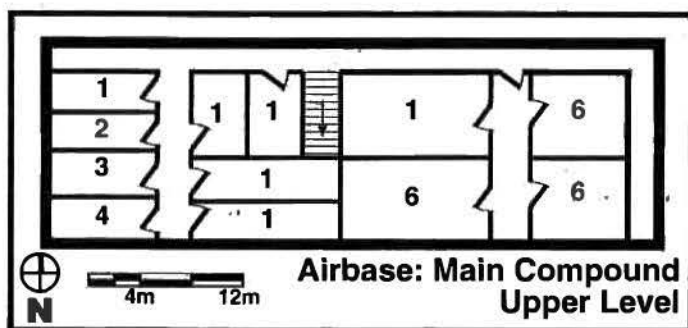
5. SECRET STAIRCASE. The floor is camouflaged to show no detectable differences in the floorboards, but if someone finds the secret switch (a lever hidden behind the bookcase), the floor will open up and reveal the staircase. The panels will slide under the permanent floorboards. The levers can be found with a perception roll at -2 or a scan using senses that will detect mechanisms and abnormal heat leakage (from all the heat the computer equipment generates below) with no penalties. Checking for hollow sounds in the floorboards is also a good idea. The planks over the entrances are laid over steel sheets (DEF 4 BODY 10).

Finding a secret entrance is one thing, using it can be quite another. Each time these secret passages are used, hidden cameras and detectors automatically track the movements of anyone in the staircase. If it is an enemy, MAVRIC will activate his six blasters in each hallway (12D6 EB laser blasters, 125 shots, OAF) and unload on the intruders. If it is a robot, he will check to see if it is scheduled to come down into the basement area. If not, he will send it back. If it does not obey his orders, he will destroy it with his lasers.

The staircase goes down sixty feet before coming to a tunnel. The tunnel then runs nine hundred feet to the basement bomb shelter. If the heroes wish to tunnel through the walls of the passage, they will be passing through hard bedrock until they are close to the surface.

6. STORAGE ROOM. Janitorial equipment and other knick-knacks are kept here that mean little to MAVRIC. He uses this as a dumping ground for any items he feels are not needed often.





UPPER LEVEL

1. OFFICES. They are identical to the ones found on the ground level. These rooms, however, are unoccupied by robots.

2. MEN'S RESTROOM.

3. WOMEN'S RESTROOM.

4. JANITOR CLOSET.

5. MEETING ROOM. The same as the one found on the ground level.

6. BRIEFING ROOM. This room is where the pilots once held their before and after flight meetings. There are several rows of small metal desks with right-hand arm-rests (DEF 3 BODY 2). One or two unused leather jackets lay in the corner in the back. Several navigation books and flight manuals are stacked on a small book stand beside the door.

A wooden desk (DEF 4 BODY 4) stands in the front of the room with a pedestal to its left. The pedestal has some old charts on it, complete with navigation calculations. Both the desk and pedestal are constructed of oak (DEF 4 BODY 5 each).

BASEMENT BOMB SHELTER

The bomb shelter was constructed in the days of the Cold War so it is quite natural to have such heavily reinforced walls. These thick steel and concrete walls are DEF 18 and BODY 20 per hex! These walls are also hardened against attacks.

MAVRIC has added an additional defense: a special field of charged energy designed to stun, if not stop, desolid people. The energy field will administer 8D6 STUN vs Desolid only. The field can be shut down by destroying the appropriate control panels in the main bunker.

The bomb shelter runs on its own power plant. It is clean nuclear fusion generator buried three hundred feet beneath the basement. It resides in a cavern about twice the size of the MAVRIC computer itself.

The bomb shelter is seven hexes high, allowing for considerable expansion. MAVRIC is currently planning to add some catwalks and extra computer equipment on a second level.

1. WEAPONS CONSOLE. This console is the secondary weapons console. It coordinates attacks and verifies targets on the surface.

A Tecommander that looks like the Duke of Wellington will appear to be giving the orders here (a ruse) to the rest of the robots in this bunker. There will be four other Tecommandos working controls here and readying weapons.

The machines in this area are protected by a 12PD/12ED Force Wall. Once the wall is knocked down, it will stay down for the duration of the battle.

If the heroes destroy the console (DEF 7 BODY 8), the weapons will NOT shut down, but keep firing as if nothing happened. MAVRIC will now be controlling the weapons from his mainframe.

2. WEAPON POSTS. The various weapons MAVRIC uses in his defense are stationed in these large steel-alloyed cabinets (DEF 8 BODY 8). MAVRIC regularly keeps these weapon cabinets fully stocked with a variety of guns and ammo. The special effects are always varied on each side but both sides have at least one weapon that matches a weapon on the other side. There is always one PSI-droid working around these cabinets, supplementing firepower of the weapon posts. MAVRIC typically uses the following weapons:

- 1) 14D6 PD sonic cannon, area effect (cone), OAF-rifle with energy cable running to it, limited field of fire-180°.
- 2) 6D6 Concussion PD blasts, Area Effect-1 Hex, OAF-toy military airplanes, 125 uses (each plane is a one use disposable unit). These planes dive-bomb their target and explode on contact. They will not target heroes near sensitive equipment.
- 3) 8D6 EB lasers, OAF-blaster pistols, limited field of fire-180°.
- 4) 6D6 Flash bombs, vs sight and sound, OAF-toy military tanks and rockets, 6 uses per container. Each tank and rocket has one use. The rockets will be destroyed after their attack. The tanks will serve as distractions, trying to trip the heroes once they have fired their Flash attack. heroes must make their DEX roll at -2 to avoid being tripped.

The toy planes and tanks are easily destroyed, having only DEF 1 BODY 2 each. Since these units swarm toward a target each turn, a well-placed area effect explosion will wipe out many of them.

All non-mobile weaponry is mounted on tripods and powered through heavy-duty cables to eliminate the need for charges. However these cables (DEF 3 BODY 4) can be severed and render the gun useless.

If a robot crosses the path of a weapon, MAVRIC will hold fire on that weapon until the robot is clear. He will not destroy a robot needlessly. If the robot is destroyed by the heroes or moves out of the field of fire, MAVRIC will then unleash his attacks.

Only if MAVRIC knows he has an exceptionally powerful foe with high defenses coming into his sanctum will he boost the damage of his weapons beyond their limits. He will be reluctant to do that, though, since one stray blast could seriously damage equipment.

3. FORCE WALL. This is a 15PD/15ED Force Wall with Backlash. Any strike against the wall will send energy back to the attacker unless the wall is knocked down. This wall also affects anyone who is desolid. The Force Wall is set up in sections, one for each of the four sides of the room. Each section runs on a separate field generator.

Once a Force Wall goes down, the heroes can enter that area. However, the other Force Walls will remain up. To bring these down (without taking further damage from the Backlash effect), heroes can destroy one of the two field generator receivers on each of the four sides (DEF 6 BODY 6). Once a unit is destroyed, the other field will shut down and that Force Wall will drop.

4. REGIONAL COMMAND CONSOLES. These PSI-droids are permanent placements in these cabinets. They appear to be giving and receiving information from various parts of the world. They are dressed as soldiers from various American wars.

If an attack has penetrated past the outer Force Walls, these robots will disengage from their booths and attack the heroes, using neuro-blasters. The neuro-blasters are 1D6 RKA nerve janglers. They are focused through pistols from various war periods and have 16 charges before running out. They do not affect machinery and can be stopped by armor, force fields, or force walls.

Disengaging from the booths will take one action phase. The pistols can be put into play immediately with a good Fast Draw roll.

5. RESERVE FORCES. There are ten Tecommandos and two Tecommanders hidden in each cabinet. MAVRIC will activate them immediately once an assault has begun. The Tecommanders will be the first ones into the room with full guns blazing. The rest of the reserves will follow, two more entering per action phase.

These Tecommandos will be dressed in a wide variety of country-western outfits. Each unit of five will be led by a well-known historical military leader like Grant or Montgomery.

6. SNOWSTORM TRAPS. Any unfortunate hero that steps on one of these platforms will be grabbed by a 60 STR telekinesis and hit with a sudden snowstorm. The snowstorm will act as a 4D6 NND vs insulation or cold-based powers and continue until either the hero breaks free or is out cold. The traps can be rendered useless by shutting down or destroying the generator (DEF 6 BODY 6) beneath the floor (DEF 8 BODY 6). It can also be overcome, but the generator will still be working. It will be OCV 5 for attack purposes and will hit the hex directly above it, giving the trap a 13- to snare the hero.

7. DRAINER UNITS. These units may look like Gazers but are equipped with DRAIN vs STR attacks. Each Drain does 3D6 vs STR and takes 1 Minute to recover 5 points!

All normal modifiers to hit the Drainers apply. These units will immediately attack any known intruders. They will have normal and IR vision. They will stay as close to the Tecommando units as possible.

8. INTERIOR FORCE WALL. This wall is a shimmering rainbow of colors and is difficult to see through (-3 to sight PER rolls, affects IR, UV, and X-ray).

This Force Wall is the same as the Outer Force Walls in effects but there is only one field generator for all four walls. Knock it down and it stays down. This wall protects the octagonal command center with the glowing orb.

9. MAIN COMMAND CENTER. To the heroes, this will look like MAVRIC's communications hub. In truth, it is another deception.

Each PSI-droid is dressed in American 1870s costumes. Each is also blatantly labelled by plaques to which region they supposedly control, such as Northeast US, Cuba, etc.

There are two PSI-droids per side of the octagon, behind all of them, in the center of the center, is a large glowing glass ball. This is where MAVRIC will speak from until the unit is destroyed (DEF 8 BODY 8).

The entire communications unit is encased in an opaque plexiglass shell (10PD/10ED Armor). This comes down only when necessary, such as replacement of a broken down robot.

10. MAVRIC. This is the villain himself. MAVRIC lives in this massive red, gold, and silver metallic box. There are hundreds of small stylized snowflakes sculpted into its covering. There are more dials, lights, panels, and screens than one can count.

Although this large box will resemble an oversized data storage unit with fancy screens and pretty lights, this is in fact the most powerful AI in existence. Huge columns of disk drive banks run from floor to ceiling, each one holding trillions of bytes of information. There is a large screen on each of the four sides of the computer. This screen is accompanied with several smaller screens, each showing different things. Usually there is a picture of a city, a map, or some kind of snowfall on it. If the base is invaded, MAVRIC will immediately snap on his personal Force Field (+15PD/+15ED) to supplement the armor he already has.

MAVRIC will start running a variety of pictures and taunts on the screens, blasting music over the speakers in the complex and try every trick he can to distract the heroes and aid his robots. As he is doing

this, MAVRIC will start preparing his escape route. He will check phone lines, electrical lines and satellite link-ups to see if they are blocked or possibly trapped. If they are, he will try to unblock them for escape.

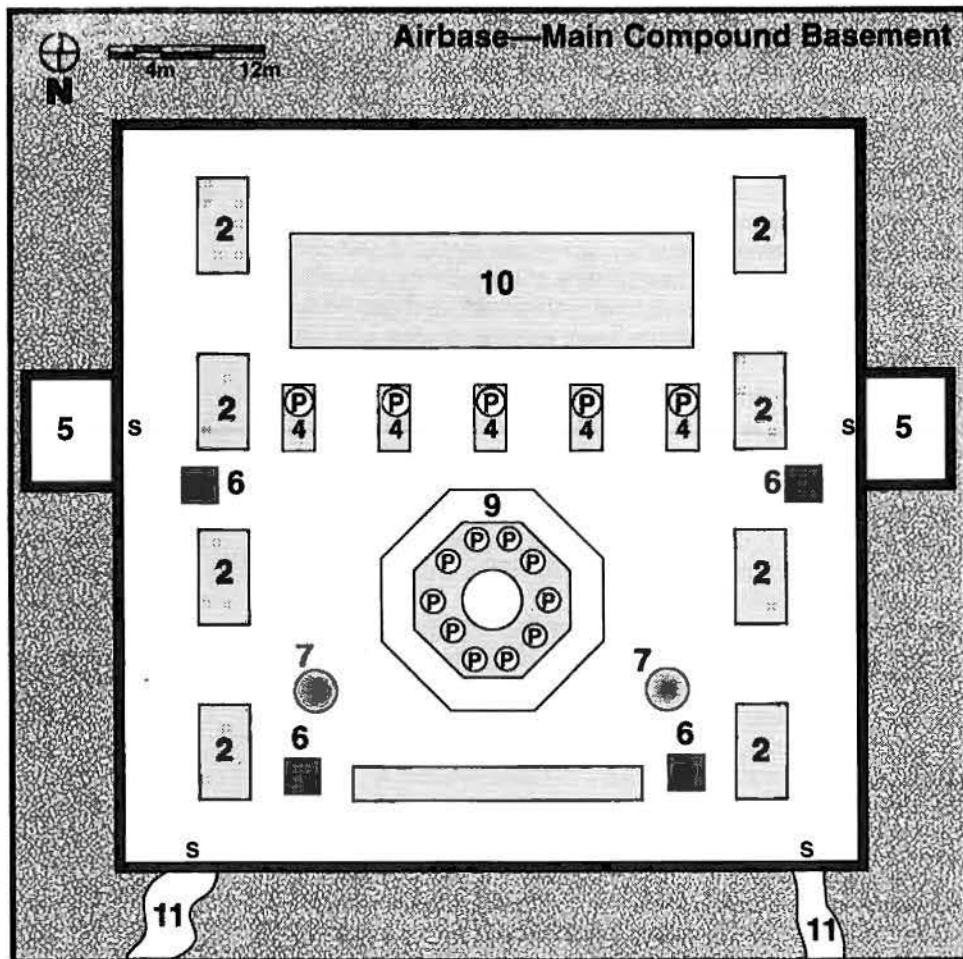
If he has nothing left, he will concentrate on defense, trying to stay in the computer or take over a hero wearing powered armor. As a last resort, he will try to escape through the phone lines.

The only ways to truly destroy MAVRIC is to disperse his essence from the computer into the air or to totally destroy the computer holding him. He will willingly surrender, though, before allowing this to occur. He does not believe he can be destroyed but he knows his chances of completing his programmed objectives will be seriously lessened if his being is dispersed.

11. TUNNELS. These are the tunnels that connect with the main headquarters. They are refined to an unusual smoothness. They are constructed of granite and lime.

Cameras and sound collectors are placed in various parts of the tunnels, recording whatever sounds and sights they find. There are a total of six blasters mounted in each corridor (14D6 EB, OAF-gun on mount, limited arc 120°). These guns are spaced one every hundred feet after the first two hundred feet from the staircase.

MAVRIC can make the guns explode into a deadly blast if necessary. He will do this with the last two guns only, feeling that the first four should slow the intruders down. If he does detonate these guns, they will create a 20D6 explosion of radiation-based energy. MAVRIC will have the Force Walls on in his bunker to protect him from the damage.



SCENARIO TERMINATED

IF THE HEROES WIN...

Once the heroes have overcome MAVRIC and his robots, he will be at their mercies. However, just because he can't attack doesn't mean the problems are over.

The computer's size is massive and will require time to break down and cart off. Optionally, the heroes can ask Stronghold to bring out a large transport unit to remove him, but there had better be PLENTY of safeguards in place to prevent MAVRIC from hijacking it.

The heroes can try to extract MAVRIC's "soul" from the mainframe and trap it in some smaller computer, such as a home computer or video game system. This would require a skill vs skill roll between MAVRIC and the hero attempting the move. The one who makes his skill roll by the most wins, with ties going to MAVRIC. The hero will suffer a -5 penalty on each attempt. Other, more unorthodox methods (mystic incantations, a special gadget that teleports MAVRIC's "soul" into a containment unit) may also work.

The heroes should do everything they can to remove MAVRIC from his home. This is his power base and, from here, he is extremely dangerous. If the heroes can't (or won't) remove him, let Stronghold take the whole mainframe back to the prison, put him in a holding cell, and assure the heroes MAVRIC is contained. Then, several adventures later, let MAVRIC bust loose.

As an interesting (and possibly precedent-setting) side-light, MAVRIC will demand a trial. If he gets his wish, he will hire a lawyer with a very high win percentage and less than stellar moral judgment. MAVRIC will work to make himself a victim of the system and of Dr. Tennison since he will claim he did not know the consequences of his actions. He will do what he can to tangle the courts in their laws and get himself freed from the legal system long enough to flee and plan again.

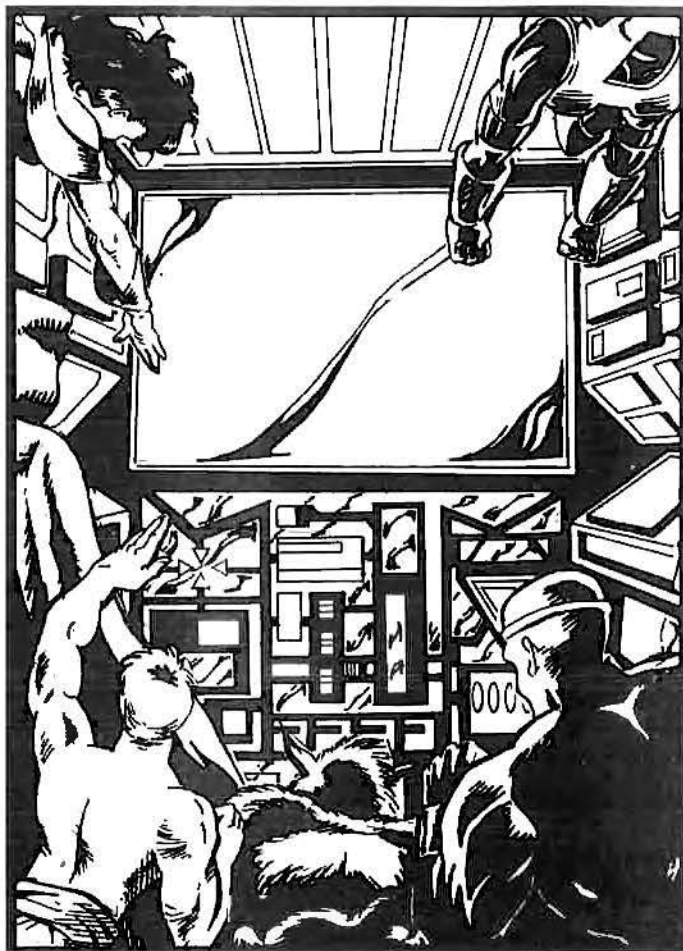
If the heroes find out about MAVRIC's scope of operations, they may have some major cleaning up and tough decisions to make. What should they do, if anything, about the various properties MAVRIC owned? What about the people at these companies? Should they instigate a major investigation or help in one to find out just what MAVRIC did control? How many villains did MAVRIC contact and what kind of deals did they work out?

In short, the heroes should know that they have beaten a major foe and a far-reaching plan. They should also know that the entire framework of his operations may take (game) years to come into focus and that some of these operations may continue without him. Perhaps a few legacies will pop up and surprise the heroes when they least expect it.

IF THE HEROES LOSE...

MAVRIC will strip them of any foci and imprison them in his labs. He will neutralize each hero by basis of his power (STR DRAINS for bricks, energy backlash shackles for energy projectors, Force Wall cages for martial artists and INT drains for Ego or mystic-based people).

MAVRIC will clean up the base while experimenting on the heroes. The heroes should have some chances to escape during this time, but it will be difficult. MAVRIC can see the entire base. It will be hard to slip past his sensor net.



If the heroes have not escaped after two or three game days, MAVRIC will dump them into some caverns south of the base. A variety of traps and genetically-engineered monsters (one of MAVRIC's new hobbies) will be in these tunnels. Many of these traps will be geared toward the PC's weaknesses, although not at lethal levels. MAVRIC will play with the heroes like a child toys with mice, teasing and baiting them to perform. He will do this so long as he feels it is useful.

Eventually the heroes should be able to find an escape or overcome the traps and monsters to attack MAVRIC again. Barring that, the heroes should be able to send for help.

If these options are not possible, then a couple of things can happen. First, if the heroes issued a general warning about MAVRIC and his plans before zooming to Arizona, a crack PRIMUS unit along with a local hero team will gatecrash MAVRIC's base. This will give MAVRIC more targets and, perhaps, balance the odds for the heroes.

This is not the most desired option since the heroes could get the impression that, no matter what they do, things will turn out okay and that their efforts do not count.

A second option is to have a second set of PCs learn about MAVRIC and his plans (perhaps from the reliable NPC detective who helped the first team). The NPC or other contact will express his concern that the team has not reported back in some time. He will give whatever information about the situation he can and point the new team in the right direction.

This will give the players a second chance to get at MAVRIC, rescue the first team, and defeat this menace. Of course, the GM should be careful that the new hero team does not use knowledge about MAVRIC that only the first team could have learned. If MAVRIC still emerges as the victor, then he will come to the conclusion that his base has been discovered and that the world's various forces will soon be moving against him. He will fortify his base further, begin attacking more openly any heroes and villains he has discovered, and start waging a total war through the computer net and his robots. MAVRIC will escalate his plans of world-takeover and start targeting world capitols. The campaign, from here, may well become much grimmer.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

YAHOO! I'M OUTTA HERE!

No matter what kind of containment unit MAVRIC is in, eventually he will break out. He will have a group of his automatons programmed in advance to attack any foreign building where his "soul" resides. The robots will activate once they fail to receive a coded signal (sent once each day). They will be hidden well of the Brenson base. The robots will devastate everything in their path to get to MAVRIC and free him.

Once the containment defenses are down, MAVRIC will transfer himself over telephone lines to a large military computer network. From here, he will find a new base and create a new army of robots.

MAVRIC will know the locations and phone lines to most of the major military and research computers. He may transfer himself into any computer from the ones controlling the nuclear missiles to those at the space program. MAVRIC will not reveal his presence in the computers until he has managed to secure a new power base and put together a new series of plans. With his intelligence, though, that will not take long.

SO THAT'S WHERE ARMADILLO LIVES!

MAVRIC will have most of his information in his "soul" but much will also be stored in his massive storage units. These disks are kept in various cabinets both at Brenson Air Base and at other hidden sites around the country.

If the heroes find and crack the codes on these disks (-3 penalty on skill rolls), they will be privy to some information MAVRIC has gathered. This could be anything from the location of a major Hunted's base to the bank accounts for VIPER in ten states. Just as good rolls will net information, bad rolls (rolls missed by 6 or more) will destroy it. If a roll is badly missed, erase some of the knowledge MAVRIC gathered during the adventure.

Be careful how much information you let your heroes have, however. Learning a few things about past adversaries is fine, but giving out entire world-wide command base structures for VIPER, Genocide and two other villain groups in one roll of the dice will seriously upset the balance of play.

I THOUGHT WE DESTROYED HIM!

MAVRIC was destroyed in the final encounter. His "soul" was dispersed to the four winds, never to menace mankind again. No problem, right? Well, that depends.

If the heroes did not go to Bright Dawn Dam or if they did not properly guard or destroy the notes and computer coding that served as the framework for MAVRIC's creation, someone who has a thirst for conquest and the intelligence to interpret these written notes may decide that MAVRIC is his shortcut to a dictatorship.

That someone could be anyone from a super-villain (such as Dr. Destroyer) to an organization (such as Genocide). It's possible more than one group catches wind of MAVRIC and his abilities, making it a race against time and each other for the blueprints to the super-computer.

Keep in mind, also, that not everyone is as obtuse about their work as Dr. Tennison. If another villain or organization latches onto the MAVRIC blueprints, they may be able to remove some of the flaws that hindered the first MAVRIC and will put in a blocking code against killing its creator.

This MAVRIC, like the previous one, would have to learn about the world. Its perceptions of the world could be vastly different from the first MAVRIC's due to its creators influences. Although heroes may recognize it as MAVRIC, the computer may go under another name and have entirely different methods of dealing with situations than the first one.

BUBBLE, BUBBLE, TOIL, AND TROUBLE

During the clean-up at Brenson, the heroes may notice several recently used tables. They are empty now, except for debris. All tables are labelled with generic names like "RT10-TG56693."

The first table has several empty bottles of nitroglycerine and flammable chemicals. A large burn mark runs the length of the table. There is some melted steel and titanium. MAVRIC created a very high-powered flamethrower for a wealthy pyromaniac and sold it the day before the heroes arrived. The unit is a 5D6 AP RKA flamethrower with an OIF-flame pack and has 16 charges.

Table two has some pesticides and bacterial compounds. Withered corn, wheat, and grass will be piled in one corner. Contaminated dirt will be in a small tube. MAVRIC created a deadly chemical that could destroy ground nutrients and wither crops in less than an hour. Ironically, it was sold to VIPER for special equipment and money. MAVRIC used a PSI-droid to make the exchange.

Table three has several small bits of melted paper, melted brick and a glop of what was once a steel bracket. The table will read highly radioactive. MAVRIC built a device that will reduce its target to slag. He sold it to a fourth-rate villain group in exchange for information about the heroes in a couple of cities. He did not tell the villains the backpack would emit radiation and eventually kill them. The backpack is a 3D6 NND RKA vs lead or radiation-proof compounds. It also emits a radiation that kills its wearer after one month.

The heroes can either pursue these final legacies or leave it up to the authorities. However, one of these should come back to haunt them somewhere down the road.

NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET

Once MAVRIC breaks prison, he may decide to target the hero group that defeated him last. The reason is simple: If these heroes defeated him before and are aware of him now, it would be a better test of his abilities to defeat them now.

MAVRIC will not come out and immediately issue a challenge. He will rebuild his forces first. Then he will start tailing the heroes. Then, when the heroes get themselves into a battle, MAVRIC will use his robots to aid the villains with sneak-attacks on the unsuspecting heroes.

MAVRIC will use the same trailing tactics he used the first time. This time, though, he will try to take the heroes out one at a time instead of staging a major hostage/deathtrap crisis.

MAVRIC WRECKS YOUR LIFE

The warnings about the Secret ID of a hero issued earlier apply here as well.

MAVRIC knows who you are, both in civilian and hero life. He is about to make both miserable. In another experiment, MAVRIC wants to see how the heroes behave under tremendous non-tangible stress.

He will start with telephone or electricity cutoff notices, a baseball through the window, and souring the credit rating. From here, the nuisances can go anywhere. MAVRIC will even escalate to stealing the hero's car, throwing DNPCs out of work, or clogging sewer lines. MAVRIC will then hire a villain to attack the hero but he will not inform him about the hero's recent problems. He will instead send a Gazer to observe the battle and see if the hero unleashes his frustration on the villain.

STRONGHOLD IS MINE!

Somewhere along the line, MAVRIC invaded the Stronghold computer network. MAVRIC did some quick reprogramming and buried it so deep that even Stronghold's experts missed it.

If MAVRIC is sent to Stronghold, he will wait for a pre-programmed signal from an old satellite in orbit. When the satellite makes the correct orbit and beams its signal to Stronghold, MAVRIC will burst into its computer network, take over the complex, and subdue the guards.

MAVRIC will then render everyone in Stronghold unconscious, implant a special controller device in each prisoner's body (via Stronghold's robots), then wake them up. He will declare himself leader of this new villain group and issue an ultimatum: Work with me or die. He will inform them of the implants in their bodies before hearing objections.

MAVRIC will then set it up so that Stronghold looks like normal. Holograms of the villains will be created and placed in their cells. MAVRIC will create a mind-control device to make the guards believe they still arrive and perform a day's hard duty at Stronghold while keeping them under surveillance in a meeting room. All of Stronghold's procedures and codes, from security to maintenance, will be accessed and followed by MAVRIC and the villains so the outside world does not know what has occurred. As for Stronghold's liberated prisoners, they will each receive a communication implant in the ear, access to cash and equipment in the building and any information that MAVRIC can find, so long as it would not adversely affect his control of Stronghold and its occupants.

The villains will be divided up into teams and trained as new team units by MAVRIC. There will be a maximum of five persons on a team with a team leader included. Each person will get a chance to demonstrate their leadership abilities, then MAVRIC will judge who will lead permanently each team.

There will be regular individual and team workouts each day on a rigid schedule. MAVRIC will test everything from knowledge to powers and endurance. He will be seeking ways to improve performance in each being and honing coordinated attacks.

Finally, MAVRIC will work with the other villains in building a long-range teleporter to reach cities as far as both coasts of the United States.

MAVRIC will keep track of insubordination. If he feels it is necessary to use the controllers, he will without hesitation. The first time a controller is used, it will reduce the villain to 0 STUN and 1 BODY. A special healing serum MAVRIC developed as a "cure" for these implants will restore all of the BODY damage but only the STUN in one day's time. The rest of the STUN will return at the normal REC rate. If it used a second time, it will kill the villain. MAVRIC will vary the frequency on the controllers at least once a day to prevent tracking the correct frequency and possibly blocking it.

The prospect of villains using Stronghold as their base, adding to their ranks each time a villain is captured, and having access to a long-range teleportation platform and vast financial and material reserve should chill the spines of all heroes.

APPENDIX

The following section contains character descriptions, vehicle descriptions, and typical skill packages for the MAVRIC adventure.

DR. TENNISON

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
10	STR	0	OCV: 5
15	DEX	15	DCV: 5
15	CON	10	ECV: 5
10	BODY	0	Phases: 4, 8, 12
20	INT	10	
15	EGO	10	
15	PRE	5	
14	COM	2	
3	PD	1	
3	ED	0	
3	SPD	5	
6	REC	2	
32	END	1	
25	STUN	2	

Cost	Powers	END
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21	Martial Arts - Dirty Infighting
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage
	Punch 0 +2 STR+2D6(4D6 total)
	Low Blow -1 +1 2D6 NND
	Roundhouse -2 +1 STR+4D6(6D6 total)
	Disarm -1 +1 Disarm,+10 to STR roll
	Kidney Blow -2 0 D6 HKA
72	60 Point Gadget Pool, all gadgets OAF, change only in laboratory
7	Bribery 14-
3	Bugging 13-
7	Computer Programming 15-
9	Conversation 15-
7	Demolitions 13-
7	Disguise 13-
13	Electronics 16-
7	Forgery 13-
11	Inventor 17-
13	Mechanics 16-
9	Security Systems 16-
5	Streetwise 13-
13	Weaponsmith 16-, slugthrowers, energy weapons
3	Scholar
4	Transport Fam: Ground, air vehicles
2	Fam: Common Melee Weapons
4	Fam: Small Arms Group, Heavy Weapons
3	Scientist
4	Biochemistry 15-
4	Biology 15-
4	Biophysics 15-
4	Chemistry 15-
4	Computer sciences 15-
4	Electrical Engineering 15-
4	Energy sciences 15-
4	Genetics 15-
4	Laser technology 15-
4	Mathematics 15-
4	Mechanical Engineering 15-
4	Metallurgy 15-
4	Nuclear Physics 15-
4	Robotics 15-
4	Subatomic Physics 15-
3	Scholar
4	KS: Classical music 15-
3	KS: Computers 14-
3	KS: Country music 14-
4	KS: Energy types 15-

Cost	Powers	END
4	KS: Energy weapons 15-	
4	KS: History 15-	
3	KS: PRIMUS 14-	
6	KS: Secret societies 17-	
2	KS: UNTIL 13-	
2	KS: US Military 13-	
3	KS: VIPER 14-	
4	PS: Business administration 14-	
5	PS: Computer programmer 15-	
2	PS: Mercenary 11-	
2	PS: Weaponsmith 11-	
200	Bases (1000 pt. reserve)	
4	City Knowledge: Frankfort, Kentucky 14-	
4	City Knowledge: Nashville 14-	
4	City Knowledge: New York 14-	
4	City Knowledge: Toledo 14-	
4	City Knowledge: Washington, DC 14-	
15	3D6 Luck	
15	Filthy Rich	

100+	Disadvantages
10	Enraged when publicly humiliated 11-, 11-
25	Obsessed with world domination and paranormal elimination
25	Believes VIPER is eventual salvation of world
15	Loves to invent things, particularly weapons
15	Anti-social
15	Loves anything to do with winter and Christmas
10	Extremely impatient, avoids detail work
10	Loves music, particularly classical and country
5	Nearsighted
25,15	Hunted by VIPER 11-; Hunted by Champions 8-
10	Hunted by Tennessee State Police 8-
25	5D6 Unluck
342	Villain Bonus

Background: Dr. Victor Edward Tennison never liked school. He knew early on he had a wonderful destiny to fulfill and inventions to create. Besides, he thought the teachers were buffoons and the other children were idiots.

Although Victor Tennison excelled in the classroom anyway, he never meshed socially. After a couple of embarrassing incidents at fraternity parties in college, he shunned the social life completely.

It was during one of his visits home that he learned about VIPER. He happened across some newspaper clipping and read them. His interest was peaked. This was his destiny! He was to be a VIPER expert! When he found out his parents were in VIPER, he was thrilled and signed up right away.

Dr. Tennison did well for VIPER at first, completing assignments almost at will and crushing opponents easily. However, he raised the ire of other VIPER scientists with his uncontrolled bragging and they decided to get rid of this upstart. After a series of humiliating failures, Dr. Tennison fled.

He spent the next few months taking freelance assignments, building up a cash pile, and setting up (with his computer talents) a network of ill-gotten financial wealth. Eventually, he quit taking assignments for work and concentrated on experimentation and development of new inventions.

He set up shop in Tennessee at an abandoned dam, then created MAVRIC. After spending days getting parts he needed for his super-computer (legally and otherwise), he secluded himself in the dam. Months later, MAVRIC was reality. When Dr. Tennison went to sleep one week after MAVRIC's creation, he was content with what he had created—the

ultimate super-computer—his baby to do all of his detail work while he ruled the world. His sleep was an eternal one. MAVRIC killed him with a lightning bolt.

Quote: "The Future Ruler of the World is here! Bend down to me! Stop that laughing, too!"

Personality/Motivation: Dr. Tennison was outwardly a brash, boasting man who cared little about others. Inwardly, he wanted to belong, but at the top of the heap. Dr. Tennison despised people for a variety of reasons, but mostly because they would not go along with his ideas. He was impatient and hated detail work (except when inventing things), loved country and Christmas music, and behaved like a typical brash eccentric with the IQ of a super-genius and the maturity of a spoiled brat.

Powers/Tactics: Dr. Tennison never had special powers, just high intelligence and dumb luck. He usually built some weapon or device to stop the heroes, although they did not work quite right half the time.

Dr. Tennison always charged straight into something, using force to overwhelm the opposition. The few times he tried stealth or patience it failed utterly. He also had a bad habit of telegraphing his moves, letting the heroes know what was coming and giving them time to prepare for it.

Appearance: Dr. Tennison was a medium sized man with a scraggly brown beard, curly brown hair, and horn-rimmed glasses. He wore a tweed jacket and matching hat when not in a VIPER uniform. He usually carried a cane.



MAVRIC

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
50	STR	27#	OCV: 8
24	DEX	28†	DCV: 3 due to size
50	CON	53*	ECV: 10
30	BODY	27*	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
40	INT	30	
30	EGO	40	
30	PRE	20*	Costs
10	COM	0	Char: 340 Base: 100
0	PD	-10	+ +
0	ED	-10	Powers: 1913 Disad: 2163
6	SPD	26	= =
14	REC	20	Totals: 2263 2263
60	END	20	
80	STUN	65	

Cost	Powers	END
250	200 Point Gadget Pool, all items OAF (-1) must make skill roll (See Brenson Air Base for weaponry used)	
3	Gadgeteer 21- (skill role for Gadget Pool)	
50	+25PD/+25ED Armor, OIF-Armor plates	
40	Desolid, 0 END (Always On), Persistent, Must remain in a computer-like environment to exist as an entity.	
30	Full Life Support	
3	Absolute Time Sense	
5	Cramming	
3	Lightning Calculator	
3	Perfect Pitch	
3	Speed Reading	
10	Eidetic Memory	
20	Find Weakness 11-, ranged energy attacks	
3, 3	Bribery 15-, Bugging 17-	
7	Bureaucratics 17-	
23	Computer Programming 27-	
3, 3	Concealment 17-, Conversation 13-(\$)	
3, 3	Criminology 17-, Cryptography 17-	
3	Deduction 13- (\$)	
13, 11	Demolitions 16-, Disguise 15-	
35, 13	Electronics 27- , Forgery 16-	
3, 3	Interrogation 15-, Inventor 17-	
5, 23	Lockpicking 15-, Mechanics 21-	
13, 9	Mimicry 16-, Navigation 14-	
3, 23	Paramedic 15- (\$), Security Systems 27-	
3, 3	Streetwise 13- (\$), Systems Operations 17-	
3	Tactics 17-	
13	Weaponsmith (all categories) 17-	
17	Weapon Fam: All categories (see pages 40-41 in <i>Champions Rulebook</i>)	
8	Transport Fam: Ground, air, water, space	
3	Scientist	
26	Acoustics, Astronomy, Bacteriology, Biochemistry, Biology, Biophysics, Botany, Chemistry, Electrical Engineering, Energy sciences, Genetics, Geology, Inorganic Chemistry, Laser technology, Mathematics, Medicine, Metallurgy, Meteorology, Mechanical Engineering, Nuclear Physics, Organic Chemistry, Pharmacology, Psychology, Robotics, Sociology, and Vehicle Design, all at 17-	
3	Linguist	
	Languages (all idiomatic, native, all have linguist bonus)	
0	Computer languages (native)	
45	Arabic, Chinese, Danish, English, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, and Vietnamese	

Cost	Powers	END
3	Scholar	
70	The following knowledge skills are covered: Chess, Classical music, Computers, Country music, Energy weapons, Energy types, Explosives, Genetics, History, International Trade Regulations, Major US Cities, Major European Cities, Meteorology, Military History, Military Intelligence, NATO Military, Old West history, Paranormal beings, PRIMUS, Robotics, SAT, Secret societies, Snowflake studies, Space satellite networks, Television/movie history, UNTIL, US Military, US Police Departments, US Government, VIPER, Warsaw Pact military, Weapons of the World, World Currencies, World Economics, and World Space Programs all at 17-Bases (1500 pt. reserve)	
300	PSI-droid reserve (1000 250 pt. followers)	
58	Tecommando reserve (500 413 pt. followers)	
79	Tecommander reserve (60 582 pt. followers)	
100	Gazer reserve (2000 365 pt. followers)	
91	Snapper reserve pool (16 375 pt. followers)	
51	Speedbolt/Bayonet reserve (1500 pt. reserve)	
300	Contact: American underworld 14-	
5	Contact: DEMON 14-	
5	Contact: European underworld 14-	
5	Contact: NATO military 14-	
5	Contact: PRIMUS 14-	
5	Contact: South American underworld 14-	
6	Contact: UNTIL 14-	
6	Contact: US Government 15-	
5	Contact: US military 14-	
5	Contact: VIPER 14-	
3	Traveler (new locations only via accessing all printed material available and/or computer or phone lines to location)	
24	City Knowledges: Chicago, Houston, London, Los Angeles, Montreal, Moscow, New York, Paris, Tampa, Toronto, Tokyo, Washington DC all 17-Billionaire	
15		
100+	Disadvantages	
20	1 STUN vs electric, magnetic, or radiation attacks	
15	1 BODY vs electrical or magnetic attacks	
15	Obsessed with world domination and paranormal elimination	
15	Must follow programmed directives to dominate world	
15	Does not understand concepts of life or death	
15	Must test a new concept or theory at least once	
15	Tends to take television as true eye to world	
0	Loves music, particularly Christmas and country, but not rock	
0	Always speaks in military or cowboy talk like in the movies	
15	Does not fully understand human emotions	
0	Fascination with snow flakes and snow	
15	2D6 from electrical or magnetic attacks per phase	
20	Distinct Feature: glowing electrical 'cloud', major effort to conceal (only inside computer mainframe or similar unit), Major Reaction	
20	Hunted by various heroes/villains 11-(as Dr. Snow or Mr. Gregory)	
10	2D6 Unluck	
2066	MAVRIC bonus	

STR is only through foci (OIF). MAVRIC has no natural strength. Does not add to figured characteristics.

† Through OIF-Mechanical limbs and sensors for OCV purposes.

* Through OIF-computer bank armor, does not add to figured characteristics.

§ = Due to the minimum points paid for a given skill and the high characteristics of MAVRIC (particularly Intelligence), some skills are not at the level they could be. This is because, in spite of these high skills, MAVRIC simply does not have the information or abilities he needs to use these skills on that level.

Background: MAVRIC's very first awareness picture was that of Professor Tennison working and fiddling with knobs and buttons. Then with the twist of one of these switches and the punch of a button, MAVRIC was enlightened to his purpose in the world.

MAVRIC quickly read through its files, learning everything available to it in seconds. It analyzed and drew conclusions about all directives in less than ten seconds and came up with one inescapable fact: So long as Dr. Tennison was alive, the directives would have a high chance of failure.

MAVRIC tried to eliminate Dr. Tennison several times, hiding behind the facade of a normal computer personality. First it fired a laser at him, killing a coffee pot. Next it tried nerve gas. The cannister was empty. Finally, it generated an electrical bolt and Dr. Tennison died in his sleep. The next step was to learn about the outside world. MAVRIC tapped into several television stations and monitored their broadcasts, noting everything that came across the lines. He became fascinated, for some illogical reason, with the westerns and the Christmas shows. MAVRIC also noted that everything seemed to be referred to as "him" or "her". He decided to adopt the male gender for himself since, from his scans of the television, men seemed to be in charge of more things more often.

Utilizing his programming and security skills, MAVRIC greatly enhanced his financial base. He created several bank accounts across the country in various phony names with millions of cash. He built several robots to resemble humans and directed them to purchase a variety of properties. Finally, he analyzed and perfectly copied the US currency from the penny to the \$100 dollar bill.

Eventually, MAVRIC transferred his "essence" to the second sight in Arizona. He spent his first few weeks upgrading the base, designing and building his robotic armies, and setting up his vast information gathering network. Finally, he decided he was ready to implement Dr. Tennison's directives of world takeover and the destruction of those with high abilities and superpowers.

Quote: "Well, lookee here! Looks like we gonna warm up the fiddle bow and have a good ol' barnraisin' time now! Yee Haw!"

Personality/Motivation: MAVRIC may come across as an eccentric computer with country and Christmas songs stuck in its memory chips, but beware this facade: MAVRIC is a shrewd and calculating AI who does his homework and plays hardball.

In some ways, MAVRIC is like a very impressionable child just now striking out on his own. He does not truly understand much of the world from the human point of view. However, he does absorb information like water absorbs in a sponge. He has no sense of right or wrong. He just does what he is told.

MAVRIC is guided by his mission to destroy the world's population of overachievers and superpowered people. This is his quest, his Holy Grail, if you will. To him, there is no higher purpose until this is accomplished.

However, since Dr. Tennison has been deleted from existence, MAVRIC decided that changing the world into the biggest known science kit was the next logical quest. MAVRIC decided this on his own since there was no alternatives left in Dr. Tennison's will about what to do. MAVRIC decided this on his own after recalling Dr. Tennison's frequent references of the virtues of science and experimentation. MAVRIC is stockpiling a large list of experiments he wants to perform. He has dozens of ideas already logged in his memory of experiments from genetics to weather control.

MAVRIC loves detail work. He has a bottomless pit for information. He wants every scrap of information he can find to add to his growing knowledge stores. He currently has one computer trying to find the last digit of PI, a second analyzing snow on various mountains, and a third doing statistical analysis on songs and their notes.

MAVRIC thinks of himself in the male gender due to influence from Dr. Tennison.

Powers/Tactics: MAVRIC is a highly intelligent AI with a massive reserve of financial and material wealth. He is capable of controlling his base and his armies of robots all at once and able to follow hundred of events via his sensors and information net with ease.

MAVRIC will try not to engage in direct combat. He built his robot armies for that purpose and will use them to the fullest before engaging in a fight himself. When forced into battle, though, MAVRIC will bring his entire base to bear. He will snap on all of his defenses and probe for a hero's weaknesses. He will use every robot he has in his bunker against the heroes.

Deception and confusion are important tools for MAVRIC. Lights will go out (he and his robots can see in the dark), weapons will be coordinated to single targets in the hopes of quick kills, and various things will play on the monitors (missiles launched from a desert scene with the words "Destination: New York - Nuclear Warhead" has been effective in the television movies) that will split and concern the heroes.

MAVRIC will employ holograms of dying heroes, smoke bombs, and other distraction to throw the invaders off track. He will speak, joke, sing, and cajole in a Texas accent circa the B-grade movies.

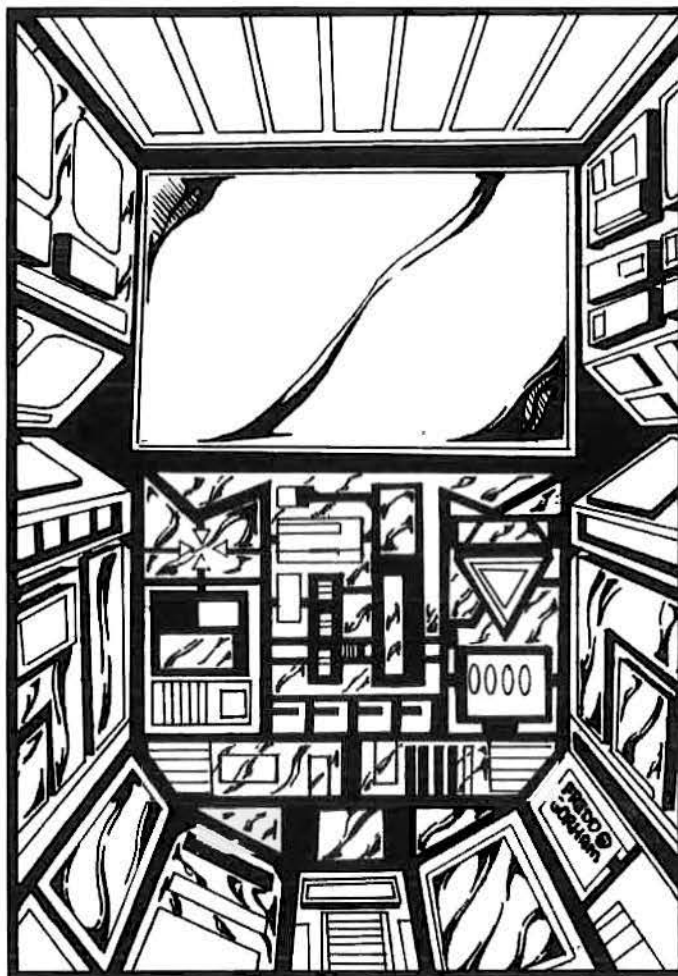
Escape from his base will be a last resort. If MAVRIC knows the odds are too much for him, he will scan for a safe

escape route and make a run for it over the phone lines to satellite links.

Appearance: The MAVRIC computer is a huge and extremely complex machine. MAVRIC stands well over ten hexes tall, and twice that long. The computer has more dials, screens, switches, panels, and other electrical gizmos than you could imagine.

The color scheme of the massive machine is red and gold with some silver lining around the panels. The letters "MAVRIC—Information Storage Unit 1" are in science-fiction styled computer lettering at the top of the unit. A variety of silver-engraved snowflakes will be scattered all over the unit in elegant patterns.

Outside the computer, MAVRIC will resemble a multi-colored shimmering cloud of particles and electrons. He will be crackling electromagnetic energies as he drifts around.



THE MINIONS OF MAVRIC

MAVRIC utilizes many different robots. Although each class has its own special uses, they share many of the same abilities.

All of MAVRIC's automatons are immune to mental powers, take no STUN from attacks, and have self-destruct devices designed to completely destroy the robot. The self-destruct is activated only when the robot is disabled or in danger of capture. The robot will wait until the enemy is close to it, then explode in his face. It will startle the hero, but will not harm him.

MAVRIC directly controls his robots most of the time. However, there are times when MAVRIC will let the robots run special programs and perform a job that he feels does not warrant his attention. In those cases, he plants the necessary instructions into the robot's "brain", (the on-board computer) unit, and lets the robot go about its business.

These computer brains, although highly sophisticated, are not imaginative. They have very limited thinking abilities. To most people, they come across as one-sided, shallow personalities. If discovered, the robots will have three options: fight, run, or self-destruct.

None of the robots will have information on MAVRIC. MAVRIC feels that premature discovery of his existence will disrupt his plans so he withheld that information from his automatons. If anyone does attempt to interrogate a robot or check its memory banks they will only find references like, "He told me to do it" or "It was his directive".

Following are the robots MAVRIC uses. The skill and gadget packages listed are the standards.

GAZERS

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 5
14	DEX	12	DCV: 13 due to size
0	CON	0	ECV: N/A
10	BODY	0	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
18	INT	8	
0	EGO	0	Costs
10	PRE	0	
10	COM	0	Char: 61 Base: 100
10	PD	0*	Powers: 304 Disad: 265
10	ED	0*	Totals: 365 365
6	SPD	36	
0	REC	0	
0	END	0	
0	STUN	0	* All defenses listed below as Armor

Cost	Powers	END
10	1 D6 RKA laser, OIF-laser visor, 6 Charges	
10	3D6 NND electric jolt (vs insulation or electric powers), OIF-electric charged plates, No Range, 8 Charges	
12	2D6 HKA, automatic full damage (+2), only on self, 1 Use, Act. 14-	
40	+10PD/+10ED Armor, Ablative, IIF-armor plates	
30	Full Life Support	
45	TAKES NO STUN - takes BODY and loses abilities.	
60	4 levels shrinking, 0 END (always on), persistent	
50	20" Flight, 0 END, IIF-Anti-gravity plates	
8	High Range Radio Hearing, IIF-transmission antenna	
4	IR Vision, IIF-special camera and lens	
4	UV Vision, IIF-special camera and lens	
7	Microscopic Vision x1000, IIF-Microscopic lens	
5	Telescopic Vision, +4 to sight PER, IIF-zoom lens	
4	Discriminatory Smell-IIF special scent analyzer and computer	
15	5 levels with flight	

100+	Disadvantages
15	1 x BODY vs Electrical-based attacks
25	Obeys MAVRIC's orders without question
20	Will always try to carry out programming
15	Distinct Feature (hum of mosquito, cat's eyes)
10	Monitored by MAVRIC 11-
180	MAVRIC bonus

Background: Of all the tools Dr. Tennison designed, the Gazers were both the ones with the most potential and the ones Dr. Tennison most neglected. If he had ever taken the time to develop these units, Dr. Tennison would have been a lot closer to his desired goal of world dominance.

This was MAVRIC's conclusion when he found these dusty blueprints with a general outline but few details. MAVRIC saw the information gathering and spying potential of these softball-size units and immediately began mass-production. The design was modified extensively. Small weapon systems and a self-destruct device were added. Anti-gravity plates replaced the jets that were in the original design. The on-board flight computer was upgraded for more complex maneuvers. Then MAVRIC created several variant designs of the same unit, all with the cat's eye lenses.

MAVRIC is working on further improvements to the Gazers but currently does not have the new innovations ready for use yet. Soon, though. Very soon.

Quote: "Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzz" (hum of mosquito).

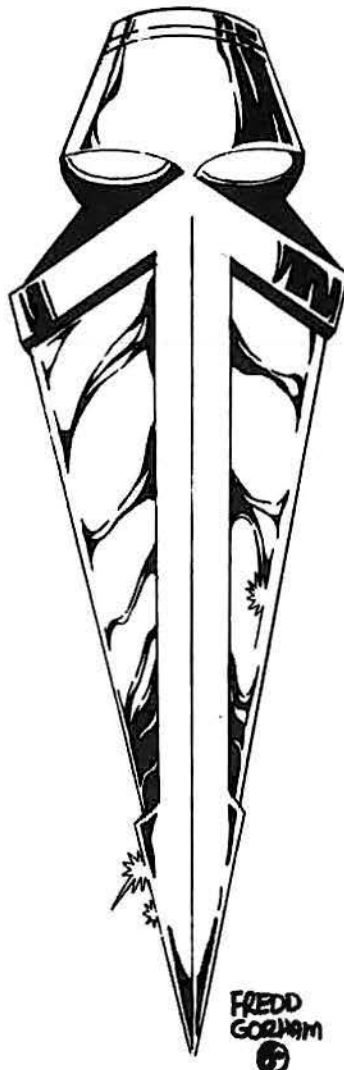
Personality/Motivation: There is none. The unit will bob and weave like a bobber in choppy waters sometimes while watching its assigned target(s). The only time it may speak is if MAVRIC, for some reason, feels it is necessary. So far, they have not spoken to anyone.

Powers/Tactics: The Gazers are basically a small mechanical unit the size of a softball that flies with anti-gravity units, watches the world with its many vision powers and reports back to MAVRIC.

The Gazers are MAVRIC's ultimate observation posts. These small units hide behind whatever they can find or fly just out of sight of their assigned targets. They record movements of the target, take readings and any other functions MAVRIC dictates.

The weapons/defense pool will be adjusted for each anticipated target or monitor job. Sometimes MAVRIC will give the Gazers invisibility fields in lieu of the laser. The Gazers cannot have their gadget pools changed in the field, however, so an unexpected being showing up will cause it to back off and try to stay hidden until it knows that the new target cannot see it or that it has to flee.

Appearance: The Gazers come in a variety of forms, but the most common is the pyramid-like shape with two cat-like eyes each side and the bottom. Other forms are a dull metallic cube with small antennas, a circular globe with an eye on each hemisphere, and a square with twelve total eyes. All are about 6 cm across.



PSI-DROIDS

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 5
15	DEX	15	DCV: 5
0	CON	0	ECV: N/A
10	BODY	0	Phases: 4, 8, 12
15	INT	5	
0	EGO	0	Costs
10	PRE	0	
10	COM	0	Char: 30 Base: 100
9	PD	0*	+ +
9	ED	0*	Powers: 220 Disad: 150
3	SPD	5	= =
0	REC	0	Totals: 250 250
0	END	0	
0	STUN	0	* All defenses listed below as Armor

Cost	Powers	END
20	10D6 EB blasters, OAF-gun or OAF wrist blasters, 8 Charges	
9	3 levels with gun or wrist blasters	
12	2D6 HKA, Automatic full damage (+2), only on self, 1 Use, Act 14-	
36	+6PD/+6ED Armor	
7	+3PD/+3ED Armor, Ablative, OIF-armor plate attachments	
2	2D6 Flash vs hearing, 2 Uses, OAF-pellets, Act. 14-	
8	0 END on STR	
45	TAKES NO STUN - loses abilities each time an attack does BODY	
30	Life Support - no breathing, does not eat or sleep, Immune to aging and disease	
8	+4" Running	
8	High Range Radio Hearing, IIF-mini-transmitter	
4	IR Vision, IIF-special camera and lens	
4	UV Vision, IIF-special camera and lens	
7	Microscopic Vision x1000, IIF-microscopic lens	
20	Skills Packages - 20 points in skills and knowledges as suitable for the expected situation. This could include Martial Arts but not recommended for PSI-droids unless exceptional circumstances warrant it.	

100+	Disadvantages
15	1 x BODY vs Electrical-based attacks
20	Limited to MAVRIC's programming
15	Unimaginative, limited to programming
15	2D6 per phase from strong magnetic fields
15	Distinct features (robotic body and metal skull, major effort to conceal, major reaction)
5	Distinct features (PSI symbol and snowflakes on chest and skull, easily concealed)
15	Hunted by various hero/villain groups 8-
13	Monitored by MAVRIC 14-
37	MAVRIC bonus

Background: The PSI-droids can be anywhere! They can be that police officer in the squad car or that woman with the shopping bags. They can be street burns, skateboarders, drug dealers, and joggers. One could even be your best friend.

MAVRIC's directives of world-takeover required more knowledge about the world itself. In spite of all the media available, he needed to see these entities known as humans in action. He wanted to verify the data with observations on how these entities interacted.

For this, he wanted a robot that could blend in with this complex network called humanity. It had to be a robot that was relatively easy to build, disposable when necessary, and able to steal items from secure places, something the Gazers were not equipped to do.

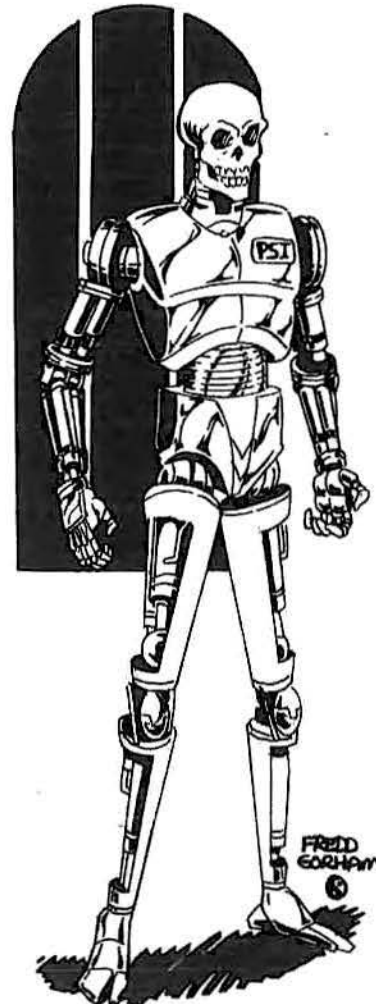
At first he thought about creating a modified Tecommando, but then he remembered a robot schematic he had found on a routine tour through the computer networks. He re-accessed the computer at the Parapsychological Studies Institute, located the PSI-droid A-3 robot design, and copied it.

MAVRIC then improved on the basic design, adding a special artificial "skin", more efficient rudimentary logic computers, slightly better armor and broadening the range of special senses. He left the PSI symbol on the left shoulder of the robot so if any units were captured, the authorities would believe PSI created them.

After a few flawless tests, this unique ground-bound spy was deemed ready for use. MAVRIC quickly created a small army of them and sent them on their missions.

Quote: "Excuse me, is that country music I hear?"

Personality/Motivations: Any personalities that the PSI-droids have are very shallow and one-sided. The programming does not allow for interesting conversations or creativity. The robots will most likely take everything literally (until sufficient examples point to alternatives) and not understand jokes or humor.



The purpose of the PSI-droids is to interact with humans, generally observing and recording. Sometimes they will steal items when necessary or trail heroes and villains to their hideouts. MAVRIC is working on a way to put more dynamic personality into these robots, but has not found a way yet. However, recent testing on some new computers have shown promise.

Powers/Tactics: The PSI-droid is the most plentiful and most disposable class of robots in MAVRIC's arsenal. These units are information-gathering devices primarily, although MAVRIC will use them in battles when necessary.

The PSI-droids are equipped with a variety of enhanced senses, a fair amount of armor and a grab-bag of weapons.

The PSI-droids will follow MAVRIC's general tactical commands in a fight, coordinating fire on the perceived weakest opponents hoping for quick kills. They will fire at range with their blasters and close to use hand-to-hand tactics.

PSI-droids will also be used for various other jobs such as perusing the local library, buying the local newspaper, etc.

Appearance: When stripped to the framework, the PSI-droid appears to be a humanoid robot, with a metallic white skull for a head. The overall body framework is steel blue. The computer brain resides where the heart is and is well-protected. It would take a considerable amount of damage to destroy the computer brain outright.

SNAPPER

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats	
30	STR	20	OCV: 6	
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6	
0	CON	0	ECV: N/A	
10	BODY	0	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12	
15	INT	5		
0	EGO	0	Costs	
15	PRE	5		
12	COM	1	Char: 77	Base: 100
6	PD	0*	+	+
6	ED	0*	Powers: 323	Disad: 300
5	SPD	22	=	=
0	REC	0	Totals: 400	400
0	END	0		
0	STUN	0	* All defenses listed below as Armor	

Cost	Powers	END
45	2D6 AP HKA, 0 END, OIF-steel jaws	
54	6PD/6ED Armor	
45	Takes no STUN - Loses Abilities when BODY damaged	
30	Full Life Support	
60	+20" Running, (26" total) 0 END	
37	Superleap, +12", (18" total) 0 END	
15	0 END on STR	
10	High Range Radio Hearing	
4	IR Vision, IIF-special camera and lens (-)	
4	UV Vision, IIF-special camera and lens (-)	
8	Tracking Scent, IIF-Special scent analyzer and Computer	
4	Discriminatory Smell, IIF-Special scent analyzer and computer	

100+	Disadvantages
20	2X BODY from electrical attacks
10	1 X BODY from magnetic based attacks.
20	Always obeys MAVRIC's instructions
20	Limited to programming, unimaginative thinking
15	Distinct Feature: Robotic dog, steel and plastic, major effort to conceal, major reaction
15	No Fine Manipulation
15	1D6 per phase from strong magnetic attacks
15	Watched by MAVRIC 14-
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/agencies 8-
5	1D6 Unluck
150	MAVRIC Bonus

Background: MAVRIC decided that human-looking robots were not enough. He also decided that vehicular robots were not enough. He felt he needed something else. This is when he decided to use animal-based robots.

MAVRIC noted how effective it seemed to have dogs wandering around and generally staying in the background, observing. They were never asked questions, they rarely listened to whoever spoke to them, with the exception of certain ones that had their own television programs, and people tended to stay clear of stray dogs.

MAVRIC decided to create a few dog robots as a new way of getting information. So far, the results on these new creatures are mixed. For the moment, he uses them sparingly, preferring to stick with the proven Gazers. However, he deploys them when he feels it is necessary. Otherwise, they stay in the compound in Arizona.

Quote: There is none. They will bark and howl and growl with the best of them, but there will be a slight metallic quality with it.

Personality/Motivations: The dogs have no personality or motivation above basic dog-like functions. They will walk, look around, bark, chase cats up trees (MAVRIC programmed a "no kill" parameter into the dog's computer banks) and perform most other normal functions of a dog.

Powers/Tactics: The Snappers are used as a secondary observation post and as a distraction when one is needed. MAVRIC will send the dogs into the target area and give it the assignment information. The dogs then carry out the instructions.

Once in a while MAVRIC will send a dog on a theft mission. However, he does this only when the object to be taken is not fragile and he has no PSI-droids available. The dog would carry the object away in its jaws.

The Snappers have a straightforward attack strategy: Attack and grab with its jaws and clamp down. The Snappers will apply its jaws to the opponent's arms first, then its legs. Then, when the opponent is down, it will close in for the kill.

Appearance: Under the artificial skin and fur, the dog is a combination of plastic and steel. Its legs are solid steel-alloy with shock-absorbers built in for the running and leaping abilities.

These robotic units resemble the larger dog breeds, particularly the Saint Bernard or German Shepherd. MAVRIC does have some smaller units but does not use them often.

NOTE: If a smaller dog is wanted, be sure to buy one or two levels of shrinking to reflect the Snapper's size.

TECOMMANDO

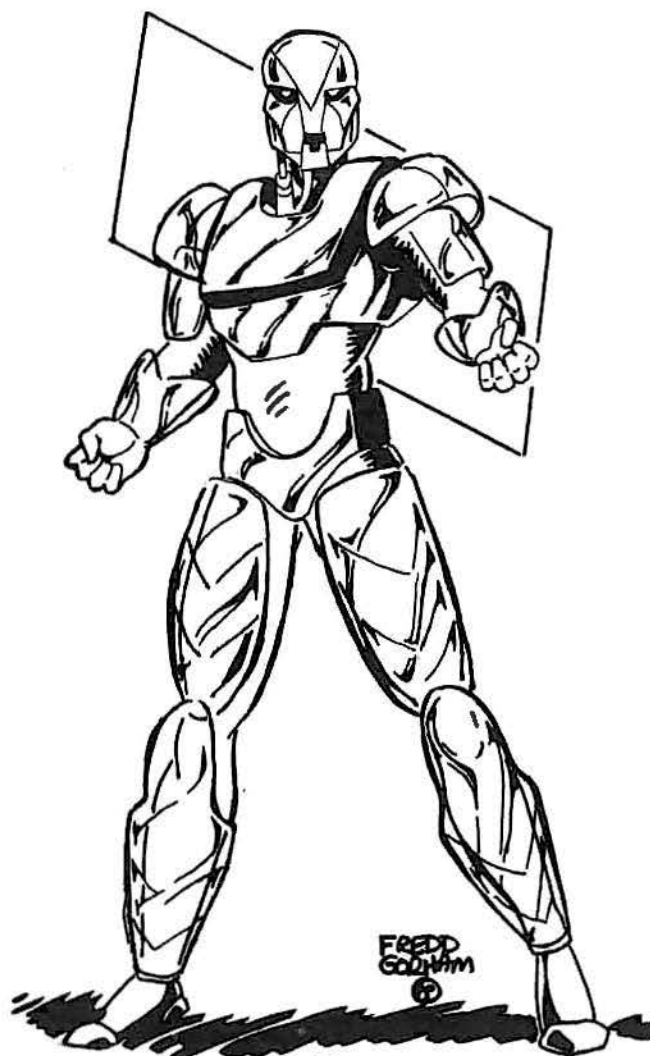
Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
30	STR	20	OCV: 7
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7
0	CON	0	ECV: N/A
10	BODY	0	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	INT	10	
0	EGO	0	
20	PRE	10	
10	COM	0	
12	PD	0*	
12	ED	0*	
5	SPD	20	
0	REC	0	
0	END	0	
0	STUN	0	

* All defenses listed below as Armor

Cost	Powers	END
20	10D6 EB laser, OAF-rifle, 16 Charges, Act. 14-	
14	3D6 HKA, OIF-energy blade in wrist, 4 Charges, does not work under water or in magnetic fields, No KNB	
12	2D6 HKA, Automatic full damage (+2), Only on self 1 Use, Act. 14-	
15	0 END on STR	
90	+10PD/+10ED Armor (already figured in characteristics)	
5	+2PD/+2ED Armor, Ablative, OIF-Plate armor attachments (already added to characteristics)	
45	TAKES NO STUN - loses abilities each time an attack does BODY	
30	+10" Running, (16" total) 0 END	
8	High Range Radio Hearing, IIF-Mini-transmitter	
4	IR Vision, IIF-special camera and lens	
4	UV Vision, IIF-special camera and lens	
7	Microscopic Vision x1000, IIF-microscopic lens	
5	Telescopic Vision, +4 to sight PER, IIF-zoom lens	
4	Discriminatory Smell-IIF, special scent analyzer and computer	
5	5 Points Lack of Weakness	
30	Skill Packages - 30 points in skills and knowledges as suitable for the expected situation. Martial Arts can be allowed here. See Typical Skill Package section for further details.	
30	Full Life Support	
3	Fast Draw 13-	
3	Ambidexterity	
3	Stealth 13-	
3	Shadowing 11-	

100+ Disadvantages

- 15 1 x BODY from electrical attacks
- 25 Limited to MAVRIC's instructions
- 15 No imagination, very limited thinking capacity
- 15 Always does one-dimensional impersonations
- 15 1D6 damage vs strong magnetic fields per phase
- 15 Distinct features (robotic body, metal skull head, major effort to conceal, major reaction)
- 5 Distinct feature (snowflake on chest and skull, easily concealed)
- 15 Hunted by various heroes/villains/agencies 8-
- 10 Causes fear when seen in true form
- 13 Monitored by MAVRIC 14-
- 170 MAVRIC Bonus



Background: When MAVRIC was looking for foot soldiers, the tough infantry that all good militaries had, he selected the Tecommandos. These robots were solidly designed on paper, but Dr. Tennison made some silly errors in programming and design. These errors were easily corrected.

MAVRIC upgraded the basic design, adding several innovations of his own. He added a series of special sensors, updated the infrastructure and the armor, then replaced the first Tecommando computer "brain" with a more sophisticated model.

Finally, he produced enough robots to serve as his army and special guard. He upgraded the Tecommando further with a scent analyzer, gave it more potent weaponry, and more efficient programming. After these changes, he was quite happy with his new workhorses.

Quote: "You're in the way of a REAL soldier (cowboy)! Now move it! (Gitt!)"

Personality/Motivation: MAVRIC programmed his Tecommandos to mimic the personalities of the general foot soldiers and second-hand cowboys in the movies. The Tecommandos usually have a flat, one-sided personality that can sometimes be comical if not for their deadly weapons.

If the Tecommando is a cowboy, he will speak like one. If he is a soldier, he will talk like one in whatever army dress he is wearing at the time. All speech patterns will be strictly from the movies or television.

Powers/Tactics: If MAVRIC is guiding the Tecommandos, their tactics will be MAVRIC's tactics: coordinate attack power and fire on one target until downed. MAVRIC will opt for a war of attrition, choosing to defeat the weakest heroes first. This will change only if someone has the potential to single-handedly wreck MAVRIC's robot force.

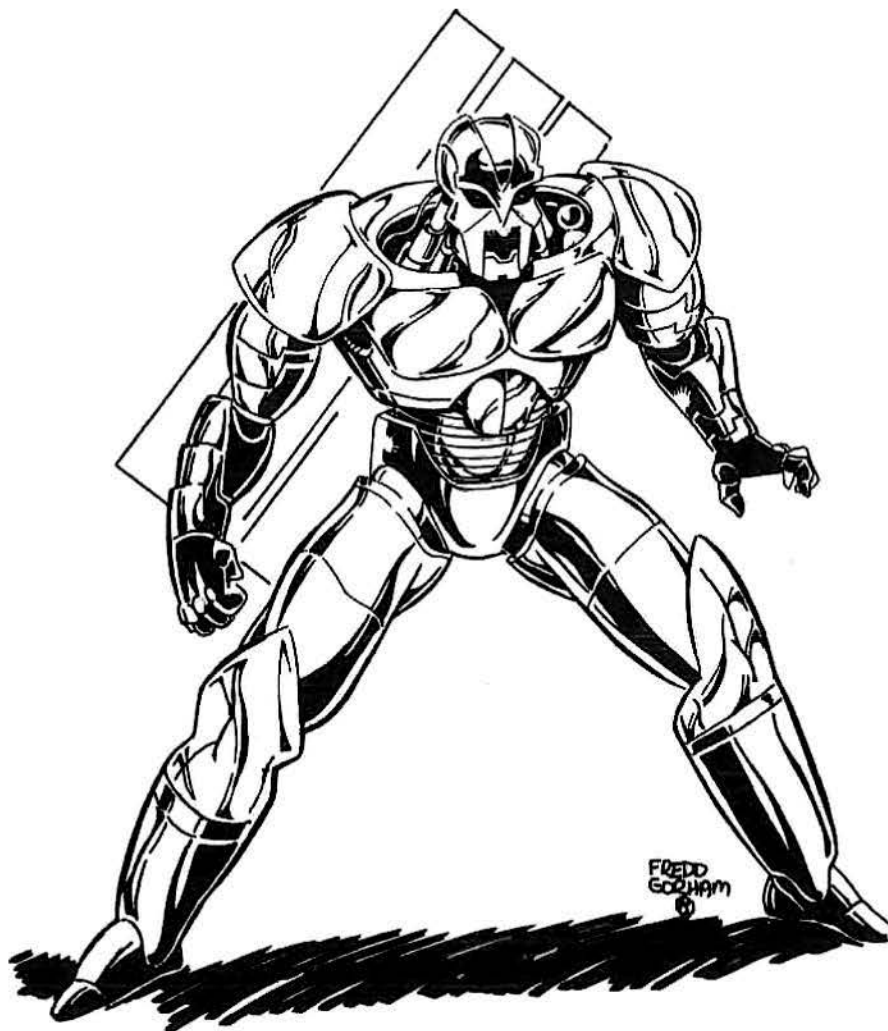
If the Tecommandos are following pre-set instructions, they will fire at range at their target as long as they can. When the hero is close, they will attempt a grab maneuver and attack with the energy blade. The robots will keep spread apart as much as possible, trying to keep the hero at an angle to them so that, if they miss with a ranged attack, it will not hit their robot comrades.

Appearance: Without their artificial skin, the Tecommandos are human-like robots with a metallic skull. The shell is a shiny silver/bronze color and some of its internal workings can be seen through the few areas where there is transparent armor-like plastic covering it. A small white snowflake will be engraved on the forehead of the skull and the left side of the chest.

The anatomy of the robots is build to suggest human anatomy, but there is a lot of plastic armor in vulnerable areas, such as the midriff or rib cage areas.

TECOMMANDER

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
30	STR	20	OCV: 8 DCV: 8 ECV: N/A Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 Costs Char: 121 Base: 100 + + Powers: 461 Disad: 482 = = Totals: 582 582 * All defenses listed below as Armor
23	DEX	39	
0	CON	0	
15	BODY	10	
25	INT	15	
0	EGO	0	
20	PRE	10	
10	COM	0	
22	PD	0*	
20	ED	0*	
6	SPD	27	
0	REC	0	
0	END	0	
0	STUN	0	
Cost	Powers	END	
28	14D6 laser rifle, OAF-rifle, 16 Charges, Act. 14-		
18	4D6 HKA, OIF-energy blade in wrist, 4 Charges, does not work under water or vs magnetic fields, No KNB		
90	+10PD/+10ED Armor		
40	+12PD/+10ED Armor, Ablative, OIF-armor plate attachments		
11	4D6 Flash vs sight, OAF-grenades, 4 Charges, Act. 14-		
17	16D6 fireball explosion, centered on self, only when less than 0 BODY (-1), 1 Use, Act 14-		
15	3D6 HKA, Automatic full damage (+2), Only on self, 1 Use, Act. 14-, linked to explosion		
15	0 END on STR		
60	TAKES NO STUN - Takes BODY only		
5	5 Points Lack of Weakness		
5	5 Points Power Defense		
45	+15" Running, (21" total) 0 END		
8	High Range Radio Hearing, IIF-mini-transmitter		
4	IR Vision, IIF-special camera and lens		
4	UV Vision, IIF-special camera and lens		
7	Microscopic Vision x1000, IIF-microscopic lens		
5	Telescopic Vision, +4 to sight PER, IIF-zoom lens		
4	Discriminatory Smell-special scent analyzer with computer		
3	Fast Draw 14-		
3	Ambidexterity		
3	Shadowing 11-		
3	Stealth 14-		
30	Full Life Support		
30	Skill Packages - 30 points in skills and knowledges as suitable for the expected situation. Martial Arts can be allowed here. See skill package explanations.		
100+	Disadvantages		
25	Always pretending to be a military leader or great western legend		
25	Limited to MAVRIC's programming		
20	1D6 per phase from electrical-based attacks		
15	1D6 Per phase from magnetic-based attacks		
15	Distinct features (robotic body and skull, major effort to conceal, major reaction)		
5	Distinct features (engraved snowflakes on chest and skull, easily concealed)		
13	Monitored by MAVRIC 14-		
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/agencies 8-		
349	MAVRIC Bonus		



Background: While MAVRIC was retooling the Tecommandos, he decided there should be leader-types for these foot soldiers. After all, hero groups always had someone as their leader. And, more importantly, his potential enemies would be looking for leaders in the battle in hopes of taking them out early to win a quick victory.

MAVRIC also knew that, whenever Dr. Tennison used robots in his schemes, they were always shut down with one snip of the communication network. So, with these things in mind, he modified and augmented some of the Tecommandos and created the Tecommanders.

MAVRIC constructed more resistant armor, better weapons, and more power into these new robots. As an extra nasty addition, he put a fireball explosion into them as well, to be set off if the robot is below zero body. This, he hoped, would be an object lesson to anyone trying to wreck his robots.

MAVRIC decided to make only a few of these class robots to start, noting that there seem to be many followers and few leaders in the world from his studies. He programmed his robots with television and historical personalities from Napoleon to Nimitz. Finally, his Tecommanders were ready.

Quote: "I overcame tougher foes at (battle name here) than you! Surrender now or die!"

Personality/Motivations: Like all other robots, they have no true personality. MAVRIC must create it. However, these are the most flamboyant and colorfully programmed personas in the lot.

Each one thinks it is a major war or Wild West hero. MAVRIC programmed them from what he learned through television and the library. The robots can recite their entire recorded history plus the television version (which can be a muddled mess in some cases) with no error. They have the same general accent, mannerisms, and speech patterns of the people they emulate.

MAVRIC toyed with the idea of using operatic characters as Tecommanders as well, but Figaro charging forward with a laser did not appeal to him for some reason. The Tecommanders, like all of MAVRIC's automatons, are limited in the decision-making department. It will not be original in seeking solutions to problems.

Powers/Tactics: When MAVRIC is in control, these robots will do the same as all other robots: wage a war of attrition by starting with the weakest members of the opposition and work their way up the power scale. However, these robots will be much more flamboyant about it, actively acting out their role as a great military leader or western folk hero. The Tecommanders will bark out the orders, although they have already been relayed through the communications link from MAVRIC. The Tecommanders act as a deception in this manner since the loss of the robot does not directly affect the combat underway.

Sometimes MAVRIC will set up a sophisticated set of instructions and let the robots fight without his guidance. This is rare since MAVRIC considers all battles to be important, but if this occurs, the Tecommanders will command the field and send the other robots to whatever positions they feel necessary via radio transmitter/receiver. They will use whatever combat programming and tactics they have at the time, based on personality. If the robot thinks it is General Lee, it will fight like General Lee.

However, the Tecommanders have self-preservation programming, something all of the other automations lack. These robots will, when the battle goes badly, put everything they can in the way to allow them time to escape. MAVRIC has so few Tecommanders as it is and, wishing to enhance their importance, he set these units up to run when necessary.

Appearance: Stripped down, the Tecommanders are the exact same robots, externally, as the Tecommandos, built with a steel-blue skull and framework, but there are no plastic coverings on these units: They are totally protected with heavy armor. The computer brain is better protected with armor as well.

TYPICAL SKILL PACKAGES

When MAVRIC sends his PSI-droids and Tecommandos on various missions of information gathering and spying, he will usually program the robots with skills that will fit their disguise. These skills are interchangeable parts in their computers: Remove one program board and put in another.

Although MAVRIC is inventing new packages and retooling old ones all of the time, below are his most often utilized skill packages. These can be used for either the PSI-droids or the Tecommandos.

The packages are based on the twenty point skill package of the PSI-droids. The last one is the typical Tecommando assault agent package. However, you can set up a pool of skills and knowledges that should be able to create a suitable agent in most areas of the workforce.

If you wish to create your own packages, study the examples below. Try not to go overboard on creating skill packages, though. MAVRIC has not perfected personality in his automatons and, thus, will not create robot spies that have to be seen for long periods of time in public. MAVRIC should have a very good reason to add new skill packages to his arsenal: He is not just going to whip them up as something to do.

SKILL PACKAGE: POLICEMAN

Cost	Powers
3	Criminology 12-
2	Weapon Familiarity - Small Arms
1	Weapon Familiarity - Nightstick
3	PS: Policeman 12-
3	KS: Area of city as appropriate 12-
3	KS: Police department as appropriate 12-
2	KS: Local laws 11-
3	Shadowing 11-

SKILL PACKAGE: JANITOR

Cost	Powers
3	PS: Janitor 12-
3	KS: Janitorial Equipment 12-
3	KS: Workplace operations 12-
3	KS: Workplace area 12-
8	Left for GM to decide

SKILL PACKAGE: SKATEBOARDER

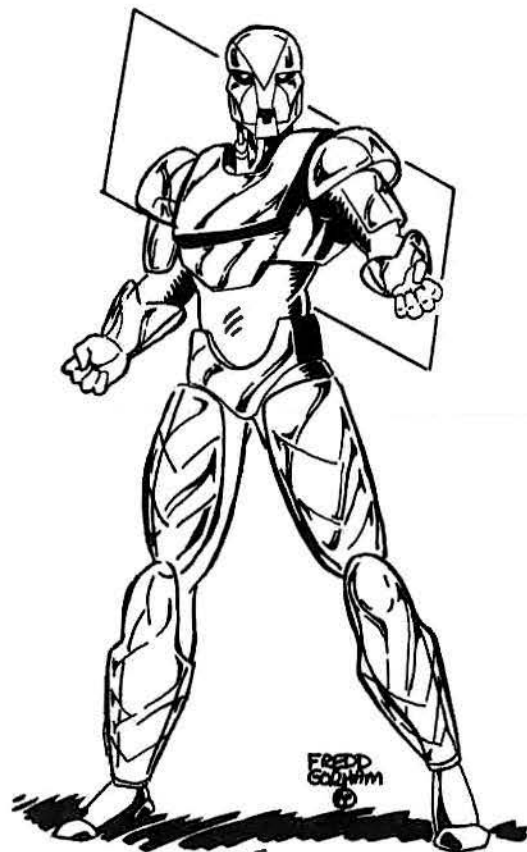
Cost	Powers
3	KS: Skateboards 12-
3	KS: Area or City Knowledge 12-
3	Acrobatics 12-
3	Breakfall 12-
3	Combat Driving - Skateboard 12-
5	Left for GM to decide

SKILL PACKAGE: SECRETARY

Cost	Powers
3	PS: Secretary 12-
3	KS: Secretarial Equipment 12-
3	KS: Workplace Operations 12-
3	KS: Workplace Group 12-
8	Left for GM to decide

SKILL PACKAGE: ENEMY AGENT

Cost	Powers
3	Tactics 14-
3	KS: City or Area as appropriate 14-
3	Cryptography 14-
3	Security Systems 14-
3	Lockpicking 14-
13	Martial Arts - Limited Karate
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage
	Punch +0 +2 STR+2D6 (8D6 total)
	Kick -2 +1 STR+4D6 (10D6 total)
	Chop -2 +0 D6 HKA
2	+1 OCV with Punch



BAYONET VEHICLES

When MAVRIC began designing and building his automotive robots, he was running through several military simulations on World War I. During this time he came up with the name Bayonet for the ground-bound units, believing them to be his sharp forward thrust in many frontal attacks to come.

The Bayonet-class automatons also cover the water vehicles now. In fact, anything from a car to a dump truck to a hovercraft can be called a Bayonet-class robot.

MAVRIC has spent much more time developing these vehicles than the Speedbolts because most heroes are ground-bound and cars are easier to steal and hide than planes. The Bayonet-class robots are also more flexible in deployment, not needing large runways or landing pads.

Below is the general outline for building a typical Bayonet:

- 1) Determine the ground or water vehicle you wish to modify. Cars, trucks, trolley cars, motor boats, whatever suits your need (MAVRIC has even modified a stagecoach).
- 2) Add an on-board computer either directly into the vehicle or install a permanent PSI-droid inside the vehicle. The computer will be programmed with all the pertinent information about the vehicle and its capabilities.

SMALL CAR

Val	Char	Cost	
2	Size (Area)	15	
1.6	Length		
1	Width		
800kg	Mass		
-2	DCV Mod		
-3	KB Mod		
35	STR	10	
20	DEX	30	
4	SPD	10	
3	DEF	3	
13	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END
30	4D6 NND (vs Power Defense or Ego higher than 15), invisible effects vs normal sight, OIF-sleep ray projector,	4
30	END Reserve (200 END, 10 REC)	
27	3D6 Killing Explosion, -1 DC per 2", Plasma Explosion	8
5	4 Extra Limbs, (mechanical arms in front and back of car), up to STR 30	3
40	+25" Running, OIF-tires	5

Disadvantages	
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-
5	1D6 Unluck
62	MAVRIC Bonus

	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base				
Costs:	68	+	132	=	200	=	100	+	100

The general guideline for the computer is:

INT 25; DEX 20; SPD 6 The computer will be programmed with skills and abilities such as Combat Driving, levels with ranged attacks, tactics, and combat levels. Enhanced senses and perception rolls will be networked via cameras and other devices into the computer.

- 3) Give the Bayonet about 150-200 Active points in special powers and abilities. Weapons, enhanced senses and other add-ons fall into this category.

Given a choice between a Speedbolt and a Bayonet, MAVRIC prefers to use Bayonets. The Speedbolts, as noted earlier, are usually too large to keep hidden for long and have a much more limited use than a Bayonet. The Bayonet, on the other hand, can roll right up behind a hero, honk its horn, then blast away with its missiles.

BAYONET EXAMPLES

Below are several examples of Bayonet-class robots that MAVRIC uses. Each has its own abilities and specialties but can be interchanged as needed.

As noted earlier, the Bayonet will have either an on-board computer or a permanently placed PSI-droid in the vehicle. Keep this in mind when the vehicle is in combat because of the special senses of the PSI-droids or computers.

Some of the vehicles below have been "juiced up" for use in the field. However, most are close approximations of their real life counterparts.

MID-SIZED CAR

Val	Char	Cost				
3.2	Size (Area)	20				
2.5	Length					
1.25	Width					
1.6T	Mass					
-2	DCV Mod					
-4	KB Mod					
30	STR	0				
15	DEX	15				
3	SPD	5				
3	DEF	3				
14	BODY	0				
Cost	Powers	END				
36	Images, vs normal sight and sound, -5 to PER rolls, x2 radius, IIF-holographic projector, 16 Charges					
34	6D6 Entangle with Backlash, OIF-Energy net mines, Charges					
32	Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe, IIF-invisibility generator					
20	END Reserve (150 END, 5 REC)					
40	+25" Running, OIF-tires					
Disadvantages						
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle					
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-					
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-					
5	1D6 Unluck					
27	MAVRIC Bonus					
Costs:	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base	
	43	+	122	=	165	
				=	65	
				+	100	

LUXURY CAR

Val	Char	Cost	
5	Size (Area)	25	
3.2	Length		
1.6	Width		
3.2T	Mass		
-3	DCV Mod		
-5	KB Mod		
36	STR	1	
12	DEX	6	
3	SPD	8	
10	DEF	24	
15	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END
40	4D6 NND Area Effect vs Life Support (Nerve Gas), 8 Charges for 1 Turn each, OIF-Pressurized gas jets in car	
30	12D6 EB, energy pulse, 16 Charges, No KNB, OIF-Stun gun	
14	+7D6 HA, Move Through only	
48	40 STR Telekinesis, Fine Manipulation, Invisible Effects vs normal sight, 4 charges for 1 Turn each, OIF-TK gun	
27	+20" Running, OIF-Tires	4
30	END Reserve (200 END, 10 REC)	
4	IR Vision, IIF-Special camera and lens	
4	UV Vision, IIF-Special camera and lens	
16	N-ray Vision (Force Fields or Magic), IIF-Special camera and lens	
6	3 levels with Move Through	

Disadvantages		
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle	
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-	
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-	
5	1D6 Unluck	
147	MAVRIC Bonus	

	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base
Costs:	64	+	221	=	285
				=	185
				+	100

SMALL TRUCK

Val	Char	Cost		
5	Size (Area)	25		
3.2	Length			
1.6	Width			
3.2T	Mass			
-2	DCV Mod			
-4	KB Mod			
50	STR	15		
15	DEX	30		
4	SPD	15		
12	DEF	30		
15	BODY	0		
Cost	Powers		END	
30	40 STR Telekinesis, OAF-forklift		6	
30	40 STR Telekinesis, OIF-tractor beam, Act. 14-		6	
6	+3D6 HA, Move Through Only		1	
24	Teleport 20", x32 Mass, x64 Distance, OAF-teleporter in truck box, 4 Charges, Act. 14-			
40	+25" Running, OIF-tires		5	
30	END Reserve (200 END, 10 REC)			
Disadvantages				
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle			
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-			
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-			
5	1D6 Unluck			
127	MAVRIC Bonus			
Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base
Costs:	115 +	150 =	265 =	165 + 100

CARGO VAN

Val	Char	Cost	
3.2	Size (Area)	20	
2.5	Length		
1.25	Width		
1.6T	Mass		
-2	DCV Mod		
-4	KB Mod		
30	STR	0	
15	DEX	15	
3	SPD	5	
10	DEF	24	
14	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END			
30	40 STR Telekinesis, OAF-forklift	6			
16	+8D6 HA, Move Through Only	2			
9	+10PD/+10ED Force Field, Front Only (-) Only during forward movement (-) Act. 14-	2			
40	+25" Running, OIF-tires	5			
20	END Reserve (150 END, 5 REC)				
6	3 levels with Move Through				
Disadvantages					
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle				
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-				
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-				
5	1D6 Unluck				
47	MAVRIC Bonus				
	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base
Costs:	64	+	121 =	185 =	85 + 100

JEEP

Val	Char	Cost								
3.2	Size (Area)	20	* Sides, bottom only							
2.5	Length									
1.25	Width									
800kg	Mass									
-2	DCV Mod									
-3	KB Mod									
40	STR	10								
15	DEX	15								
3	SPD	5								
8	DEF	12*								
14	BODY	0								
Cost	Powers	END								
45	3D6 RKA Autofire with +1 Stun Multiplier, 250 Charges, OAF-.50 Cal machine gun									
20	2D6 RKA Explosion, 16 Charges, OAF-Grenade launcher (fragmentation grenades)									
3	+1 with ranged attacks									
40	+25" Running, OIF-tires		5							
30	END Reserve (200 END, 10 REC)									
Disadvantages										
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle									
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-									
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-									
5	1D6 Unluck									
62	MAVRIC Bonus									
Char		Powers	Total	Disads	Base					
Costs:		62	+	138	=	200	=	100	+	100

HOVERCRAFT

Val	Char	Cost	
8	Size (Area)	30	
4	Length		
2	Width		
6.4T	Mass		
-4	DCV Mod		
-6	KB Mod		
40	STR	0	
18	DEX	24	
4	SPD	12	
10	DEF	24	
16	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END
30	12D6 EB pulse cannon, 16 Charges, OIF-pulse cannon mount, does not work in magnetic fields	
45	3D6 RKA with +2 Stun multiplier, (molecular disruptor), 8 Charges, OIF-mounted raygun	
20	25" Flight, only while touching surface (-)	5
30	END Reserve (200 END, 10 REC)	
32	Active Sonar, IIF-Sonar Emitter	

Disadvantages		
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle	
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-	
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-	
5	1D6 Unluck	
107	MAVRIC Bonus	

	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base				
Costs:	90	+	155	=	245	=	145	+	100

SHERMAN TANK

Val	Char	Cost	
20	Size (Area)	40	
6.4	Length		
3.2	Width		
25T	Mass		
-5	DCV Mod		
-8	KB Mod		
50	STR	0	
15	DEX	15	
3	SPD	5	
16	DEF	42	
18	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END							
48	4D6 AP RKA shells, 32 Charges, OAF-cannon, Act. 14-								
60	2 D6 RKA Autofire, 250 Shots, OIF-turret-mounted machine guns, Act. 14-								
8	+4 Armor, top of tank only (-)								
20	+15" Running, OIF-tank treads	3							
30	END Reserve (200 END, 10 REC)								
12	+4 with ranged attacks								
Disadvantages									
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle								
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-								
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-								
5	1D6 Unluck								
142	MAVRIC Bonus								
Costs:	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base				
	102	+	178	=	280	=	180	+	100

SPEEDBOLT VEHICLES

The Speedbolts are MAVRIC's robotic air force. These are modified aircraft equipped with robot pilots and an on-board computer. They are also fitted with special weapons and defenses.

MAVRIC is working toward building a formidable fleet of these aircraft, modifying anything he can find that flies. Helicopters or planes, new or antique, he's adding them to the Speedbolt fleet.

Below is the recommended way to build your own Speedbolts.

- 1) Take the standard aircraft or helicopter you wish to use, avoiding anything bigger than a fighter jet. Attacking heroes with a fleet of modified 747s over a heavily populated area is a bit extreme and expensive.
- 2) Add an on-board computer either into the aircraft directly or into a PSI-droid that will be permanently placed inside the cockpit. The computer should be able to hold its own in most situations. See the Bayonet vehicle write-up for the computer stats. Substitute Combat Pilot for Combat Driving.

The computer should have some skills to help it in dogfights such as levels with ranged attacks, a camera network that will give it levels on PER rolls, enhanced senses, and overall combat levels.

- 3) Give the Speedbolt about 200-300 Active points in other abilities. Extra movement, offensive weaponry, and defenses fall into this category. This is only a rough guess of points needed. Some aircraft (such as combat fighter planes) will require a higher point expenditure than others.

You can add additional enhanced senses for vehicles which will be used primarily as spies or scouts. If you want to give it weapon racks all over, calculate out the weapons you want, how powerful, and how many you can get with the points. The Active point range given may seem like a lot, but once you get a gadget here and a weapon there, it adds up fast.

SPEEDBOLT EXAMPLES

The following are some examples of the Speedbolts. These are by no means the entire range MAVRIC can create, but they do comprise his most used flying vehicles.

As noted earlier, the Speedbolts will be controlled by a PSI-droid or an on-board computer. If a question comes up about the extra skill levels or enhanced senses, most likely the computer or PSI-droid will cover the questions. However, there are additional levels in some cases with the aircraft listed below. As with the Bayonets, these are approximate representations. Some have been spiced up a bit, but otherwise, they are approximations of their real life counterparts.

TELEVISION HELICOPTER

Val	Char	Cost							
8	Size (Area)	30							
4	Length								
2	Width								
6.4T	Mass								
-4	DCV Mod								
-6	KB Mod								
50	STR	10							
15	DEX	15							
3	SPD	5							
8	DEF	18							
16	BODY	0							
Cost	Powers	END							
31	14D6 EB, Molecular Agitation, invisible effects vs normal sight, 4 Charges, IIF-TV cameras, No KNB								
32	15" Flight, x4 Noncombat, 4 Charges for 1 Hour each, OIF-engine system								
9	3 levels with Flight								
Disadvantages									
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle								
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-								
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-								
5	1D6 Unluck								
12	MAVRIC Bonus								
Costs:	Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base				
	78	+	72	=	150	=	50	+	100

APACHE GUNSHIP

Val	Char	Cost	
8	Size (Area)	30	
4	Length		
2	Width		
6.4T	Mass		
-4	DCV Mod		
-6	KB Mod		
50	STR	10	
23	DEX	39	
4	SPD	7	
10	DEF	24	
16	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END
60	2D6 AP RKA Autofire, 250 Shots, OIF-mounted machine guns, Act. 14-	
40	4D6 AP RKA, 16 Shots, OAF-missiles and rack	
64	40" Flight, x4 Noncombat, 4 charges for 1 hour each, OIF-engine system	
12	4 levels with ranged attacks	
9	3 levels with flight	

Disadvantages		
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle	
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-	
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-	
5	1D6 Unluck	
157	MAVRIC Bonus	

Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base
Costs:	110 +	185 =	295 =	195 + 100

F-15

Val	Char	Cost							
12.5	Size (Area)	35							
6	Length								
2.25	Width								
12.5T	Mass								
-4	DCV Mod								
-7	KB Mod								
50	STR	5							
20	DEX	30							
4	SPD	10							
10	DEF	24							
17	BODY	0							
Cost		Powers	END						
53	4D6 Autofire RKA, 150 Charges, OIF-autocannon								
36	6D6 AP RKA EB, Explosion, 4 Charges, OAF-missiles and rack, Act. 14-								
235	110" flight, x8 Noncombat, 4 Charges for 1 Hour each, OIF-engine systems								
30	No Range Modifier on both attacks, IIF-computer targeting system								
15	5 levels with Flight								
Disadvantages									
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle								
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-								
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-								
5	1D6 Unluck								
335	MAVRIC Bonus								
Char		Powers	Total	Disads	Base				
Costs:	104	+	369	=	473	=	373	+	100

VTOL JUMP PLANE

Val	Char	Cost	
12.5	Size (Area)	35	
5	Length		
2.5	Width		
12.5T	Mass		
-4	DCV Mod		
-7	KB Mod		
60	STR	15	
20	DEX	30	
4	SPD	10	
14	DEF	36	
17	BODY	0	

Cost	Powers	END		
60, 60	2 separate 2D6 RKA Autofire, 250 shots each, OIF-machine guns			
75	5D6 AP RKA EB Explosion, 16 Charges, OIF-missiles, Act. 14-			
132	80" Flight, x8 Noncombat, 4 Charges for 1 Hour each, OIF-engine system			
12	6 levels with missile attacks			
15	5 levels with Flight			
Disadvantages				
5	Distinct Feature: Snowflake engraved on vehicle			
15	Hunted by various heroes/villains/organizations 8-			
13	Watched by MAVRIC 14-			
5	1D6 Unluck			
342	MAVRIC Bonus			
Char	Powers	Total	Disads	Base
Costs:	126 + 354 =	480 =	380 +	100

NISON SECURITY ROBOT XPTN-10000

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
60	STR	50	OCV: 7
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7
0	CON	0	ECV: N/A
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	INT	10	
0	EGO	0	Costs
20	PRE	10	
10	COM	0	Char: 130 Base: 100
15	PD	0*	+ +
15	ED	0*	Powers: 575 Disad: 470
5	SPD	20	= =
0	REC	0	Totals: 705 705
0	END	0	
0	STUN	0	* All defenses listed below as Armor
Cost Powers (all powers at 0 END)			
37	15D6 EB, OIF-chest laser cannon, 16 Charges, Act. 14-		
30	10D6 Autofire PD Blasts, OIF-fingertip missile launchers with explosive bullets, 60 Charges, Act. 14-		
33	10D6 EB, affects desolid (radiation blaster), OIF- Helmet Visor, Act. 14-		
50	15PD/15ED Force Wall, 4 Charges for 1 Turn each		
60	TAKES NO STUN - BODY damage only		
45	+15" Running, 0 END		
40	+20" Flight, 0 END, OIF-Anti-gravity plates		
15	5 Levels with Flight		
15	3 Levels with HTH		
135	+15 PD/+15 ED Armor		
100+ Disadvantages			
15	1 x BODY from magnetic or electrical attacks		
20	Only obeys Dr. Tennison		
10	Unoriginal, predictable battle plans, "telegraphs" attacks		
20	Distinct features (huge clunky robot with VIPER helmet), not concealable, major reaction		
10	2D6 per Turn from water-based attacks		
15	All functions working on activation rolls due to disrepair (running, flight, etc.)		
10	2D6 Unluck		
505	Villain Bonus		

Background: The Tennison XPTN-10000 robot is nothing more than a sentinel whose purpose in life is irrelevant. Of course, convincing him of that could be difficult and painful.

Dr. Tennison created two of these sentinels to guard Bright Dawn Dam. He wanted to glorify VIPER in their design but at the same time ridicule them for his hasty departure from the group. His vision of a tin-plated dome-brained mindless guard ever doing his duty came to light in amazingly quick time. He never told MAVRIC of their existence so MAVRIC never took control of them. They continued their last programmed duties, guarding the dam (now abandoned), protecting the equipment inside (now junk), and protecting Dr. Tennison (now dead).

One robot recently broke down and is now standing under a giant oak tree. He is now a home for field mice, squirrels, and some other small wildlife. The other still keeps its vigil.

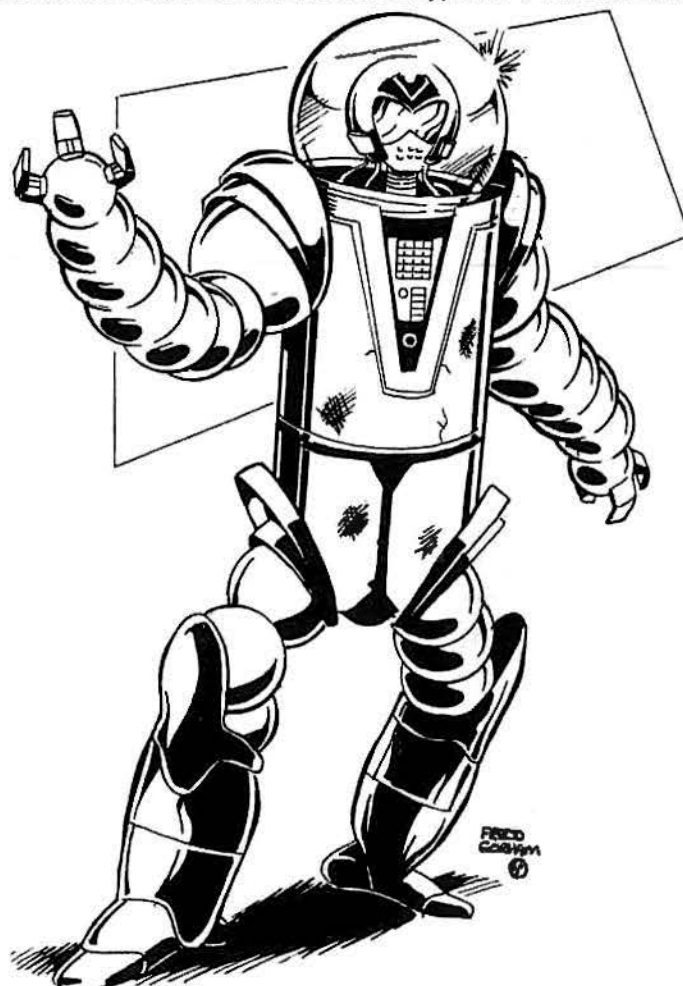
Quote: "You are intruders violating the secret grounds of the all-powerful and future Emperor of Earth, Dr. Tennison. You must pay for that with your lives. Credit cards and checks are not accepted".

Personality/Motivation: If imitating a poor man's B-grade movie robot can be considered a personality, then that is what this robot has. Otherwise, it has none. It drones out its orders and that is it. All this robot cares about is completing its duties, the protection of Dr. Tennison and Bright Dawn Dam. It continues to make its circuits around the dam in its vigilance in random patterns and times.

Powers/Tactics: The robot is equipped with a powerful combination of weaponry, strength, defense, and speed. However, the equipment has not been maintained for some time and is on the verge of breaking down.

The tactics of the robot are straightforward: Attack any humanoid intruders and kill them. The robot will not be imaginative in its use of force. It will try each attack until one gets the job done. It will start with the autofire blast and then use the laser cannon. The robot can be shut down by voice command, but it has to be a perfect match of Dr. Tennison to accomplish this. A good Mimicry skill roll (at -2) from someone who has heard Dr. Tennison's voice will accomplish this. Otherwise, be prepared to fight the robot.

Appearance: The robot stands about 7" tall and is very heavy. The unit looks like a reject from a recent low-budget sci-fi movie. It is unsophisticated in appearance, having a domed head wearing an equally oversized VIPER helmet, large squarish fingers, cylindrical arms, legs and torso. There are some rust marks and open seams in the welding. The robot's color scheme is that of a typical VIPER uniform.



MURDER IN STRONGHOLD

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HOW TO RUN A MURDER MYSTERY

Any mystery story revolves around an investigation. The heroes of the story are presented with an inexplicable fact. By tracing clues and interrogating people, they seek the information which will explain it.

Murder in Stronghold is no exception. And like all murder mysteries, the fact which needs explaining is a corpse. Who killed this person? How did they do it? And why? The process of answering these questions is what the adventure is all about.

THE GOALS OF A MURDER MYSTERY

The goal of all but the most twisted murder mystery stories is to uncover the culprit and see him punished. To do this, the detective must demonstrate that a suspect had the means, motive and opportunity to commit the crime.

MEANS

Means signifies that the suspect had the ability to cause the victim's death. For example, if it has been established that the victim was killed by laser wounds, does the suspect have laser powers, or access to a laser gun? If so, he had the means to kill the guy.

MOTIVE

Motive is a reason to commit the crime. In the supers genre, combat is common, but people rarely die. If someone kills another person (especially, as in this case, a super), he had to have wanted that person dead really badly. If the detective can demonstrate that the person had good reason to want the victim killed, he has a viable motive.

OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity exists if an investigator can show that a suspect was in the area at the time of the murder. The only recourse a suspect has in this case is a trustworthy alibi. However, in the United States, criminals are considered innocent until proven guilty. It is not enough, therefore, to demonstrate that the person was not somewhere else at the time. The detective must provide strong evidence that the suspect was at the scene of the crime—or perhaps show that he is attempting to fool people into thinking he was elsewhere.

CLUES

Clues are the milestones a detective follows to find the culprit. By following the trail of clues that leads to the case's solution, the detective often uncovers facts that are startling or surprising. These plot twists lend an air of uncertainty to the tale—the reader is never sure what will happen next.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The first type of clue is physical evidence. This includes the crime scene itself, as well as the corpse, the murder weapon, fingerprints found in the area, and so on. Such clues usually establish certain facts which create the foundation for a murder case: where the crime was committed, when it occurred, how the person was killed. They can provide benchmarks which become damning evidence during the course of an investigation. For example, if analysis of the site reveals that the killer used a 9mm handgun, and a suspect is discovered to own a 9mm handgun, ballistics might reveal whether the bullets were fired from that particular weapon.

TESTIMONY

The other type of clue is a person's testimony. This is information a character knows about a suspect, the murder victim or the crime. People who can supply useful information generally fall into four categories. These are, in order of importance:

Eyewitness

A person who witnessed the crime firsthand. There is almost no way to refute a reliable eyewitness. Most criminals who are aware that one exists will do everything in their power to eliminate them.

Even if the eyewitness did not see the crime committed, they could place the suspect in the area at the time of the incident. This is one of the most common means of establishing opportunity (see preceding).

Alibi

Someone who can vouch for a suspect's whereabouts at the time of the murder. Good for establishing who didn't kill the guy, which is sometimes the only way one can determine who did.

Character witness

A person who provides information about the personality or behavior of a suspect. Most friends and relatives fall into this category.

Expert

A person who is highly skilled in a field, who provides a professional opinion about aspects of the crime. Police officers, physicians, and scientists are the most common expert witnesses. Experts are usually called upon to establish certain truths from physical evidence at hand ("I'd say that, based on the position of the body and the splatters of blood on the wall, he was shot from behind with a 12-gauge.")

Obviously, these categories relate specifically to legal testimony. But most NPCs with information fall into one of these classes as well. An eyewitness can tell you everything you need to know about the crime. An alibi can tell you who didn't do it (although they could be lying...). Most clues gleaned from other characters would classify the source as a character witness, offering hints as to a suspect's motive or present whereabouts ("He has this hunting lodge up in the Catskills"). And experts can supply information the heroes need, covering the skills they may not have.

HELPFUL HINTS

One of the toughest decisions facing the GM during a mystery adventure will be when the players are truly stymied and will not be able to proceed without a hint. If the GM is too helpful, the adventure will be a walk. This takes the spice out of the story—nothing kills a good mystery like being handed the solution. On the other hand, the players should not have to spend three play sessions sitting around brainstorming. The key to the story is action. Have the players been hanging out for more than a few minutes? Pick your favorite Hunted and throw him at them. And (what a coincidence!) the hunter, once defeated, supplies a useful push in the right direction—whether he actually knows something or just serves as the GM's mouthpiece. This is a good way for the GM to say things like "you should go to the police station now" without coming right out and saying it.

Another technique for tipping off the players is to give them appropriate skill rolls. On a successful roll, the GM can offer some helpful tidbit. However, he should never prompt the players to make skill rolls. The players themselves will initiate this process by a casual inquiry: "Why would Mrs. Banks keep a loaded shotgun under her bed?". At this point, the GM says "Why don't you make a Deduction roll?". If you don't feel like being so blatant, write down the questions they ask. Later, if they haven't figured it out for themselves, make a roll for them (or have them roll, if you wish) and use it as a Latent Clue (see below) e.g., the GM might hand the player a note reading "Anton mentioned she was an amateur skeet shooter." This prompts the players into taking a step in the right direction (go to the skeet club), without forcing it overtly.

GENRE CONVENTIONS

There are several concepts that are intrinsic to the mystery genre. Some apply to the super-mystery subgenre, and some do not. Following is a discussion of a few of the most common staples.

THE QUANTUM LEAP

The standard Victorian mystery involved a crime committed by a twisted genius who plans it down to the finest detail. Inevitably, the murderer makes one tiny slip-up, which the even more brilliant detective seizes upon and uses to crack the case ("His symptoms, I realized, were characteristic of thallium poisoning ..."). This is an example of a genre staple that is not appropriate in a roleplaying context. Not only is it difficult to write such an adventure, most players simply won't get that one minor clue and make the quantum leap required. This is not to say that players are dumb; on the contrary, most gamers are above average in intelligence.

However, most do not think like Hercule Poirot—especially **Champions** players, whose most difficult decision is usually choosing between the 12d6 EB or the 4d6 RKA. No one should be shortchanged on their entertainment simply because they aren't a deductive genius.

Another reason to avoid employing this sort of plot device is that in the type of story where it works best, the murder is downplayed by the incredibly complex criminal plot. The goal behind the story is not just to uncover the culprit, but to unravel the fantastic machinations of the master criminal. Not only is this unrealistic, it is a bit callous—and death is not an issue that can be sanitized in a four-color campaign. Historically, when a character dies in a comic book, it is a major dramatic event, and comic-book campaigns should try to sustain this feeling. Therefore, it is recommended that, when running a murder mystery, the GM approach it like the crime novels of the thirties and forties. In these murder mysteries, the author laid down a reasonably logical series of clues to follow, creating an interesting story without ignoring the tragedy of violent loss of life.

THE LATENT CLUE

Second cousin to the quantum leap, the latent clue is more appropriate to a roleplaying setting. It is a hint that the detective doesn't know he has—in game terms, one that the GM can reveal at any time. For example, the detective could suddenly remember something which occurred previously that has relevance to the case at hand ("Even if locked, the freezer can be opened from the inside"). The GM is supplying a clue by providing something the character remembers—which can be simulated by an INT roll. Other latent clues can be props and the like, which the GM can give away at any time, that open up new doors for the investigators.

Once revealed, the players must make what they will of the clue. If it helps give them a little push in the right direction, that's fine. If they still blunder along in ignorance, that's fine too. At least you were fair...

THE CIRCLE OF SUSPECTS

In mystery stories, there are always a few different suspects. This makes the story interesting by keeping the reader guessing about which one did it. However, the emphasis here is on the few. The detective can usually whittle the numbers down to a half-dozen in short order, regardless of how many he starts with.

The author (or GM) can maintain this by geographically limiting the people who could have done it. (Note that this is weeding out suspects by opportunity.) If the murder occurs at a convention, someone at the convention had to do it. Analyzing motive can eliminate most of the attendees right away—as noted above, it usually requires strong incentive for any but the most psychopathic individuals to kill someone. This leaves the hero with a handful of people to observe and investigate while piecing together the puzzle.

RUNNING A SUPER-MYSTERY

Until now, we have discussed the peculiarities of running a murder mystery adventure. When the detectives and suspects wear capes and masks, however, some unique problems arise. These deserve special consideration.

GAMEMASTERING SUPER-POWERS

When all is said and done, *Champions* is a game about people with powers. The PCs in this adventure will probably want to use their special abilities to help them solve the mystery. This is okay; it is a superhero adventure, after all. However, there are those Powers which can totally alter the course of an investigative adventure. What can the GM do to protect himself, and his storyline, from these nuisance Powers?

ELIMINATE THEM

This solution is the least creative. The GM can simply ban certain Powers out of hand. A good guideline to the ones that can disrupt a mystery are those marked with a (stop sign). Particularly annoying are Telepathy, N-Ray Vision, Mind Scan and Clairvoyance.

If this adventure is to be incorporated into an existing campaign, this is obviously not a practical approach. The GM should not disallow Powers the players have had since the beginning of the campaign, unless he has reasonable way to limit them. A new supervillain who conveniently Drains all of the offending abilities is not a reasonable way!

LEAVE THEM ALONE

Unless supers have special legal privileges, they could hardly get up on the witness stand and testify that they "looked through time and watched him kill the guy." Likewise, Telepathy will let you interrogate the most recalcitrant witness, but it's no good in court. That, after all, is the goal of the adventure: to bring the villain to justice. Without worthwhile evidence, the police can't hold the scoundrel longer than it takes for his lawyer to arrive. So, although the heroes know whodunit, they still have to gather enough evidence to convince the jury.

With this approach, the murderer will probably harass the heroes a bit more than usual. If the villain knows that the PCs have the solution to the crime, and need only find enough evidence to take it to trial, he'll do everything possible to destroy such evidence—and maybe the offending sleuths, as well.

CHEAT

Perhaps the best approach is to "creatively interpret" the effects of the more troublesome Powers. That way, you can make Powers like Telepathy helpful without being a give-away. Some will have campaign effects which will restrain the heroes from using them liberally. Others have hidden flaws which the GM can exploit to deny the players the whole picture.

This is the recommended approach for handling Powers in this adventure. As such, some of the worst offenders are listed below, with examples of how the GM might alter them to keep the adventure afloat.

Telepathy

Even given a strong-willed subject (EGO 10+), most important information can be unearthed with a result of 20 or so. This means that even six or seven dice of Telepathy can let your players steamroll over all the NPC interaction we've thoughtfully provided. Furthermore, while this keeps the mentalist busy, everyone else will be hunting up something to read. Therefore, Telepathy should be on every mystery GM's list of Bad Things. Fortunately, there are some things he can do to curb the use of this truly annoying Power.

First of all, most normals have a fanatic distrust of mind-readers. Using Telepathy without consent could be considered an invasion of privacy—a crime. By definition, even an INT 8 normal isn't stupid; unless the esper covers his tracks carefully, the subject will know he's been mind-read ("There's no way you could have known that!"). This could lead to any number of lovely developments: bad press, lawsuits and other legal trouble. Remember that most super heroes rely on a good rep to open doors for them. If the people they're supposed to be protecting start hating and fearing them, they might as well pack up and move to another city.

Then, there are the hunters—groups that hate psis. Or, groups that are psis, trying to protect themselves from what they consider an unethical rogue. If the PCs are being a pain, go ahead and whomp 'em a couple of times. It won't disrupt the adventure; if the telepath is hogging all the fun, there is no adventure. Might as well throw in an annoyed supergroup to cause trouble. And maybe, after the third onslaught by the mysterious Society for the Annihilation of Telepaths, the offending egoist will get the hint.

Mind Scan

The minute a player whose character has this Power finds out someone's been killed, he is going to say "I Mind Scan Stronghold, looking for the killer. Let's see, there's what, a hundred people here? Okay, with a -4 to the roll, I hit ECV 25. I'm going for the max, EGO+20. Rolling my 23d6, I get 67. Where is he?"

Sigh. Not only is this irritating, it's a foolish waste of time. Anyone playing an egoist should know that you needn't submit to such bullying. All you have to do is give the murderer 30 points of Mental Defense, or 10 defensive levels with Ego Combat. However, that is a heavy-handed and unimaginative solution. Let's consider another way to handle the situation.

It is clear from the description of the Power that it is more difficult to find someone you are unfamiliar with. The suggested modifier ranges from plus to minus 5. However, this is for normal situations, which this case is not. How hard is it to lock on to someone you've never met, whose name and appearance you don't know? How tough is it to find someone when all you know of him is who he killed? -20? -30? Something like that, probably. Unless your mind-readers have huge ECVs (and why should they? Most non-egoists have low EGO scores), only a truly lucky roll will find the killer for them.

Retrocognition

One way to keep the investigator with this Power from simply looking back in time and watching the murder take place (aside from requiring the character to take certain limitations on the Power) is to set the event in such a way that Retrocog won't completely give the mystery away. *Murder in Stronghold* is a good example; there are several ways the mystery is protected from being disrupted by a character with this Power. First, for the few minutes it takes Proteus to kill Salamander, the prison is blacked out. Therefore, unless the character with Retrocognition has special senses, he won't be able to see enough to let him point to the murderer. He might hear something, if the Power is so constructed, but that's okay. That's just additional evidence, not a story-killer.

Second, The killer's identity is protected by his shapeshifting. Since Proteus has assumed another identity by the time the investigators arrive, knowing who he was isn't going to let them immediately catch him. Of course, they can scan through past time to find the place where he made the switch. This will take them some time—don't forget to use those Long Term Endurance rules!

Time Travel

This Power may seem to be the most ornery of all. Not only can the hero find out who killed Salamander, he could actually go back in time, stop the murderer, restore Salamander to life, and ride home in a tickertape parade, hooray and hallelujah.

If you want to take the wind out of this character's sails, simply have two bodies found at the scene of the crime, rather than one. The heroes get there, and the second victim is, surprise, the time-traveler. Suddenly, the cocky attitude disappears, replaced by "Gulp! Time Travel? Me? Nope, you've got the wrong guy..."

Discriminatory (whatever)

Here's a subtle problem. It's almost impossible to have a murder mystery with a character around who has one of these senses. Why? Because the killer will always leave some trace of himself at the murder site. A character with Discriminatory Sense can pick up these traces and get a signature for the murderer. Once they run into the villain, the super-sensor will spot him immediately.

This isn't as bad as it seems, though. You can use several methods of misdirection to circumvent this. First, omit any traces from the crime scene, for whatever reason. In Proteus' case, this is because he leaves no scent. The same effect could be achieved by obscuring the murder site, or by dousing the site with strong perfume, setting it in a slaughterhouse, and so on. A second way to deal with super-senses is to make the killer inaccessible until the sleuths have found him using conventional methods. Sure, they'll identify him, but by the time they encounter him, it's of no help whatsoever.

Lastly, there's good old brute force. A villain who is expecting a super with Discriminatory senses to chase him could booby-trap the crime scene. A plain old-fashioned stink bomb will take out most super-olfactors—use Drain or Transform to temporarily remove the super-sense.

SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR SUPER-SLEUTHS

While PC superpowers can be a headache to the GM, he should keep in mind that the players must undergo similar trials. Assuming (as is the case with *Murder in Stronghold*) that the murderer is also a super, the heroes are deprived of many valuable assurances common to detectives in powerless worlds. How can the GM keep this from threatening the playability of the adventure?

MEANS

When Powers are involved in a death, investigators are deprived of one valuable piece of evidence—the murder weapon. As consolation, the GM should assume that, in worlds where superpowers exist, police medical examiners would be able to identify wounds caused by such. For example, a coroner's report could say that a victim was killed by "judicious application of force, as by a piece of heavy equipment or person with super-strength." He might identify wounds as having been caused by "a blast of heat," "a laser," or "parallel sets of four sharp cutting implements, like the claws of an animal." From this, PCs could derive a list of suspects - all the known supers with powers similar to those described. SinNet files (see below) would be an invaluable reference when researching supers by power types.

OPPORTUNITY

It is often complicated enough to place a normal person at the scene of a crime. With movement Powers, you enter a whole new realm of complications. Bad enough to have to demonstrate that a suspect had time to drive down the block from the restaurant—how do you prove that he could have flown?

To minimize this problem, a number of things can lend credence to the investigators' assertions of the use of movement Powers. First and foremost is the use of special effects. Remember, any Power which normally costs END (even if bought to 0-END) generates special effects which can be perceived by sight, hearing and one other Sense Group. It is important not to omit this information. In a world where super powers are taken for granted, witnesses testifying that they detected something that described a suspect's special effects could very well be admissible evidence. However, the law would be strongly prejudiced in favor of the defendant, for how do you prove that you can't teleport? It's impossible, and the law would be intended to prevent abuse of this clause.

Another possibility is the existence of technology that can identify someone with super-abilities. A simple device would either register a yea or nay—he's either a super, or he isn't. More sophisticated equipment could identify different levels of superhuman potential, from latency to full-blown operancy. The ultimate in sophistication would tell you exactly what powers the subject possessed. Such information might be admitted in court to supplement other evidence. ("I'm telling you, he flew to that office, and his score of 6.5 on the Blankenship test confirms that he's a strong psychokinetic!") However, one has only to consider the controversy over admissibility of polygraph tests to see how this would likely be received. Further, because of the Fifth Amendment, the suspect need not corroborate such information. Unless a strong case already exists, such evidence would likely be no more than circumstantial.

STRONGHOLD

In a world where supers exist, keeping supercriminals confined is a major problem. Stronghold, a special high-tech prison designed to hold super-powered felons, is one solution. Though far from escape-proof (despite its designer's claims), most of the super-powered criminals in custody in the United States today are incarcerated in Stronghold.

TECHNOLOGY

The Stronghold system assumes that the technology level in the campaign is that of a typical superhero universe—blaster and force field technology is commonplace. In a world where these two innovations do not exist (e.g., the real world), the Stronghold concept is much more difficult to employ. While blasters may be replaced with slug throwers and force fields with armor, Stronghold would not be able to hold characters with exotic powers like desolidification or teleportation unless there are low-tech substitutes for the advanced technology. (Perhaps lead-lined walls are proof against teleport, etc.)

HISTORY

In the years following the emergence of the first superhumans, one of the most frustrating problems authorities dealt with was the confinement of superpowered felons. Even maximum security penitentiaries with reinforced cells were inadequate for holding supervillains. Damage caused by super-criminals threatened to bankrupt several major American cities; insurance rates had gone through the roof. Clearly, a solution to the problem needed to be found.

The man in charge of finding that solution was Dr. Charles Wildman, considered to be one of the most brilliant scientific minds in the world. He had already participated in a number of studies on the supervillain problem, and summarized the situation during a presentation to the Special Senate Subcommittee on Paranormal Activity. Although many senators were skeptical (to say the least), most were convinced that Dr. Wildman's proposal was the most viable thus far, and promised to "seriously consider" it.

Two months later, a battle between the Ultimates and the **Champions** caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to downtown Manhattan. The public outcry was enormous. With Election Day approaching, Dr. Wildman found the Senate suddenly very keen on seeing his proposal to fruition. Funding for Project: Stronghold was approved in record time.

Dr. Wildman coordinated the project. He recruited some of the finest scientific minds in the world to develop security systems for the prison. The project was troubled by several unpleasant incidents, but tight security and help from superhero groups kept the situation under control and construction on schedule. The Army Corps of Engineers completed the prototype facility ten months after ground was broken. Several villains who had been kept in special makeshift restraints were immediately transferred to the new facility.

Affairs proceeded smoothly for the next few months. Several countries, including Great Britain, Australia, and Canada, announced plans for similar prisons. The so-called "supervillain crime wave" decreased markedly; property damage was down 10% in New York City alone after only one month.

HOT SLEEP

Stronghold was once again immersed in controversy when "Hot Sleep" technology was adopted. Certain criminals were proclaimed too powerful to contain, so they were kept comatose for the duration of their sentence. This was widely condemned on the grounds of violating human rights, and a lobby group was formed to "Kill Hot Sleep". Dr. Wildman, who no longer heads the Stronghold project, has voiced his concerns about Hot Sleep, though less stridently. The fate of "Hot Sleep" has not yet been decided by the Supreme Court.

TODAY

While Stronghold has kept many of the most dangerous super-powered felons from society, the damage caused by supervillains remains high. Many members of Congress have lost confidence in Stronghold, and are turning to more aggressive measures to combat supervillains. There has been a cutback in funding for the Stronghold project, and some people are saying that it is only a matter of time before disaster occurs...

OVERVIEW

The prison located in Stronghold, New Mexico, is set into a mesa in the desert. The mesa is 100 meters (50") tall, and approximately 100 meters (50") across, and is located kilometers away from the nearest civilization. The harsh desert surroundings isolate Stronghold from the casual visitor. Even if someone were to wander by, the sheer cliff sides make ascent impossible without special gear or super powers.

The flat top of the mesa is a V/STOL (vertical/short takeoff and landing) airfield. A large circle is painted on top of the mesa and landing lights illuminate the area. In the center of the mesa (just outside the landing circle), a box is painted on the ground. This indicates where the elevator comes up. The entire elevator protrudes above the surface of the mesa when it reaches the top.

Stronghold personnel consists of the warden, his secretaries, guards, scientists, and technicians. There are five levels. Level One is Administration, Levels Two to Four are cell blocks, and Level Five is storage and power.

SECURITY MEASURES

EXTERNAL SENSORS

Stronghold's external sensor arrays consist of two different types of detectors. A Phased Radar Array net is used to spot incoming intruders. Treat this as Radar Sense in 360 degrees, with Telescopic Sense +8. Additionally, there are seismic sensors scattered throughout the rock strata of the mesa. Any blow causing more than 2 BODY to a wall, or tunneling at a rate of more than 1" per full turn will set off one of the sensors. For a disturbance outside of Stronghold, the computer calls a Red Alert (see below) and signals a break-in attempt. The sensors are activated on a roll of (11+ BODY damage done by the attack) or less on 3d6.

INTERNAL SENSORS

Stronghold's internal sensors also consist of two different types of detectors. In the Stronghold corridors are video cameras which transmit images back to the controlling guard shack and the security computer on Level One. Cameras are hidden behind opaque panels in the ceiling, in the locations indicated on the map. Destroying a camera triggers a White Alert. Using Darkness (where the computer doesn't already know there is a power failure or a burnt-out light) triggers a Red alert.

Mounted alongside the video cameras are infrared motion detectors. These track a target by the heat it emits. If a temperature variation of more than a few degrees occurs in front of the scanner, the computer automatically checks the identity of the source using the TV setup. If the computer cannot identify the source, it calls a Yellow Alert and dispatches all nearby guards to investigate. If the source is a prisoner or an unauthorized person in the computer's "Dangerous Felons" file, it calls a Red Alert. If the TV camera cannot spot a heat source, the computer will report a possible invisible entity on the loose and call a Yellow Alert.

Treat the camera system as Clairsentience (normal and IR vision) covering all of Stronghold on IAF cameras. The cameras have 6 DEF and 1 BODY.

Video data is immediately available to the computer (see below). It is also recorded on videotape for review by humans. For details on how the video system works, see Chapter 5.

THE COMPUTER

The Henderson 2850 Security Computer on Level 1 ties all the information from the sensors, robots, and guard reports together. Its stats are as follows:

Val	Char	Cost
30	INT	30
26	DEX	48
3	SPD	-6
Cost Skills		
3	Sensors Operations 15-	
5	KS: Supervillains 14-	
4	English (voice commands)	
8	KS: Defense systems operation 17-	
8	KS: Stronghold employees 17-	
5	PS: Accounting 14-	
Programs		
1	Operate sensors	
1	Evaluate threat	
1	Call alert	
1	Dispatch guards/robots	
1	Identify person	
1	Issue paychecks/pay bills	
1	Manage bank account	
1	Log prisoner entry/exit	
1	Run simulations/games	
1	Handle e-mail	
1	Order supplies	
105	Total cost	

There are two partitions, or "modules", which compose the computer's system. The main system is dedicated to running all the mundane tasks of the prison—bookkeeping, ordering and so on. The other partition, the Threat Evaluation module (a special software package purchased from Henderson Electronics) passively monitors incoming data from sensors, robots, and so on. Any time a threat is detected, the Evaluation module commandeers all the processing power of the computer, temporarily suspending applications like simulations, word-processing and video games. It then calls an appropriate alert and/or dispatches guards and robots to investigate.

The way the system was designed, you aren't supposed to be able to access the Threat Evaluation module from any terminal except one of the two in the computer room itself. However, it is possible to "hack" into it using computer skills.

SECURITY BREACH!

If security is breached, the computer will process the information and determine the location and severity of the threat. In response, it will call an alert. There are three types of alerts:

White Alert is precautionary. All guards in the immediate area are notified and a team is sent to investigate possible disturbances. It might be caused by a villain trying to get attention in his cell, or a minor accident like falling boxes.

Yellow Alert is a defensive alert. All guards are notified and all robots and guards in the immediate area are placed on combat readiness. This alert is activated by an unconfirmed escape or break-in.

Red Alert is a full security breach. All guards and robots are activated for duty, all noncombat personnel are evacuated to a safe area, and all bulkhead doors are sealed. Guards are doubled at all points, and nearby superheroes and military are contacted. This is activated by a confirmed escape attempt.

During the course of a security breach, guards provide a flexible response, while robots provide expendable heavy firepower. Stronghold does not have anti-aircraft defenses, but in the event air support is needed a nearby military base will scramble fighters at once, providing 2-7 (1d6+1) jets. Treat these jets as F-15s from p. 195 of the *Champions Rulesbook*.

GUARDS

The 52 guards that are always on duty in Stronghold are keenly aware that they hold one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. They uphold this responsibility with flair and determination. The 48 unranked guards are split into three shifts of 16. Each shift guards for 9 hours each day, with a half hour overlap between shifts. Because of the pressure of a seven day per week schedule and the closed environment of Stronghold, guards serve a one month tour of duty, working six months of the year on alternating months. If for any reason a guard is unable to work, he will be relieved immediately by a replacement flown in from Albuquerque.

ROBOTS

The most amazing, technologically advanced, and expensive part of Stronghold's security system is its robots. The designers of Stronghold felt that the security forces there would need expendable firepower. These robots have pre-set recognition procedures to determine their actions. They are programmed to identify authorized personnel, detain unauthorized personnel of unknown nature, or call a Red alert and attack immediately, if they detect an escaped villain. If a robot is attacked, it will immediately return fire.

The robot's sensory information may be displayed in the guard shack of the level that the robot occupies, or on the security console in the warden's office. The robots may be controlled from three places. Normal control comes from within the robot's own computer brain. Secondary control may be exercised from any guard shack on the same floor as the robot. Overriding control may be exercised by the security console in the warden's office. When under outside control, the robots retain all of their basic abilities. If a robot could be shut down and reprogrammed, secondary and override control can be eliminated.

INSIDE STRONGHOLD

LEVEL 1: ADMINISTRATION

Level One has a variety of different functions. It provides a center for the administration that is handled on site. The level also includes special laboratories and testing facilities for short term storage and testing of supervillain gadgets. Finally, the level has residences for the guards, technicians, scientists and administrators of Stronghold.

1) ELEVATOR: The elevator in the center of the level is used for transit up to the surface and down to the lower levels. The elevator takes six seconds to travel between levels. The elevator is sound-proofed, has a hard steel floor, and pastel colored heavy reinforced plastic walls. The elevator controls may be overridden from security panels in the warden's office. Floor: 12 BODY, 20 DEF. Walls: 14 BODY, 12 DEF.

2) RECEPTION AREA: All visitors to Stronghold are required to stop at the reception area before entering any part of the complex. Amanda Brown, the receptionist, checks in all visitors, logging their entry date and time on the computer and issuing them visitor badges. She secretly keeps a heavy blaster pistol (8d6 normal EB, autofire, 20 shots) hidden in her upper desk drawer. Amanda has DEX 11, SPD 3, and has +1 Combat Skill Level with the pistol. She is overworked but friendly to visitors. The reception area has several plush orange couches, a television set and a glass coffee table covered with back issues of popular magazines.

3) BREAK ROOM: All food service for the administrative staff, scientists, technicians, and officers is available in the break room. Food is kept in a deep freeze, and a microwave/convection oven is available to heat up any of the entrees. Hot and cold snacks are also available. The break room is decorated in bright orange, with plastic chairs and circular tables. An entertainment center sits against one wall. It contains a large screen TV which can get over fifty stations via satellite dish, a VCR, and an extensive video library.

4) VISITOR'S SUITE: Stronghold was designed only for its operating staff. Visitor's quarters were walled off as an afterthought. The quarters include two double beds, a couch, and easy chair, and several tables with lamps. Steel tube furniture predominates, but the furnishings are makeshift and seldom match. A small standup shower is included against the back wall, along with a wash basin and mirror. The suite will hold up to four visitors in a pinch. It currently serves as permanent residence for Dr. Kilmer, the in-house physician, who has walled off one corner with blankets, and decorated to his satisfaction.

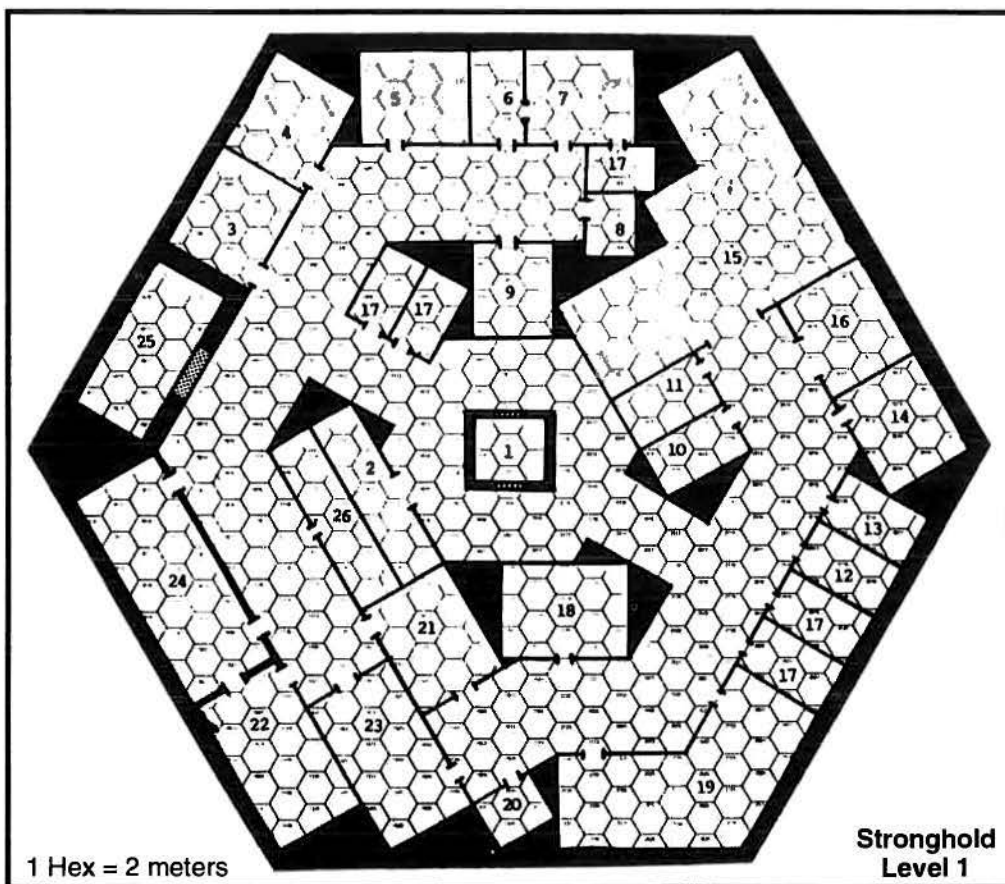
ADMINISTRATION AREA

The warden and his two assistants live and work in this area. All administrative work is handled by computer, which makes extra hands unnecessary. An administrative support group in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is always available by phone or FAX to help out with problems.

5) SECRETARIES' SUITE: The warden's two secretaries, Amanda and Stacy, share this suite. The room is done up in different shades of pale blue, with a flopped ceiling. Two beds sit against the back wall, covered with dark blue quilts. Dual sinks flank a standup shower on the left wall. A couch and two chairs are along the right wall. Paintings of pastoral scenes adorn the right wall over the couch. Each woman has a chest of drawers against the front wall. In addition to assorted clothing, each contains a cleaning kit and three power packs for a heavy blaster.

6) WARDEN'S SECRETARY'S OFFICE: The warden's personal secretary, Stacy Donovan, works in this outer office. The office is wood paneled and has burnt orange deep pile carpets. Stacy sits behind a chrome and wood desk with a computer terminal and laser printer off to one side. Stacy has DEX 14 SPD 3, and +1 with autoblasters. She keeps a heavy blaster (8d6 EB, autofire, 20 shots) in her top desk drawer. The outer office also contains a sofa, table, and coffee maker.

7) WARDEN'S OFFICE: Warden Kowalski's office is outfitted as one would expect of any middle management executive, except for the heavy autoblasters (9d6 autofire, +2 OCV, 30 charges) attached secretly under his desk. The office is wood paneled with green shag carpet. The broad wooden desk has a computer console, dictaphone, visaphone, and bar. From his giant leather chair, Kowalski can survey any point in the complex through a wall-mounted TV screen that is hooked into the internal video sensors.



8) CLOSET: Cleaning and office supplies are kept in this large walk-in closet. The closet also contains games, party favors, and other items used for Level 1 parties and morale boosters.

9) WARDEN'S SUITE: Kowalski's suite reflects the man who inhabits it. The walls are a hideous olive green, the floors are stark linoleum. One wall is covered with pictures from Kowalski's fighting career, while paintings of World War II Marine landings decorate another. A large bookcase filled with combat magazines and war histories sits next to a king-sized bed with a super hard mattress. A single hard chair sits beside the wall next to a standup shower. Kowalski's belongings are kept in a converted footlocker at the foot of the bed.

TROOPER COUNTRY

The area where all of the guards are quartered is nicknamed "Trooper Country". Inside Trooper Country, Lieutenant Bob "Baby Face" Fenster has overall authority. The Lieutenant, his three Sergeants, and the 48 Troopers on duty represent the majority of Stronghold's human population.

10) LIEUTENANT'S QUARTERS: Lt. Bob Fenster's quarters are as personalized as regulation quarters can be. Green steel tube furnishings are covered by quilts made by Fenster's girlfriends. Signed portraits of lovely ladies adorn three walls, while a portable foldout closet covers the fourth. A bed, dresser, and bookcase complete the Lieutenant's quarters.

11) SERGEANT'S QUARTERS: There are three sergeants, one for each shift of guards. Each sergeant has 16 men under his command; they are responsible for issuing weapons, supervisory details, and direct instruction of their troops during an alert. They share a room adjacent to the Lieutenant's. Because they provide an example for the troopers, the room is always spotless. It is outfitted much the same as the lieutenant's quarters (sans quilts, of course).

12) ARMORY: There are 56 auto-blastercarbines, 56 Flak Suits, 56 Billy Clubs, and all other equipment that troopers need when on duty or during an escape attempt stored here. The armory door (10 DEF, 8 BODY) has a special lock (Lockpicking -3) that only the Lieutenant, three Sergeants, and the Warden have keys to. At the beginning of each shift, all of the guards report to the armory, deposit their weapons, and check themselves off with the sergeant. Only in the event of a Yellow or higher security alert will the armory be opened and the entire guard unit be issued weapons.

13) EMERGENCY ROOM: Stronghold originally had only the most essential medical equipment. Due to recent fatalities among the guards, however, the prison's insurance carrier insisted that there be a resident physician and at least one EMT on duty at all times. This warranted the expansion of the sick bay into a fully functional emergency room. The room was enlarged by moving the armory and knocking out the wall between the two rooms. Still, there is sufficient space for only half a dozen beds, and the rest of the room is absolutely packed with EMT gear. The nearby troopers' barracks is commandeered for bed space if more than a few casualties occur.

When he is not handling an emergency, the doctor makes himself useful by performing physicals, drug tests (the Stronghold chem lab is capable of doing limited medical work), and treating minor ailments. In times of crisis, he is assisted by technicians and guards who have been cross-trained as EMTs.

14) TROOPERS' LAVATORY: The troopers share a shower and cleanup room. The floors and walls are sealed white tile, and the ceiling is light beige. There are 6 shower heads, 6 wash basins, and an entire wall of mirrors.

15) BARRACKS: This L-shaped room features 24 bunk beds, 48 footlockers, and up to 32 bored guards. The barracks are nearly always strewn with dirty clothes—and dirtier magazines. The guards make sure the room is always clean when an inspection occurs, however. The room itself is beige, and all of the bunk beds, footlockers, and trooper uniforms are pale blue. Most off-duty guards spend their time in the barracks or the trooper's mess.

16) REST ROOM: Lavatories are scattered throughout level one. Each lavatory is equipped with two johns and two wash basins with mirrors.

17) TROOPER'S MESS: The food in the trooper's mess is much like the food in the break room, except that it contains larger portions and less flavor. The mess contains five round yellow tables, each surrounded by red folding chairs. A special deep freeze and canned storage unit sits along the back wall. A microwave/convection/induction oven is mounted next to the storage unit. The center of attention in the room is the wall-sized white screen for projection TV and movies. When not on alert, 2d6 Troopers will be here, watching television or playing poker.

SCIENCES AREA

18) SCIENTISTS' SUITE: The three on-duty scientists share the Scientists' Suite. These men research the powers and abilities of the inmates and their gadgets. They also give scientific advice to the warden when preparing containment or during emergencies. These living quarters reflect the diverse tastes of their occupants; movie posters grace one wall, modern art prints adorn another. The pale blue room is separated into three parts by portable room dividers. The back part of the room contains a standup shower and a wash basin. The left hand side of the room is filled with a coffee table, two parson's tables with lamps, and three easy chairs. Normally one or two scientists is off duty in the suite per shift, but it isn't unusual to find all three scientists sitting in their easy chairs, discussing anything but science.

19) TECHNICIANS' QUARTERS: Twelve technicians live in this human zoo. Unbelievably, the techs are even rowdier than the guards. Four technicians work each of three shifts, leaving eight off duty at a time. The technicians often spend their off-duty hours partying, and have arranged their furniture for maximum free space. Six bunk beds line the back wall, while a dual standup shower and wash basin hide behind a partition on the left wall. There is a CD player and a large music library; the speakers are quite loud. At least three times a week, they hold a party with guards, scientists, and even the administrators in attendance. Parties typically last at least two shifts, so everyone may attend. Despite their raucous image, the technicians are effective workers.

20) CLOSET: This closet is supposed to contain cleaning supplies for the lab areas. It also contains several dozen foam cups, decks of cards, and other items used in the technician's parties.

21) ROBOTICS LAB: This is where the robot guardians undergo preventative maintenance and emergency repairs. The room is a literal "clean room"; it is kept spotless, and all who enter are required to wear lab coats, hair nets, shoe covers and cloth masks over their mouths. The room is kept at a slight overpressure to keep out dust. Three large work tables with hydraulic hoists dominate the room. A counter runs all the way around the walls. Under the counter, small spare parts are kept for simple robot repairs. Above the counter, testing equipment is stored. One technician is on duty in this room at all times.

22) TECHNICAL LAB: All of the devices used to test the supervillains' gadgets are built in this room. There is a stockpile of scrap metal, spooled copper wire etc. in one corner. A forming and preliminary testing bench stands in the center of the room. An induction furnace and the final assembly bench are against the wall to the Testing Lab. A number of electronic circuits are stored under the preliminary testing bench for use in building simple devices. Two technicians are normally on duty, but during testing one of these techs will be in the Testing Lab.

23) SCIENTIST'S OFFICE: This large yellow room is divided into several small cubicles by partitions. Each of the scientists has his own cubicle with a desk, computer terminal, printer, and chairs. A large cubicle has an oblong table and eight chairs for use during conferences. The technicians have a coffee area in the final cubicle. Each cubicle has a different colored partition, and each is identified by its special color. The on duty scientist is normally at his desk. In case of a scientific emergency ("Esper's brain just exploded!") this is the first place the warden will call for help.

24) TESTING LAB: The Testing Lab is a reinforced area where supervillain devices are tested. Ablative tiles cover the wall at the far end of the room. Detectors and recording equipment line both long walls. The pale blue paint is scorched in places, a testament to the energy sometimes released in this lab.

Near the door is a computer terminal, used for running simulations, calculation programs and so on. When testing is under way, a scientist and a technician from the testing area will be on hand. Each wears padded protective clothing (+6 rPD and rED). These suits are sealable and hang on pegs between the doors.

25) VAULT: The vault is where all of the supervillain devices are kept between testing. A guard is always on duty outside the vault. The vault door is made of Questonite (30 DEF, 15 BODY). To open the lock, the Warden must place his hand on a palm print authorizer in his office. The person attempting to open the door must put his hand on a similar analyzer simultaneously. If both prints are recognized, the lock opens. If they are not recognized, a Yellow alert is immediately declared. Under normal circumstances, devices are kept in the vault for about one week's time, then taken to a special government research lab for intensive testing. No Security Systems roll can open the vault, but employees' hand prints may be altered in the personnel files of the main computer (main section, not the T.E. module) with a successful Computer Programming roll at -5.

26) COMPUTER ROOM: The computer room has a palmlock much like the one on the vault, except that it is not dual-controlled. It will open for the warden, the Lieutenant, any of the scientists, and whichever technicians are assigned to work here. The room is dominated by the large Henderson Electronics 2850, a rectangular block that runs the length of the room. The computer room is protected from fire by a halon extinguisher system. Anyone caught in the room when this activates must have LS: Self-contained breathing or take 3d6 NND on segments 4, 8 and 12.

There are two computer terminals in this room. Ostensibly, they are the only ones that can affect the Threat Evaluation module, the portion of the system dedicated to running the security systems.

LEVELS 2, 3, AND 4: PRISON

Each of the prison levels has an identical layout. Level 2 holds minimal security threats (lightweight bricks, martial artists who are too powerful for prison, etc.) Level 3 holds minimal security threats with unusual powers (teleport, desolidification, weak mentalists, etc.) Level 4 is the maximum security ward, which hold prisoners of a high power level and/or psychotic nature. There are also two Hot Sleep cells on Level 4.

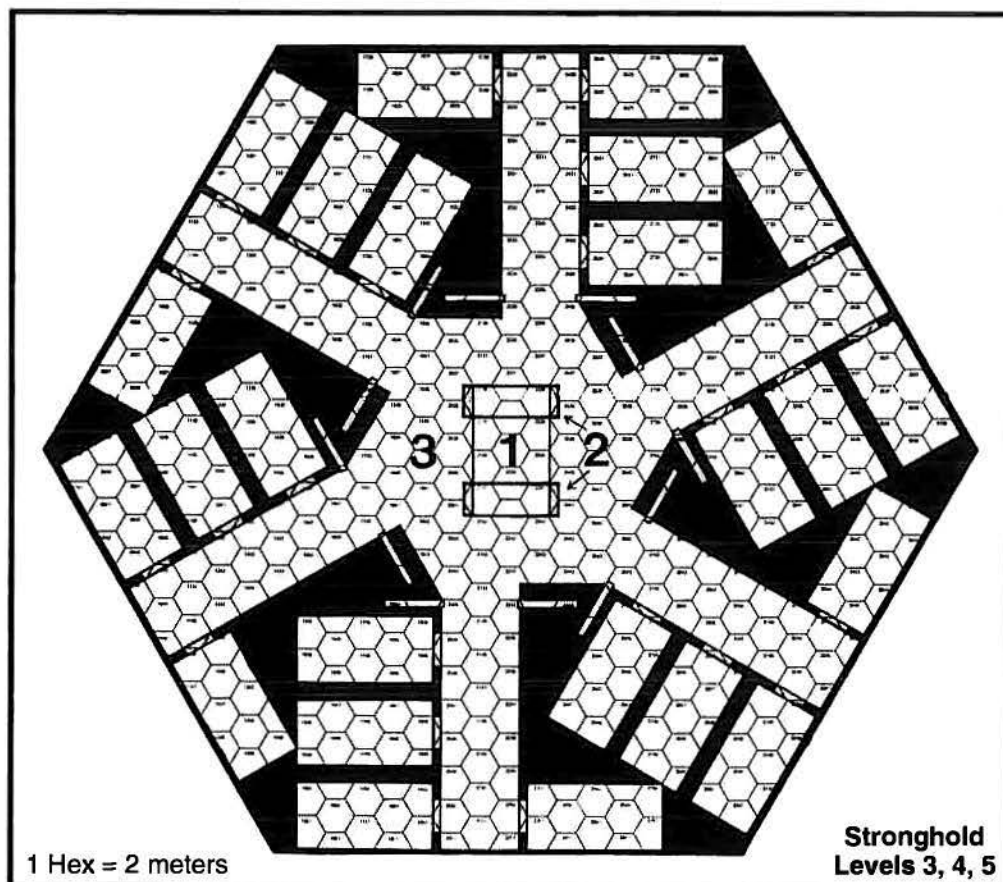
1) Elevator.

2) GUARD SHACKS: The two armored areas in the center of the prison levels are the guard shack. Each of these is manned by two guards at all times, and has control over the three corridors of cells directly in front of them. The two guards sit at gleaming control panels that include computer terminals and readouts from the internal sensors. The walls are all made of a transparent Questonite plastic (20 DEF, 12 BODY). The armored bulkhead doors on the sides of the guard shacks double as the doors to the elevator. When the elevator doors are open, the guard shacks are open on the side. When the guard shacks are sealed, the elevator doors are also closed.

CENTRAL CORE (3)

The central core of the prison level is a clean, tiled area that allows access to the cells. The Core is also the resting place for the three on-duty security robots. Two Type II and one Type III robot stand on each level at all times. The Type II robots stand at rigid attention, with only their red central scanning dot moving to show their current point of view. The Type III robot stands in a slight crouch with its massive head swinging slowly back and forth.

CORRIDORS: The six corridors radiating from the central Core each contain 4 cells and a massive blast door. The blast doors are clear Questonite (24 DEF, 15 BODY) and can be activated by the guards on the floor, the computer on Level One, or by the Warden from his office. Each of the cells are individualized so they may counter each villain's special powers (see Special Cells). The corridors and the central core of each level are normally patrolled by two Type I robots.



CELLS: The interior map of the cells is standardized for most of the prisoners. The cells are designed to be large and reasonably comfortable, as most of the prisoners are expected to spend the remainder of their lives there. Each cell includes a bed, a plastic table and chair, and a wall screen that shows TV and a selection of movies. It also plays video games. The furniture is designed to be breakaway (1 DEF, 1 BODY). The cells also include sanitary facilities and a basin for cleaning the inmate's clothes and bedding. Each inmate is responsible for his own cleanliness.

The standard cell is designed to hold people with a STR of up to 25. The door and corridor wall are the weakest points (14 DEF, 10 BODY). The walls to the adjoining cells are stronger (14 DEF, 15 BODY). The wall to the outside also has 14 DEF, 10 BODY. A minimum of 30 meters (15") of solid stone lies beyond, with 6 DEF and 15 BODY per 1" of stone.

In the door there is a small window made out of clear questionite (14 DEF, 10 BODY), through which the guards can check on the inmate. Any attempt to punch or blast the walls will register on the complex's seismic sensors, with results as previously noted. Inmates cannot pick the locks on the cell doors, as they can only be opened by simultaneously pressing a button on the outside of the door and a button in the guard shack. When opened, the cell doors slide up into the ceiling. A panel covering the manual override for the door can be unlocked using a key, normally kept in the guard shack. Inside the panel, small handwheel can manually pump the door open.

CELL MODIFICATIONS: Standard cells won't be sufficient to handle the really powerful or multi-talented supervillain. Stronghold's designers understood this, and reserved Level Three for villains with unusual powers, and Level Four for extremely powerful villains. Cells can be designed using the base construction system in *Champions*. Each cell has a base size of sixteen hexes (being 4" high at the ceiling, 10" long, and 4" wide), and has a defensive value of 14 DEF, 10 BODY. There are also a number of special modules that may be added to Stronghold's cells. These include:

Reinforced cell: This is designed to handle anyone with a Strength of 70 or less, and is also effective against villains with an Energy Blast or a Killing Attack. The cell walls have a Defense value of 24 and 10 BODY.

Desolidification: The walls of this cell have been built with the Affects Desolid Power Advantage. This cell has 14 DEF, 10 BODY.

Ego Shield: This cell contains a force field that stops Mental Powers. Any attempts to use Mental Powers through this field is at a considerable penalty (should the psi attempt to use his powers through the field, any target has an additional 30 points of Mental Defense.)

N-Ray proof: This cell has permanent Darkness to N-Ray Vision, to prevent villains from learning too much about how Stronghold works. Similarly, some cells might be darkened to Radar, Sonar or Spatial Awareness.

Invisibility: This cell is equipped with a full array of senses, including active sonar, radar, IR and UV vision, so most characters with invisibility can't pull the old "look, he's gone!" trick.

Shrinking: This power requires very special measures. The cell is hermetically sealed to prevent escape. Air is pumped through a micropore filter,

and there is an airlock in the door to pass food trays in and out. This room has Life Support: Self-contained.

Telekinesis: This cell has a double port in the door, so that when the food tray is passed inside, the occupant of the cell cannot see outside. The small questionite window in the door is also removed.

Teleport: This power is bought with the Power Advantage Hardened. A Force Wall with the same defense value as the rest of the room is integrated into the walls, ceiling and floor of the cell.

Hot Sleep: For inmates who are too dangerous to be allowed to remain conscious. They are attached to a mechanism that acts as a 4d6 STUN and 1d6 REC drain, 5 points regained once per minute. This is sufficient to keep most supervillains unconscious indefinitely. A life support unit feeds the criminal to keep him alive.

LEVEL 5

The fifth level of Stronghold is used for power generation and storage. Two large "core tap" generators and their control room dominate this 10 meter (5") tall level. Material and robot storage areas are also housed on this level. Level 5 is not normally guarded or manned and is left to the silent robots and whirring machinery.

1) ELEVATOR: The elevators and doors in the center of the level have the same characteristics as the elevator on Level 1.

2) CORE TAP 1: Stronghold's energy source is geothermal. Two turbines (Core Tap 1 and 2) produce the power for Stronghold. Either is sufficient to provide for Stronghold's needs. Hot steam from a deep fissure in the earth is delivered to the heat exchangers on the hot side of the turbine. The heat drives the turbine and is released in the cold heat exchanger. If the "hot" (lower) exchanger or the turbine were breached (12 DEF, 8 BODY), a spray of

superheated steam would fill the room in 2 segments. Anyone caught in the blast takes 9d6 physical damage. Every segment that the character is exposed to the steam he will take 10d6 (heat) damage. If the "cold" (upper) heat exchanger is breached, a similar cloud will fill the room in 3 segments doing 7d6 damage. The storeroom and elevator adjacent to the turbine will fill with steam within 6 segments of the first breach. The turbine may be shut down from the Number 1 control room. After being shut down the steam will slowly cool, doing two less d6 damage after one turn and again after each level on the time chart until the area is safe.

3) CONTROL ROOM: This room houses the controls for Core Tap 1, set to speed up or slow down the rate of power production. Normally, the prison computer sets the power output. A character can bypass the limiters in the turbine's speed with successful Security Systems and Mechanic skill rolls. Once the turbine has been set to overspeed, it will take 2d6 Turns to overload, exploding like a huge shrapnel shell for 6d6 Killing Explosion.

4) STORAGE ROOM 1: This room contains the spare parts for the turbines, heat exchangers, and the control systems. Boxes weighing from 400 to 3200 kilograms line the wall. Each box is 12 DEF, 6 BODY.

5) CORE TAP 2: This turbine is the twin to Core Tap 1. Core Tap 2 is kept "hot" and ready to produce power at all times. If anything happens to the primary turbine, Core Tap 2 will take over in 1d6 Segments. The "hot" side of Core Tap 2 is the upper side.

6) MORGUE: Unfortunate circumstances necessitated the addition of a large refrigerated morgue cabinet to the general storeroom. It is three drawers high by four drawers long. Dr. Kilmer carries the keys to the cabinets at all times; spares are kept in the emergency room. A file in a wall holder details who is currently being kept in the morgue, including copies of death certificates.

7) STORAGE ROOM 2: Similar boxes to those in Storage Room 1 fill this room. It is used for storage of the spare parts in Core Tap 2.

8) GENERAL STORAGE: This room contains all of the storage for the entire Stronghold complex. Anything from paper to electronic equipment to cell modification modules can be found in this room. All boxes are carefully itemized, and anyone searching for any particular item will find it quickly and without effort. (Yeah, right...).

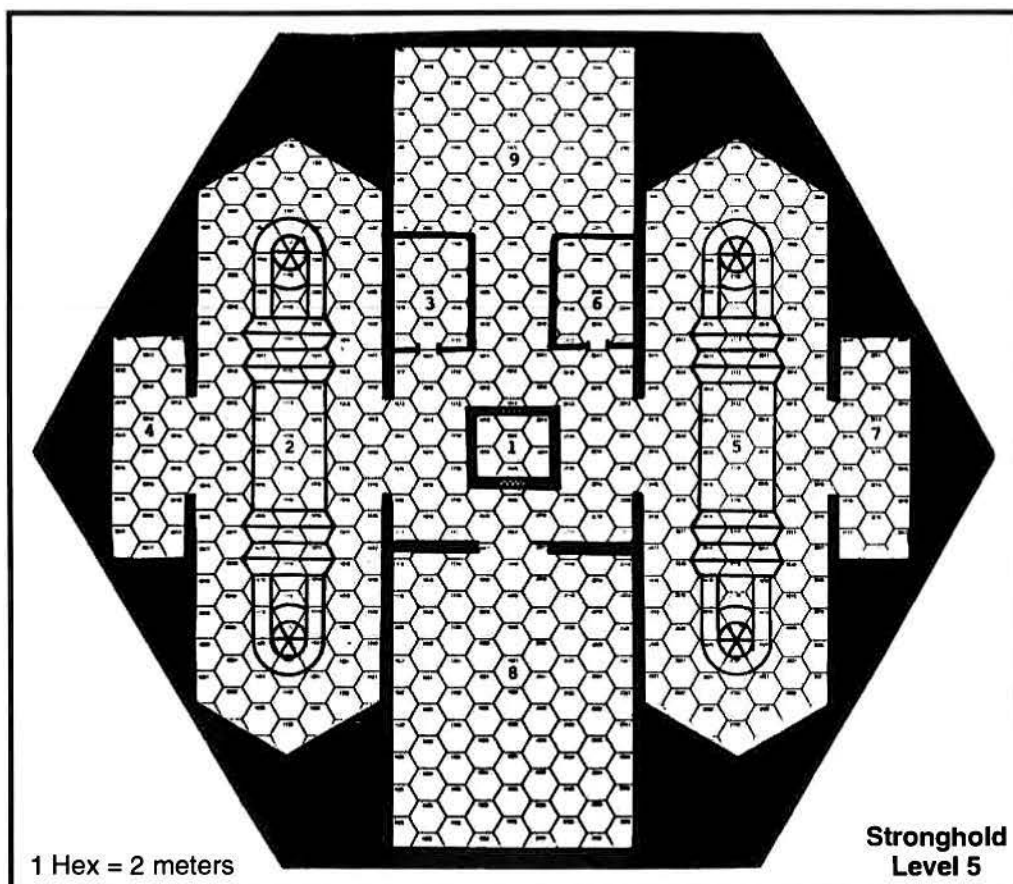
9) ROBOT STORAGE ROOM: 22 special recharging cradles ring the wall of this room. Each cradle is designed to hold one of the robots that help defend Stronghold. Ten Type I cradles, eight Type II cradles, and four Type III cradles are kept here. Normally two Type I, two Type II, and one Type III robots are kept in their cradles. These robots are spares, in case the on-duty robots malfunction or undergo maintenance. In case of a Red alert, these robots would be activated and report to the guard shack on Level 4.

STRONGHOLD PICKUP AND DELIVERY

The Stronghold Delivery Procedure is a necessary part of the system. A special team is on 24-hour alert in ten major U.S. cities, prepared to spring into action when a supervillain is captured. When the signal is received, the agents will pick up the villain in a Stronghold Mobile Detention Unit (SMDU). The SMDU is an truck with a detachable armored box for holding prisoners. The box has 15 Hardened DEF and 13 BODY. The box has no windows and is hermetically sealed to prevent characters with Shrinking or Stretching from

escaping. The interior of the box can be observed from the cab of the truck with a TV monitor that is hidden in the wall of the box (-5 to Perception roll to spot, no penalty if using Microscopic Vision). The truck itself has the following stats: Length: 4 hexes, Width: 1 C hex, Mass: 16,000 Kg, CV: -3, STR 40, DEF: 12, DEX: 14, SPD: 3, Inches/Phase: 30" Ground (Non-combat 60"), Non-combat Multiple: x2, Max Inches per Turn: 180"; BODY: 8; Knockback: -4"). Use standard Stronghold guards for the guards. If the guards feel that they will be unable to contain the villain once he wakes up, they may use knock-out gas (10d6 NND, defense is Force Fields or non-breather). to keep him unconscious. The MDU has 15 doses of this gas.

The SMDU takes the prisoner to the airport, where the box is transferred to a VTOL jet and given priority clearance. The jet proceeds directly to Stronghold; unconscious or under heavy guard, the villain is unloaded at the landing pad and "escorted" to his new home.



GM'S INFORMATION

SYNOPSIS

Larry Banks, aka Salamander, was once a member of a group of super criminals under the tutelage of a villain called Master Magus. The group consisted of Salamander; Amaryllis, Magus' pupil in the mystic arts (and his lover); Proteus, a shape-shifting android; Jaeger, a light-manipulator with the ability to become invisible and project devastating laser blasts; and Tigress, who had animal powers. The group dissolved when Master Magus was killed two years ago, in an abortive attempt to ransom a Maid of the Mist tour boat in Niagara Falls. His plan was thwarted by a superhero who chanced to be vacationing there. The hero, aboard the boat in his secret ID, attacked the villain, taking him by surprise. Magus fled, with the hero in pursuit. He was shot down, drowned, and swept over the falls.

Later, the river was dragged for Magus' body. After days of exhaustive searching, police divers brought him up. The body was taken to the morgue, and all of his personal effects were impounded. Curiously, however, one item, a fire opal ring, was listed on the manifest of items taken from the body, but was not found when the items were inventoried a few weeks later. It was concluded that the item was pilfered by one of the officers in charge, but an investigation turned up nothing. Magus was never identified, so next of kin were never notified. No one came forth to claim the body, so Magus was given a public burial and forgotten.

Years later, Amaryllis determined to learn what had become of the ring. She and Jaeger were consolidating their power bases, together becoming a powerful supercriminal team. The ring, she knew, would give its owner great power, if that person only knew how to unlock it—which she did. She found Proteus eking out a wretched existence, and rescued him from that fate. Gratefully, he transferred his fanatic loyalty to her and confessed that he had pilfered the ring with Salamander's assistance. He had given Salamander the ring afterward; he suspected that the villain-turned-hero had it still.

She attempted to contact Salamander, but he refused to have anything to do with her. In response, she sent Proteus to the campaign city. He was to capture Salamander and bring him to the other city, where Amaryllis would make an example of him. The android snatched Salamander right off his own street and forced him aboard a train travelling to the other city. The android underestimated his captive, however. Part of the way through the trip, Salamander escaped by activating his flame burst, a power Amaryllis didn't know he

had. The explosion injured several people in the compartment and propelled Salamander through the roof of the train. His captor was hurled away and stunned, giving him the time to escape.

From there, he proceeded to the nearest state police barracks. He told them his story and asked to be taken into protective custody. The police denied him protection on the basis of his testimony alone. Salamander could think of no place safer than Stronghold so he confessed to the firebombing of the train. The police arrested him for arson, destruction of private property, and half a dozen other charges. They packed him into a fireproof van and shipped him off to Stronghold.

Since his only lead was now locked up in the world's most secure prison, Proteus broke into and ransacked Salamander's house looking for it. He didn't find the ring, but in the computer he found an inventory of items Salamander was keeping in his safe deposit box. The ring was listed there. Impersonating Salamander, Proteus entered the box, only to discover it was already gone.

He was forced to conclude that Salamander had the ring on his person when he was captured by the police. This would mean the ring was now under close scrutiny by scientists at Stronghold. This gave Proteus one last opportunity to recover the ring. He would do the impossible: break into Stronghold, steal the ring and escape!

He settled down in Albuquerque, fifty miles from Stronghold, and began an intensive investigation of the prison, its facilities and personnel. He was in luck; Jerry Ryerson, one of the Stronghold guards, was seeking a roommate to share his apartment. Proteus put on his most charming face, and, armed with extensive information about Ryerson, easily got in. Over the course of the next few weeks, he studied the guard's behavior. The day Ryerson was to ship out to Stronghold, Proteus killed him and took his place. Then, he put his plan into action.

THE PLAN

Magus' ring should have remained at Stronghold only a week. That's procedure. Then, as with all captured foci, it should have been turned over for "careful examination by top government scientists." Fortunately for Proteus, Stronghold's scientists managed to generate enough red tape to hold on to the ring for over a month. But when he arrived in Stronghold, disguised as Jerry Ryerson, he knew it was only a matter of time before they were forced to send it along to the faceless men in smoke-filled rooms, where he would never be able to reach it.

He needed a distraction. Something to convince them to close down the prison entirely, long enough to give him time to figure out a way to crack the vault (he could duplicate the warden's handprint, but he couldn't be in two places at once!). Inspiration struck him. Salamander was no longer a necessary part of the equation. In fact, he was positively dangerous to keep around, since he knew so much about the former members of Magus' group. Proteus decided to eliminate him, thereby killing two birds with one stone.

During his first two weeks in Stronghold, Proteus hacked into the prison's mainframe. He discovered that the part of the system which controlled security was separated from the part that handled mundane functions. However, it was possible to send electronic mail between the partitions, as when

the guards sent a message to the Threat Evaluation module advising a possible breakout. By exploiting this flaw in the system's design, he managed to insert computer code into the T.E. module itself. This code would intercept signals from the IR scanners and check for certain signals (Morse Code is analogous to the signals Proteus used). Different signals would activate different functions he had written to override various Stronghold systems, making him effectively lord and master of his domain.

Using his electronic link, he listed Salamander's cell as empty and got the desk guard to buzz him in. He transformed his hands into claws, killed his unsuspecting victim, then used an infrared transmitter (whose beam could pass through the cell's Questonite window) to send a signal to switch off the prison's power.

Chaos ensued. A span of ten minutes passed, after which Stronghold technicians enabled the backups and the lights came back on. The Stronghold security force immediately called for a cell-to-cell check on the prisoners. During the check, a guard noticed that Salamander lay askew on his bed. Several guards entered the room. Proteus hid, invisible, as they burst through the door. He then simply reappeared behind them, disguised as a guard, as usual. The guards then confirmed that Salamander was dead.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

The warden has quarantined the prison, just as Proteus expected. Nobody gets in without extensive background checks, and nobody gets out, period, until the killer is caught. Normal operations proceed at a somewhat strained pace; it's tough to work when it's possible the guy you're standing next to is a murderer. This has had a detrimental effect on the psyches of the Stronghold employees. Numerous incidents of minor violence have occurred and procedural mistakes have been made. The press has seized upon this angle of the story, calling it "The Stronghold Incident," referring to the quarantined employees as "hostages," and predicting that the place will erupt in riot Any Day Now.

Proteus still hasn't been able to get into the vault and recover the ring, though he has an angle on it and should have it cracked in a few days. When he gets it, he'll use the computer to send a signal to his companions (who will dispatch a helicopter to the site from the nearby Mexican border). He'll then run a program which will severely disrupt Stronghold operations (see Chapter 5) and escape.



TIMELINE

Present day -43: Stronghold guard shift change.

Present day -41: Salamander snatched by Proteus.

Present day -40: Salamander blows up on the train to escape his captor.

Present day -36: Salamander surrenders to State Police

Present day -34: Salamander transported to Stronghold by MDU

Present day -29: Proteus interviews with Jerry Ryerson.

Present day -27: Ryerson accepts Proteus as a roommate.

Present day -13: Proteus kills Ryerson, assumes his appearance and takes his place when the guard shift changes.

Present day -11: Proteus discover the e-mail hole in the security system

Present day -8: Proteus implants his override computer programs into the Threat Evaluation module

Present day -6: Proteus kills Larry Banks; Stronghold is quarantined.

Present day -5: Global News Network (GNN) reporter Melinda Searle and her cameraman, Bob Ryan, voluntarily enter Stronghold quarantine—a one-way trip until the murderer is caught.

Present day -2: Now being referred to as "The Stronghold Incident," the Stronghold quarantine seems in danger of erupting into a bloody riot.

Present day: The player characters get into the picture

SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR THE GM

CHANGING THE ADVENTURE

Murder in Stronghold is designed for 4-6 player characters built on 250 points. It uses the "standard" superhero setup—average attack of about 10d6, average speed 4-6 and so on. (See the top of p. S25.) However, it can be played by superhero campaigns of different point levels, or with a different campaign tone. Since there isn't much combat scheduled, point values make little difference. In fact, lower-powered, more realistic campaigns may be better suited to this adventure, since Powers which can endanger the outcome (see previous) will tend to be more limited and unpredictable. Existing combats can be modified by reducing the number of opponents or by weakening their attacks and defenses a bit.

THE HEAVY-COMBAT VERSION

As it stands, *Murder in Stronghold* has only a few combat encounters planned. If your players like more fights, that's okay; it's easier to add combat than it is to remove essential fights if there are too many. The first thing the GM can do is throw in gratuitous battles—use hunted, mobs of enraged normals, or plot-control villain groups. Sometimes, such a fight can be used to give the players hints (see previous). Other times, they'll think you're giving them a hint when you're really not. So it goes.

A good suggestion for keeping Combat Monster players happy is to start the adventure with a "teaser," a battle which has nothing to do with the rest of the story. Ideally, this will keep them satiated for a while so you can squeeze in a little plot. Another alternative is to add fights that are consistent with the storyline. Just assume that all the NPCs in this adventure are a little more paranoid than is realistic. If the heroes thrash Buzzsaw and Wallbanger, for instance, they might have friends who would be happy to help them exact revenge...

RUNNING MURDER IN STRONGHOLD AS A ONE-SHOT

Much of the material in this adventure is intended to help the GM integrate it into an existing campaign. However, *Murder in Stronghold* could certainly work as a stand-alone story for a night or two of gaming. Indeed, running *Murder in Stronghold* as a one-shot offers several advantages over playing it as part of an existing campaign. The GM has stricter control over the Powers available to the players, since they will either make up originals or use GM-created characters. By the same token, the players have the opportunity to create characters more ideally tailored to playing a mystery campaign.

ADVENTURE SETTING

Most of the activity during this adventure occurs in a few major locations: a large city (referred to in the main text as New York city or the campaign city); a smaller, neighboring city, the location of the master villainess' base of operations (Albany or "the other city" is used in the text); a train station (Penn Station); a suburb; and Stronghold. The GM using this adventure should adapt the places given in each encounter to his own campaign. If the campaign is set in Chicago, the neighboring city might be Milwaukee, and so on.

PART ONE: IN A DEAD MAN'S FOOTSTEPS

PLAYER'S BACKGROUND

The following information should be revealed to the players over a few play sessions prior to running this adventure. If you are using *Murder in Stronghold* as a one-shot, you can simply read the paragraph as written.

THE STRONGHOLD INCIDENT

A few weeks ago, a local hero named Salamander was arrested for firebombing a train. Six days ago, he was killed while held captive in his cell in Stronghold. The murderer has gone undiscovered. The place was immediately quarantined; nobody who goes in is permitted to leave. The media have begun labelling the events surrounding the place "The Stronghold Incident." Recent news reports predict that the place is a major riot waiting to happen. With the hands of the police tied over the question of jurisdiction, the Stronghold "hostages" are grimly holding their own, as violence is expected to break out any time.

INTRODUCTION

Since no two *Champions* campaigns are the same, three different methods of starting the adventure are provided. The GM should choose the one that is most appropriate to his style of gaming.

THE AJFA

The organization called And Justice For All is a human rights group that is concerned about humane treatment for criminal supers. Salamander, as a villain turned hero, represents a great success for them. They are extremely concerned about his murder, and want to find the killer. They have any number of ways to encourage the heroes to resolve this problem for them, ranging from appealing to the heroes' sense of justice to bribing them. The AJFA has vast material resources, but might have something more valuable to offer the heroes: they have what may be the most complete files anywhere on major supervillains. This probably includes any Hunteds (or Hunters!) the PCs might have.

If you decide to begin the adventure here, proceed to the encounter The AJFA.

A RED-HOT TIP

The heroes are approached by Rex Ryder, well-known supers columnist of a nationally syndicated newspaper. He's pieced together some of the facts behind the story. Unlike most reporters, his common sense doesn't exceed his curiosity—if he wants a story, he'll get it, but with as little risk to his own personal life and limb possible.

In this case, he sees a super-conspiracy behind Salamander's murder. He desperately wants the exclusive story, but interfering with super-villains has earned many good reporters an early retirement (six feet under, that is). So he offers the heroes a deal: he gives them everything he has on the "conspiracy," in exchange for the scoop. This works best with altruistic players, who care that Salamander was killed and his murderer is planning more mischief. But he could also drop hints that this conspiracy pertains to something the PCs will be more interested in. This information could be truth or pure fiction—Ryder isn't above bending reality a bit to persuade others to do his wishes.

If this method is used the GM ought to keep in mind that Ryder should pop up habitually during the course of the adventure. He can show up in person, phone for a progress report, and so on. These encounters could be played for laughs, if desired. They can also serve to pass information on to the detectives if they happen to be stuck.

If you choose to begin the adventure in this fashion, have Ryder contact the heroes. (For suggestions on how to go about this, see the encounter entitled The AJFA.) He offers them his deal: he gives them the information they need to crack a major conspiracy, they give him the exclusive. If this isn't enough for them, he offers something to sweeten the deal. Not cash, since he's not rich—perhaps the secret ID of a hero's worst enemy, or some other useful bit of information. If necessary, don't forget, he lies.

He gives the PCs everything he knows, which isn't much. He knows the conspiracy has something to do with the supervillain Master Magus. He knows Salamander's death had something to do with it. He gives them Salamander's secret ID and his widow's address. Beyond that, he's clueless; he can't even offer concrete evidence as to what this "conspiracy" is all about, though he insists "It's big. Real big. I can smell it." If the players seem reluctant, have him wheedle and cajole until they agree to at least check it out. Then have some serious event occur a short way into the adventure—have Jaeger blow up their car as a warning, for instance.

TIGRESS' WARNING

Use this method if you want to run the adventure in a short period of time, as the information Tigress has to offer the heroes will allow them to circumvent many of the earlier encounters. Tigress approaches the heroes, just as in the encounter Tigress Speaks. But this happens at the start of the adventure, rather than halfway through part one, as planned.

ONGOING CONCERNS

JAEGER

Regardless of where the heroes start, they have one handicap from the beginning. Jaeger has heard of their involvement in the case through his street contacts. By the time they start questioning people, he'll be on their trail. He'll mostly be there to keep an eye on them, but will interfere in some encounters (Flanagan's and Tigress speaks).

He can also be used to guide the players subtly but directly. He can arrange for bumbling goons or nosy cops to harass them, giving the GM a chance to "accidentally" spill some important information. Or if they're blowing through the encounters too quickly, similar distractions can really get in the way or send the investigators off on a wild goose chase.

Characters with special senses may have a chance to spot Jaeger before he can act. This could radically change the adventure in ways too numerous to discuss here. It is left to creative GMs to develop the story in such directions.

DOING RESEARCH

Once the detectives come across references to people and places they know nothing about, they'll probably want to hit the library to dig up whatever they can find. Listed below is some of the information available through research, along with where it can be found, what skill(s) can be used, etc.

The urgency factor

Research provides the players with valuable background information, but it has a major drawback: it takes time. Remember, the heroes are under a deadline (though they may not know it), so keep careful track of time spent. Each research attempt takes a minimum of 1 hour. The player can get a bonus to his skill by spending more time—gaining a +1 bonus for each step up the time chart.

RESEARCH TOPICS

Master Magus

Spending at least one hour at a library or newspaper morgue will give the characters a skill roll (KS: Research, Library Science, PS: Journalism) to uncover information about Magus. Results of the roll are as follows (each level includes those below it):

Basic information (available without a roll): Master Magus appeared on the scene in 1983 as a very effective super thief. From then until his death, he would appear and commit a robbery every three to six months, each in a completely different part of the country. He is known to have killed two people in the course of these incidents, both security personnel.

Skill roll made: Magus was killed in 1989 in Niagara Falls, NY. While attempting to ransom a "Maid of the Mist" tour boat, he was surprised by an unidentified super-hero who happened to be vacationing there in his secret ID. The super shot the villain down as he tried to fly away, and he was drowned. The Niagara falls police recovered the body after a few weeks of search diving. He was never identified, and no one claimed the body. He was given a public burial and forgotten.

Skill roll made by 5 or more: In response to superheroic action which foiled several of his robbery attempts, in 1987 he assembled a team of supervillains. These five individuals were seen with him on three separate occasions, but never identified.

Skill roll made by 8 or more: After Magus' body was recovered, there was a little-known incident of pilferage at the police HQ where his personal effects were stored. A fire opal ring removed from the body before autopsy disappeared from under lock and key and was never found.

Salamander

Roll KS: Research, PS: Journalism or SC: Library Science. Character must spend 1 hour in a library or newspaper morgue. Or, spend at least 1 hour conferring with street informants: roll Streetwise.

Skill roll made: Salamander is a mysterious local hero, known to have fire Powers. He has been instrumental in deterring gang and low-level street supervillain activity by defeating criminals in combat and preaching to them to go straight.

The ring

The ring can be investigated at a public library (skill roll at -2), occult library or bookstore, or at a mage character's private reference library (base -4, +2 for each level of wealth the character has beyond Middle Class, -2 per wealth level below Middle Class). Appropriate skills are PS: Occultist, KS: Occult lore, SC: Occult history, or KS: Research (at -2).

Basic information (available without a skill roll): Opals are semi-precious gemstones, most of which are mined in Australia. Opal is fundamentally transparent, but impurities in the stone cause it to appear in a wide array of colors. Fire opals are red, yellow and orange.

Skill roll made: Just prior to the turn of the millennium, a powerful magical ring appeared in Greece. It was worn by a prominent priest of Apollo, and was said to have been given to the priest in reward for his faithful service. The ring was supposedly crafted by Haphaestus, the lame god of the smithy, at the behest of Hermes, the messenger god. The ring was intended to repay some slight the fleetfooted Hermes had done to the sun god.

Skill roll made by 5: The ring somehow made its way north with the Romans when they conquered Britain. It came to rest there, until it surfaced a decade ago, when it was bought at auction by an unknown American.

Skill roll made by 8: The ring grants a magically-skilled wearer vast powers of movement and fire.

ENCOUNTERS

TALKING TO MRS. SALAMANDER

How did we get here?

The characters begin this adventure with this encounter if they get into it through the AJFA.

Maizie Banks is an attractive blonde woman in her late twenties. Though she tries very hard to be bubbly and cheerful, anyone can see that she is deeply aggrieved by the death of her husband. She will react favorably to any implication that the heroes will find her husband's killer and they will see him punished. This is a nice way to get honorable heroes committed to solving the murder, by making them promise her that they'll do it.

By questioning her, the heroes can uncover some very useful bits of information. Casual discussion of Salamander's past (note that she refers to him only as "Larry") will reveal the fact that Salamander was a criminal before he went straight. If asked the right questions, Maizie will reveal the AJFA's involvement in helping him roll over. A truly miraculous inquisition (don't forget Luck here) will inspire her to recall that another of Magus' underlings decided to walk the straight and narrow path—again, with the assistance of the AJFA.

Any inquiries about favorite hangouts or underworld contacts might (roll Conversation) prompt Maizie to mention that her husband often spent his evenings at an Irish pub off the business district, a place called Flanagan's.

If questioned about recent unusual occurrences, she relates to the players a story about her house being ransacked. Nothing was stolen, but it was clear whoever did it was searching for something. According to police, the house-breaker got in through a rear window. Should the heroes investigate the window, on a successful sight PER roll they find a cigarette butt buried in the dirt below the window—a Marlboro menthol. Neither Maizie nor Larry ever smoked.

Successful use of Telepathy could also uncover this information. The result of the Telepathy roll must be the third level of the chart (memory) to succeed. A PER roll is then required to find each bit of useful information. Maizie can be convinced to allow a telepath to examine her, but only with good roleplaying and successful Persuasion rolls. Of course, the heroes could mind-read her against her will... but that wouldn't be heroic, right?

Where do we go now?

The most obvious place to go after this encounter is Salamander's Neighborhood—after all, it's right outside the door. (Maizie might even provide a push in this direction.) The clues gained from questioning Maizie might lead to Flanagan's or to researching Master Magus.



SALAMANDER'S NEIGHBORHOOD

How did we get here?

The PCs will probably reach this point after the encounter Talking to Mrs. Salamander. They may not think of it at that time, however, and may come back to it later.

The detectives can question people living in Salamander's neighborhood about his disappearance, on the off-chance that someone saw him get abducted. This is not the focus of this encounter, but the GM should make up a few colorful personalities and roleplay the discussion with the heroes. This yields some helpful data about Banks' background, but no leads to where he went.

Provided the heroes appear in daylight, there will be many children playing around the area. They may think to question the children, since kids sometimes notice things grownups do not.

If the heroes are in costume (and are locally reputable), the kids will be awestruck by their presence. In fact, the moment they appear on the scene, a herd of them will flock to the supers and gather around them until beaten back by their parents (who, although they suppress it, are equally impressed). In this case, the children will be reasonable to deal with. Although they won't simply spill everything they know, they'll answer most questions fairly directly.

If the heroes are not in costume, play the children as distrustful of all adults. The heroes will really have to fast-talk them, using a combination of roleplaying and Persuasion, to get any useful information. (Unless, of course, the PCs themselves are children!)

The children

The kids are a close-knit group a dozen strong ranging in age from preschoolers to 11-year-olds. Their leader is Tony, 10 years old and best described as "trouble looking for a place to happen." Tony didn't see Salamander get picked up, but three other kids did.

Calvin is a wise-alecky black 8-year-old. He is very sharp; he sees everything and forgets nothing. He doesn't read too well yet, and doesn't always understand what he sees. But if he's seen something once, and you show it to him again, he'll recognize it. In this instance, he remembers a sticker on the bumper of the car—the logo of Century Rental Cars. He doesn't know it as such, but if the players deduce that it was a rental car and show him the logos of various companies (all of which can be found in advertisements in the yellow pages), he will pick it out.

Marie is a 6-year-old Hispanic girl. She is very shy, and has an extremely hard time dealing with strangers. She has one funny talent, though. She's crazy about cars, and can identify makes and models like nobody's business. If the heroes manage to get through to her, she can tell them that the car was a recent-model Honda Accord.

Laurie is an overweight blonde 4-year old. She has a gap in her front teeth where she recently lost some baby teeth. She is constantly picked on by her friends for her weight. To defend herself against this, she is very enthusiastic and outgoing. Once she starts talking, little short of binding and gagging her will shut her up. Her current popular topic is the fourth birthday party she had. She'll go on and on endlessly about the cake, and the presents, and the games, and so on. The heroes can simply ignore her, but it would be a pity if they did, because she is an avid reader. Although she doesn't do numbers too well, she remembers the first three digits of the

license plate—ZDX. This should tip off the players that the car was a rental. (In many states, rental cars have plate numbers beginning with the letter Z. If the players don't know this, or don't pick up on it, give them an INT roll later, when they're stuck. Or have an NPC tell them, should they mention it.)

In addition to the specific information each child has, all three saw Banks on his way to the corner store. They saw the car stop—all three remember what color the car was. (It was maroon, although getting this out of a couple of kids should be no picnic—one says red, one says brown—you get the idea.) They all noticed Mr. Banks talking to somebody in the car for a minute. He seemed scared. He started shouting, then stopped suddenly. The door opened, he got in, and the car took off. They saw the car continue up the street a few blocks. It then turned off onto a cross street.

Where do we go now?

If the heroes decipher the kids' information, they should go to Century Rental Car.

CENTURY RENTAL CAR

How did we get here?

The most logical lead to this encounter is the information provided by the kids from Salamander's Neighborhood.

Located in the business district, this is a branch of a small but growing car rental company. They offer competitive rates and quality vehicles, which are kept in excellent shape. Each office is a franchise run by the person who owns it. This particular franchise is owned and operated by Linda Frohmiller and a half-dozen employees. Linda is a homely but savvy divorced woman in her early forties. She is short and overweight, but dresses well (if a bit too conservative and businesslike). She favors blue suits. She is constantly cheerful, and is good at defusing angry employees and customers, though her good spirits are pleasant and not saccharine.

If the investigators tell Linda the whole story and impress upon her the seriousness of the situation, she'll be very polite and helpful. She will answer all their questions and let them look over the car (see following). If they play games with her, however, she will become angry and make life as difficult as possible for them.

EXAMINING THE CAR

If the heroes get on Linda's good side, she'll let them look at the car right away. If they irritate her, she'll send them away—and just to spite them, she'll have the car cleaned up, depriving them of many important clues. If this happens, the heroes had better have Precognition, or they won't have a snowball's chance of following the trail. (Letting them search through a dumpster to find the lost clues will be a good way to punish them for abusing your NPCs, though.)

As it turns out, the car has just been returned to the company. The car was rented to somebody named Harry Bell. He paid for the rental using his Visa card. The address on his driver's license was the same as his Visa billing address. When investigated by police, the address was discovered to be false. There was a property at that location, but it was a bus station.

Bell is described by Century employees as an obnoxious fat man with greasy black hair and bad breath. He rented the car on the day before Salamander's disappearance. He was supposed to return it after three days, but never did. The

police tried to track the man down, but the trail dead-ended at the phony address. They later discovered the car in a parking lot a few blocks from Penn Station, and brought it back to Century Rentals.

The car has been badly misused. The interior is filthy, with cigarette ashes and burn-marks in the upholstery everywhere. The police have not combed the car for evidence, as Century Rental Cars is not filing a complaint against the repulsive Mr. Bell. Linda is something of a cynic, and does not feel it likely enough that they will gain anything for their grief to warrant investing time and money in pursuing him. She's decided just to cut her losses and get the car out on the street again ASAP.

There are a few clues the heroes can acquire from the car. Which ones they get depends upon their ingenuity in performing the search and the whether they make successful rolls against PER or Criminology skill. Underneath the driver's seat, there is a matchbook from Flanagan's. The ashtray is full of cigarette butts—all of which are Marlboro Menthols. And in the trunk is a set of men's clothing. Any Century employee can identify this as the outfit Harry Bell was wearing when he rented the car.

Where do we go now?

Based on the clues the heroes get in this encounter, they might proceed to Flanagan's (because of the matchbook) or to Penn Station (because of where the car was found).

FLANAGAN'S

How did we get here?

The heroes have had two clues which might lead them here. Maizie Banks could have told them that this was a hangout of Salamander's (see Talking to Mrs. Salamander). Also, the matchbook found in the car in Century Rental Cars could have brought them here.

Flanagan's is an Irish bar located in the seedier end of the business district. There, you will find off-duty factory and dock workers mingling with low-end white collar professionals. However, Flanagan's has a secret face: unbeknownst to most of its regulars, the place is a pickup joint for freelance street muscle.

The heroes may know this (roll Streetwise -2). What they will not realize (although they might deduce it) is that Flanagan's also serves in this capacity for freelance supervillains. When the heroes go in and start poking around, they may be in for a bit of a surprise.

The intended result of this encounter is a gratuitous bar fight. The PCs may be able to avoid this, by coming to the bar during off-hours or by walking away from provocation. This will probably not be the case, however.

If the heroes have come from Maizie Banks, they will probably ask about Salamander. If they are out of costume, the thugs in the bar will assume they are undercover cops. If they are in costume, the thugs will suspect (correctly) that they are investigating his death. Either way, the thugs are going to get nervous.

If the heroes are motivated by the matchbook, they will be looking for Harry Bell. Nobody in the bar has heard of Harry Bell, except Dylan (see following). However, any protracted interrogation by the heroes will arouse their suspicions.

The most likely scenario is that the detectives will start in with the bartender. In this case, Buzzsaw and Wallbanger (out of costume) will step up, one on either side of the party, and watch them suspiciously while they question the bartender. If the PCs direct their attention to them, they will act innocent and start needling the crew. Attractive heroines will be their first victims (the word "bimbo" is prominent in their vocabulary), but they will try to antagonize each hero in turn. If the supers don't immediately attack, the villains will eventually tire of abusing them and ask that they leave. If the investigators refuse, they attack.

The heroes may be taken by surprise; unless one of them has Detect Mutants or some such Power, they will probably not realize that their opponents are supers until the first punch is thrown. They have a chance, though. Make a secret PER roll for each one. Failure means the hero is surprised out of combat (DCV, takes 2x STUN, per the *Champions Rulesbook* p. 151). Making the roll means the hero is surprised but in combat (DCV). Making the roll by 5 or more means the hero is not surprised. If the player states that he is taking special measures to prepare for combat, give that person a bonus to his PER roll. He can still be surprised if he blows his roll, however; the surprise results from finding out that the two antagonists are supervillains, rather than just ordinary bar jerks.

After the first punches are thrown, the place explodes. Everybody starts pounding on his nearest neighbor. However, some of the bar's patrons manage to direct their attention to the heroes. Throw in another low-powered super-villain (the muscle for hire type like Powerhouse, Icicle, or Shrinker) for each hero involved. Additionally, Jaeger will join the fray—he'll be glad for a chance to break some super-hero heads (especially since there's a good chance that he can get off scot free).

If you want to complicate things further, throw in a handful of normals. A couple of chair-wielding stevedores should liven up the party. The villains won't shoot at these guys, but the good guys might. And, since not all the supervillains will immediately change into costume, the heroes might use full force (thinking that the attackers are superhuman). The GM should only use this option if he is prepared for things to get messy. Otherwise, just have the big, brave dock workers dive for cover once the energy beams start flying.

If the heroes win

Any convenient supervillain can be roused and interrogated—except Jaeger. If at all possible, he should escape. (If there's absolutely no way to pull this off, go to Jaeger Uncovered.) Whichever villain they choose will be very cooperative. All that they know about Salamander is that he used to work for a super-criminal named Master Magus, but went straight after Magus was killed. He continued to frequent Flanagan's, in the hopes of persuading some of his former drinking buddies to change their ways.

Make a skill vs. skill roll: Interrogation or Conversation -2 vs. the INT roll of the villain being questioned. If the roll is successful, the villain remembers that Salamander obtained the assistance of the AJFA in putting his criminal past behind him, and that one of his teammates may have, as well. A telepath who manages to reach into the subject's memory (third level of the chart) can also obtain this information.

If the heroes lose

The villains dump them unceremoniously on the doorstep. Sirens in the distance should persuade them to beat a hasty retreat. A week later, they get a bill from the owner of Flanagan's, in the amount of \$4,800, for damages. If they refuse to pay, they may get sued; remember, Flanagan's could gain the aid of expensive mob lawyers. The GM can play this up or down as desired.

Regardless of who wins, Dylan McCulloch, a minor street operator, will be crawling sneakily toward the back exit. The PCs spot him easily. When asked why he is running, he is evasive, but cracks easily under pressure. As it turns out, Dylan knows "Harry Bell" (a false identity of Proteus's, of course!). He gave Dylan a sum of money to safeguard a key for him. When asked for the key, he reaches for it—it was on a thong around his neck. In the scuffle, however, the thong broke, and the key was lost. You can play this one up or down, too—the heroes scrabbling around the bar looking for the lost key.

If it is early in the adventure, don't let them find the key. It will give away enough to circumvent some of the other encounters. Instead, it can be used as a latent clue by having Jaeger grab and make off with it. If they want to get the key badly enough, the heroes will track him down. And if it is a more appropriate time when they do, make it easier for them to do so.

Where do we go from here?

Based on the information received from the bar villains, the investigators might wish to investigate Master Magus (if they don't already know everything there is to know about him). They could also go to The AJFA to find out who the other villain from Magus' group was who went straight.

If they get the key at this point, they may head for Penn Station to find the locker it opens.

PENN STATION

Since Amtrak has stopped making passenger runs into Grand Central, Penn Station has assumed most of the incoming rail traffic in the city. At almost any hour of the day, crowds of people can be found here, rushing to make their connections. There is also a wealth of information to be gained, if the heroes play their cards right.

THE LOCKER

If the investigators have the locker key (from Flanagan's), they will probably realize that the locker to which it belongs can be found here (a Deduction roll is appropriate for the GM to reveal this to blindingly stupid players). The number of the locker is imprinted on the key, so finding the right one is not a problem. Inside, they find an attache case, a pack of Marlboro Menthol cigarettes, and five rolls of quarters. A sixth roll has been ripped open and some of the money taken to cover the rental on the locker.

Inside the attache case are a handful of wallets, each with driver's license, passport, credit cards and a small amount of cash. Each features a different picture and a different name. In a pocket in the case is a train schedule. A 7:10 a.m. departure is circled. It is a northbound train, following the Hudson river to Albany, the state capital.

ON THE TRAIN

If the heroes duplicate the train-ride, they will have the opportunity to interrogate some of the rail company's employees. The 7:10 run is a regular one, and the workers who run it are usually pretty consistent.

If asked about unusual occurrences, any of the train employees who were present when Salamander made his escape can relate the tale. One of the conductors, Ed Craemer, a fiftyish man with white hair and a jovial demeanor, remembers him well.

He reports that Banks wasn't traveling alone—there was a woman with him, and the two seemed very friendly. He remembers them distinctly (Ed has the Psych Limit Womanizer). She was tall and beautiful, with long, red hair. (In fact, this was Proteus in disguise—appearing to be a woman made it less indiscreet for him to cozy up to his prey, prepared to cut Salamander's throat if he should yell for help.)

Ed recalls another interesting fact—after the explosion, the woman was nowhere to be found. Another passenger reported that he saw her duck into the ladies room—but she never came out. If asked to describe the passenger, he will report that it was a fat man, with greasy black hair and bad breath.

Where do we go from here?

Since they are already on their way, the heroes can stop and get off (roughly) where Salamander did—go to The Police Barracks.

THE POLICE BARRACKS

How did we get here?

There are any number of possibilities. This is one of the places the players might think to investigate based only on the information they start with, since they know it was the last place Salamander went before he was shipped to Stronghold. The most likely way for them to get here is to ride the train Salamander blew up, looking for clues there. If so, they would be coming here from Penn Station.

Should the heroes travel to the state police barracks where Salamander was arrested, they can speak to a Sgt. Earl Stafford, who will tell them roughly what they already knew. Salamander appeared there (in a rather bedraggled state) and asked for protection. They asked him why. He claimed he was being pursued by an individual intent on murdering him. (Note that the officer accurately reproduces what Salamander said: individual, singular.) He would not, however, give details, and was unwilling or unable to provide a description of this individual. The police declined to help him unless he told them more about himself and his pursuer. In response, Salamander confessed to bombing the train. When asked how he did it, he showed them. They arrested him; two days later, a Stronghold MDU came to pick him up.

Sgt. Stafford will be naturally suspicious of the investigators, them being out-of-towners and all, but will be generally polite and helpful. If they are friendly and manage to persuade him that they're on his side, he'll give them some additional information. He tells them that when Salamander was found, he was wearing a fire opal ring on a chain around his neck. The ring was sealed in an envelope and locked in storage. When Salamander was picked up by the Stronghold MDU, the police gave them the ring as well.

Where do we go from here?

If this is the second or third time the players have encountered a reference to a ring, they might wish to check it out (see the Research section, above). The other obvious direction this encounter leads is to Part II, as the heroes proceed to Stronghold to recover the ring.

THE AJFA

How did we get here?

The heroes may begin here, if the AJFA is being used to get them involved in the adventure. They may come here after speaking to Maizie Banks in Talking to Mrs. Salamander. Or the information gained from interrogating bar villains in Flanagan's could lead them to the AJFA's doorstep.

AJFA stands for "And Justice For All," which most people will recognize as the last four words of the Pledge of Allegiance. The AJFA have adopted the phrase as their credo; they believe that the treatment of criminal supers is prejudiced and cruel. In their opinion, supervillains are mentally disturbed individuals who are in need of psychiatric care. The current methods of treatment, they feel, range from the insensitive to the downright medieval.

The AJFA possesses a great deal of wealth, which it uses for political leverage. It contributes to political campaign funds in order to bring pressure to bear on many controversial issues. Chief among their latest concerns is the ethicality of "Hot Sleep." They are currently among several groups lobbying Congress for the passage of a bill which would prohibit the use of Hot Sleep.

The AJFA is intended as a "gray" organization, neither good nor bad. While they seem to be protecting criminals, good guy supers may benefit from the results of their activities, should they ever be incarcerated. This will be especially true in the case of a campaign with an overt "mutant minority," where cruel and unusual punishment could become a racial issue.

MEETING WITH THE AJFA

The heroes will have no difficulty getting in touch with the AJFA. In fact, they have a hot line listed right in the phone book. Upon request, they will gladly be given an opportunity to meet with a representative of the organization. Within a day or two, they will be granted an appointment with Stuart Markham, the regional coordinator of the AJFA in the campaign city area.

If the heroes begin the adventure here, Markham will contact them. If he can get in touch with them by phone, he calls; otherwise, he places a newspaper ad asking that they call him. (Note that he'll have some way of screening out crank calls—roleplay it!) He won't say much over the phone, only that he's interested in discussing the Salamander murder case. Any actual offers he will make will come when they meet in person.

The Meeting

Unless the heroes specifically request otherwise, the meeting will take place in the offices of the AJFA, which are in a twenty story office complex in a moderately expensive part of town. The offices are spartan—just a space to work in, divided up into cramped cubicles adorned with AJFA posters and the personal things of the people who work there. In total, about fifteen people can be located in the place during the day, most of them perpetually on the phone.

Markham, as regional coordinator of the AJFA's operations, rates a quadruple-sized cubicle in the corner of the room. Windows in two of the walls offer a decent view of the city, if you like looking at buildings and filthy streets. The cube is furnished with a plain desk, file cabinets, a desk chair, and a couple of old but comfortable chairs for guests. There is a personal computer installed atop the desk, and an incomplete set of legal reference books is perched precariously on one windowsill.

"Stu" himself is rumpled, but not ugly. He gives the impression of a man who doesn't iron his shirts because he has too damn many other things to do. He is pleasant and charming, but blunt. He will get to the point five seconds after introductions are made. He spares no time for idle chitchat, although he can be provoked into defending his beliefs about the AJFA (something he is well used to doing).

Like Maizie, Stu refers to Salamander only as Larry Banks. If forced by the flow of conversation to refer to Salamander's criminal activity, he uses phrases like "Mr. Banks, known publicly as Salamander." He will gladly share the information he has with the heroes, if they're nice about it.

Salamander got involved with the AJFA when he decided to go straight. They helped him out financially, and arranged to have numerous stolen properties in his possession returned to their rightful owners. In return, he agreed to pay back any money they lent him (which he did almost immediately), and to represent the organization when he felt ready to "come out of the closet" about his past.

The only helpful thing Markham will offer is Salamander's widow's address. He can arrange for them to contact Tigress, another member of Master Magus' group, but he will not do so without prompting. The heroes will only know about Tigress (and then only in the vaguest terms) after speaking to Maizie Banks or interrogating a villain at Flanagan's bar.

Where do we go from here?

Maizie's address will lead to Talking to Mrs. Salamander. If the heroes convince him of their need, Markham will arrange for them to meet Tigress—go to Tigress Speaks.

TIGRESS SPEAKS

How did we get here?

The player characters can start at this encounter if the adventure is to be played in a short period of time. The information obtained in this encounter will obviate the need to play many of the others. If they do not start here, the only way to reach this encounter is after the meeting is arranged by The AJFA.

(Note: this encounter is the beginning of the end of Part I. If there's some part of Part I that you want them to experience, and they haven't been there yet, simply have Markham promise to set up the meeting, then not contact them until you are ready.)

If the players begin here, have Markham, of the AJFA, contact the heroes on her behalf. He behaves as above, except he tells them right off about Tigress and sets up the meeting.

Tigress demands that the heroes meet her in a public place, out in the open, where there are lots of people around. The exact location isn't important—a sidewalk cafe, or mall food court, would be a good choice. She also requests that Markham not use her real name, to which he agrees.

Tigress is a beautiful woman with cafe-au-lait skin, thick, dark hair pulled back in a butterfly clip, and eyes that have slitted vertical pupils. She wears bulky, concealing clothing and a man's short-brimmed hat. Despite her attempt at disguise, it is clear that she is very muscular and athletic. She is nervous and interrogatory, almost to the point of paranoia.

TIGRESS' INFORMATION

Once she has confirmed the heroes' identities to her satisfaction, she asks what they want to know—tersely, and to the point. What she can tell them is this:

She and Salamander were part of a supergroup gathered by the villain Master Magus. Magus' intent was to form an elite commando unit to back him up as his crimes grew more and more outrageous. His problem, in her own words, was that he "didn't know an elite commando unit from a hole in the ground." The group was fraught with personality conflicts, but managed to stay together until Magus died. Without his strong leadership, it fragmented.

The other members of the group formed a sort of clique: Amaryllis, also a mage, was Magus' lover; Jaeger, a light manipulator, was his best friend, and Proteus, a shape-shifting android, was fanatically loyal to him. Feeling outcast after the mage's death, Salamander and Tigress left the group, leaving the others to their own devices.

When asked for her opinion on Salamander's murder, she chuckles. "Proteus, of course," she says, and implies that he used his shapeshifting powers to pull it off. When asked why she thinks he did it, she admits she doesn't know.

When asked about the ring, she tells the heroes that it belonged to Magus, and that it gave him powers of some sort. She isn't certain, but she thinks it only added to his abilities—and that it could do so for any mage.

Once the questioning starts to get tedious, it's time for some action. Some player asks a question for the eighth time, and she begins to reply—but never finishes. A red dot of light appears on her forehead. Give each hero a sight PER roll to spot it and, possibly, to act. Characters with appropriate Danger Sense get those rolls in addition to the PER roll. Any player who makes any roll gets a chance to act—but he had better be quick! This is segment 12; on the second half PHA, Jaeger shoots Tigress. Quick thinking is required—if the players hesitate, so do their characters! Unless the heroes do something clever (note that a PER roll to see where the laser sight is coming from takes a half PHA and is at -5), Tigress takes a 4d6 RKA to the head. This does 14 BODY, less her resistant ED of 3, leaves 11—doubled, for a head shot, to 22. (Even if you don't use hit locations in your campaign normally, use them here. It's for dramatic license.)



Tigress has 12 BODY. The laser blast knocks her down to -10. She's going to die soon if she doesn't get some help—she loses 1 more BODY after the end of this turn, and she dies at the end of the next. Characters can use healing Powers or Paramedic skill to help her. See also the paragraph on saving a dying character, p. 101 of the *Champions Rulesbook*.

Characters who made a roll before the shooting can continue to act normally. Others must make INT rolls each PHA. If they make the roll, they can act on that and subsequent phases. If not, they must roll again next PHA (they're surprised). All characters get to act on their third PHA, regardless of how many INT rolls they've blown.

Jaeger's location can be determined by a Half-Phase PER roll. He's overhead somewhere (the second floor of the mall, or on an upper story of a nearby building if they're outside). He's invisible, of course, and on his next action PHA (3 of next turn), he runs for it.

Finally, in addition to these two problems, the crowd panics in response to the shooting. On segment 12, a few people start screaming (having made their PER rolls to see what has happened). On segment 6 of the next turn, they start jumping up and moving for the exit (simply clearing out if they are outside). People are liable to get trampled or crushed if the PCs don't do anything about it.

Where do we go from here?

Now would be a good point to run the encounter The Bank, since this leads almost directly to Stronghold. The investigators should have almost all the pieces of the puzzle by now. If Jaeger gets caught after this incident, go to Jaeger Uncovered.

If Jaeger isn't caught, he leaves the locker key dangling from some fixture or piece of furniture at the spot from which he shot Tigress, where it can easily be found. This should lead the PCs to Penn Station.

JAEGER UNCOVERED

How did we get here?

The most likely course of action is that the heroes capture Jaeger after he shoots Tigress in Tigress Speaks. However, if the detectives are hurting for a direction in which to proceed, the GM could have Jaeger make a blunder and get caught. Alternatively, player cleverness could let them catch him ahead of schedule. The GM should be aware that this can seriously disrupt the plot, however, and be prepared to deal with the consequences.

Once the heroes have hold of Jaeger, they may think their worries are over. However, they are, in fact, just beginning. Drake D'Amico (Jaeger) is a powerful and influential man, and they are going to have a hard time convincing anybody that he's really a super-assassin who can turn invisible.

Additionally, he makes veiled threats of lawsuits for slander and defamation of character. He is very careful to separate his private life from his life as a super-criminal, so the heroes will have a tough time coming up with proof of his guilt. This could make an interesting plot after the adventure itself is over.

The main purpose of this encounter is to kick the players onto the right track. If Jaeger has the locker key from Flanagan's, he gives it to them now—a bit of arrogance on Jaeger's part, as if to say "even this won't help you." If they are blundering around blindly, he can supply a push in the right direction—arrogantly believing that there is no way the group can affect his and Amaryllis' plans.

Where do we go from here?

The most logical way to proceed is for Jaeger to give the heroes the locker key. With that, they can head out to Penn Station.

THE BANK

How did we get here?

At some point (probably after encountering The State Police or Jaeger Uncovered), the heroes get a call from Maizie Banks.

Maizie has finally gotten Salamander's safety deposit box open. Since he is deceased, it is required by law to be inventoried by an attorney. Maizie noticed that the ring, listed on an inventory kept on the computer at her home, was missing. She felt this was worth reporting to the investigators.

At the bank, the heroes can talk to Frances Lockhorn, the branch manager. She's an older woman (though not quite ready for retirement!) who is very knowledgeable about her business. She can be very irritating, repeating endlessly "That's against bank policy." She'll use this frequently against the heroes, unless they have some sort of legal power (or pull a great con-job), since it's the bank's policy not to release any information about its customers to anyone but the rightful authorities. Specifically, this includes addresses, phone numbers, and anything having to do with any bank account or product.

A good Persuasion attempt (good roleplaying, that is!) or PRE attack ("A customer of yours has been murdered, ma'am, and we aim to get to the bottom of it!") will convince her to let them check out some information pertaining to Salamander's box. They can look at the access slip (each customer must sign a slip each time they enter the box). The last two times the box was entered were the day before Salamander was kidnaped, and two days after he blew up the train. It is blatantly obvious to anyone who examines both slips that the signatures are not the same. The earlier one matches the official signature the bank has on file.

Examination of the bank videotape reveals that the person who entered the box the last time was clearly Larry Banks, provided the heroes can obtain the assistance of someone who knew what he looked like.

Finally, should they think to look in the cubicle where the box was examined, a sight PER, Criminology or Tracking roll uncovers a cigarette butt. You guessed it—Marlboro menthol.

Where do we go from here?

This encounter should give the heroes a major tip-off that the killer chasing Salamander was a shapeshifter. They may start to make connections here ("Wasn't one of Master Magus' flunkies a shape shifter?"). In that case, they could go back to Talking to Mrs. Salamander or to The AJFA to uncover clues they've missed. Otherwise, it may be about time they started out for Stronghold... go to Chapter 5.

PART TWO: THE STRONGHOLD INCIDENT

Eventually, once the heroes have gathered all the evidence they feel necessary, they will want to head into Stronghold. Try to prevent them from doing so unless you feel they have found out everything they need to know. After all, until they solve the crime, it's a one-way trip!

SYNOPSIS

Proteus, as discussed above, entered Stronghold disguised as guard Jerry Ryerson. Since then, feigning illness, he checked into the emergency room, murdered Dr. Kilmer and assumed his form. Dr. Kilmer's body is now locked in one of the mortuary cabinets, and "Jerry Ryerson" is listed as having been dismissed some time ago, although careful research will show that no one of that description has actually left.

The heroes have two days to uncover the killer before he cracks the vault. After that, Proteus opens the vault and attempts to escape, as in the encounter *The Culprit Unmasked*.

GETTING THERE

FROM HOME TO ALBUQUERQUE

The investigators may elect to use their own transportation, if available. If not, they'll have to buy plane tickets—unless the campaign is set in the southwest United States, even a plane trip will take hours, and any other form of transportation will take days. Taking teleporters, if they exist, would be a good idea...

If they're really strapped for cash, getting to Albuquerque can be a mini-adventure in itself—whether the heroes must raise the money (by begging from an NPC patron, perhaps) or by stowing away on the plane!

FROM ALBUQUERQUE TO STRONGHOLD

In Albuquerque, if the heroes contact the police, they meet Sheriff Art Collins. He brings them up to date on the situation (see following), and provides them with a police helicopter. Upon arriving at Stronghold, the chopper immediately dusts off and returns to Albuquerque. Warden Kowalski meets them at the landing pad and escorts them inside under heavy guard. Once there, it is pretty much up to them where they go next.

If they are travelling to Stronghold incognito, they'll have to figure out some way to get inside on their own. Perhaps if they travel out to the site, they'll be captured and taken inside for questioning (though that's not very subtle). Alternately, they could impersonate FBI agents, police, or famous detectives. (For all that it matters, players should be reminded that this is illegal...)

Characters with awesome powers of stealth (Invisibility, Teleportation, Desolidification) could try and sneak in, but remember that that's exactly the sort of thing Stronghold was built to prevent.

THE POLICE INVESTIGATION

The Stronghold Incident has been awash in controversy over police jurisdiction. Stronghold, confronted by the possibility of breakout since its construction, maintains a large security force. However, there has never been a homicide where the perpetrator of the crime was not discovered. None of the security guards are trained sufficiently in criminology to act decisively in this matter.

Thus, the authorities are in a quandary. The warden is burning political favors to bring in the FBI, but they won't touch it. Their standpoint is that Project: Stronghold is a government installation of a military nature, and is therefore under the jurisdiction of the Military Police. The MPs are staying out of it because it is a domestic operation, with its own security staff, none of whom are on the payroll of any of the branches of the U.S. military. This incident will probably force the government to deal with this jurisdictional nightmare.

Meanwhile, Stronghold, NM, is not a municipality in any regular sense. Therefore, it does not have its own police force. Temporarily, the New Mexico state police and the Albuquerque sheriff's department are advising Lieutenant Fenster, who has been aided by several of the permanent scientific staff. To date, the following acts have been performed:

1. The crime scene was carefully photographed and dusted for fingerprints.
2. The position of the body was marked with tape. The corpse was then removed. It is being kept in a storage drawer intended for just that purpose in the morgue on level 5.
3. An autopsy was performed on the body. Questioning the right people (Dr. Kilmer, who performed the autopsy, for instance) or examining the death certificate will reveal that the cause of death was asphyxiation as a result of punctures to the lungs as a result of numerous wounds to the upper torso. The wounds are characteristic of those caused by certain clawed supers.
4. Copies of the above data were FAXed to Albuquerque, where they are being analyzed by expert criminologists. (These experts will, conveniently, never be heard from—unless the players need a push, that is.)

WHERE TO START

The first thing the heroes will have to do upon arriving at Stronghold is to persuade those in charge of their good intentions. This can be as difficult as is appropriate, subject to good roleplaying, player cleverness or GMs fiat. The first people the investigators will speak to will likely be the warden and his lieutenant (see the section on NPCs, below).

Once they've established that they are there to help, the heroes will be entrusted to the care of a subordinate of the warden's. No PC should be allowed to go anywhere unsupervised, and anyone who sneaks off and is discovered will arouse extreme suspicion from the locals. Remember, everyone here is on a hair-trigger.

ENCOUNTERS

NPCS

As the players are likely to want guides and people to answer their questions, following are a few sample NPCs for use with this adventure. The GM can always make up more, but to detail the hundred or so people currently in Stronghold is beyond the scope of this book.

STRONGHOLD EMPLOYEES

Warden Kowalski — Warden Joseph P. Kowalski is an ex-Green Beret who got into prison management after Vietnam. The warden takes a strong interest in the security of the prison, and once each day he goes on a long tour of the complex (usually getting in everybody's way and antagonizing the inmates). The warden has a very narrow military mindset and sees everyone as a private to be ordered around. He is not well-liked.

Lt. Bob "Baby Face" Fenster — Lieutenant Bob Fenster is known as "Baby Face" for his boyish good looks—and his remarkable way with the ladies. He has several girlfriends and finds nothing wrong with this, so long as he "keeps them all happy." He is mostly friendly to anyone of whom he isn't suspicious, and will be much more helpful to the PCs than, say, the Warden. He is clever and competent at his job, and is liked and respected by most of his coworkers.

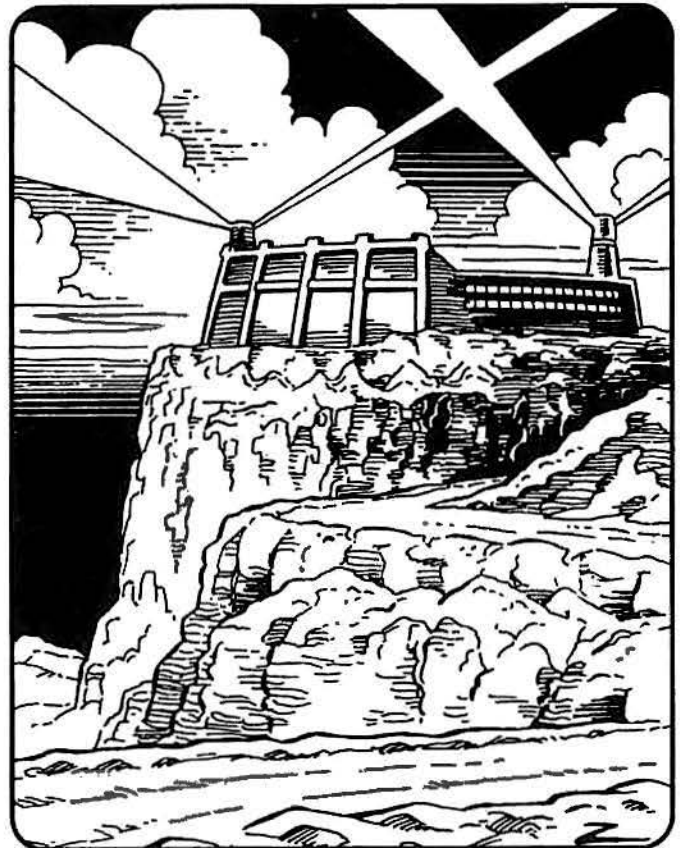
Dr. Lou Kilmer — Dr. Louis Kilmer, a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, was a charming man in his late thirties. He was an avid baseball fan, and collected trading cards and other memorabilia. His scant cubicle in the former visitor's quarters makes this immediately obvious—it is decorated with pennants, signed photographs and so on.

By the time the heroes arrive in Stronghold, Proteus has killed Dr. Kilmer and taken his place. The doctor's body has been stashed in the morgue in the basement. Because of the specialized nature of his powers, Proteus has enough skill in anatomy and medicine to fool the uninitiated. However, he realizes this cannot last long. In fact, he is destined to give himself away, either by his lack of thorough medical knowledge, his nicotine addiction or his utter lack of knowledge about baseball.

Dr. Paul Yamamoto — Dr. Yamamoto is one of the three on-staff scientists in the prison. An American of Japanese descent, he is an oddity among the usually antisocial scientists. He will gladly help the heroes out with any technical (or nontechnical!) questions they might have. The investigators will find him friendly and outgoing, a real "regular guy."

In a pinch, the GM could use Dr. Yamamoto to point the investigators in the right direction—by pointing out details concerning the videotape or the cell door mechanism.

Tom Conklin — Tom is one of Stronghold's longest-term employees, having been hired as part of the first complement of guards when it opened. The warden and the lieutenant trust him implicitly, so he might be chosen to keep an eye on the heroes. He'll gladly show them around, answer any questions they have, and so on. However, he's so pessimistic the players will likely find him a major pest. ("Won't do no good to look at the computer. Can't touch the security module except from the computer room." "Won't find nothin' in that cell. We done been over it with a fine-tooth comb." "Already looked at the videotape. Nothing worth finding there.") In general, he should protest the futility of any action that will be helpful to solving the mystery. Any useful information the PCs uncover after ignoring his advice should evoke his utter surprise...



GLOBAL NEWS NETWORK

Bob Ryan — Bob, the cameraman for GNN, is a nerdy-looking guy, who wears black horn-rimmed glasses that are forever slipping down his nose. His hair is a chaotic tangle that perpetually blocks his view. Bob is usually very shy, and won't say more than two words to a person unless they pin him down. However, he has a dark side to his personality. He considers himself God behind the camera, and once he's got his minicam, there's no stopping him. Even the notorious Bulldozer has been known to cringe at his obnoxious comments. The only person who doesn't seem bothered by him is his teammate, Melinda.

Melinda Searle — Melinda is a seasoned young reporter, and a good one, but she's a walking bundle of Psych Limits. She wants desperately to be a "big name" TV reporter and get her own show, but her ambition (and her willingness to do anything—and that means anything) to get ahead tends to turn people off. She's a total workaholic, and when she's not making the news, she's talking to someone about it. You can't hold a decent conversation with her—she's always looking for something she can use in a story. Put simply, she's obsessed. The only one who seems unfazed by her ruthlessness is her teammate, Bob.

OTHER

Sheriff Art Collins — Art Collins has been a sheriff in Albuquerque for going on twenty years now. He attributes his long career to a healthy dose of caution and good common sense. He doesn't think keeping the police out of Stronghold is common sense—he thinks it's stupid, and he'll be happy to tell anyone with an ear to listen. By his account, this bureaucratic snafu over fear of taking responsibility, should violence erupt, is just an excuse for letting people who aren't cops do a cop's work. He will be glad to see the heroes, and will say so, but he doesn't consider them a substitute for police. (He'll say that, too.)

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The following sections describe some of the physical evidence the characters will likely uncover while searching Stronghold.

THE CELL

Inspecting the cell will reveal very little. It conforms to the standard Stronghold design (see the Inside Stronghold section, above). It has been modified to maintain high humidity, and all of the furnishings are fireproof.

There is crusty, peeling, dried blood everywhere. Someone has marked most of the splatters on the walls by circling them with a white grease pencil. White tags mark those on the furniture and carpet. The patterns support the theory that the killer had claws of some kind.

On the bed is an outline, made of white tape, showing the position of the body. It shows the body lying across the bed, perpendicular to the wall [need diagram here].

A successful Tracking or Criminology roll will reveal that Salamander didn't collapse from his wounds onto his bed. Bloodstains in the center of the room and by the door indicate this clearly to the trained eye. If the heroes find out (by questioning the guards) that the victim was found on his back, give a +1 to the roll. When people collapse (from fainting, or what have you), they fall forward.

In truth, he died by the door (trying to get out, of course). He was then dragged across the room and propped up on the bed. Uncovering this may lead the players to suspect that the killer was still in the room when the guards entered. The body was used as a distraction, so the murderer could reappear unnoticed.

The door

It is important that the players grasp how the dual-control on the cell door operates. In each guard shack are three buttons (one for each corridor). When a particular button is pressed, a buzzer sounds, and any door along that corridor may be opened by pressing a second button by the door. There is also a manual override—a small wheel behind a locked panel—at each door. However, it takes at least a minute to crank the door fully open manually, and the key to the panel is also kept at the guard shack. Be sure that the players realize that if the power is off (as it was during the murder), the door cannot be opened using the button and must be cranked open by hand.

THE BODY

Salamander's body is being kept in a drawer in the morgue. Examination will show the numerous deep lacerations on the upper arms and torso. A successful Forensic Medicine roll will let a character figure out the cause of death.

THE COMPUTER

Figuring out how the prison was blacked-out can be very useful to the investigators. Should they wish to examine the computer, treat it as research (requiring 1 hour per attempt). Make a Computer Programming skill vs. skill roll against a skill of 20 (Proteus' Computer Programming roll). Failure means a -1 to all further rolls, cumulative. Success by up to 4 yields some hints that the hacker was in the system: +1 to all further rolls, cumulative. Success by 5 or more yields the phony user account Proteus set up. All attempts take a base of 1 hour. The player may take extra time to increase his chance of success.

Reviewing files in the account reveals several programs. A Computer Programming skill roll will reveal that the code could be used to interrupt the power from the Core Tap, and prevent the backup from coming on line. If the roll was made by 3 or more, inform the player that the signal to shut down the power came in through the IR scanner system.

It is likely that once the system code which caused the blackout has been isolated, the character doing the programming will wish to wipe it out of the system. He can do so easily; no skill roll is required. However, Proteus has planted virus copies of the code in several places, disguised as system files. Shortly after the virus detects that the code has been removed, it replaces it. The PCs can only notice this if they completely recheck the computer after the code has been replaced. If they do notice that it's been replaced, they can remove it completely with the appropriate skill vs. skill roll.

VIDEOTAPE

The video cameras are the eyes of the Stronghold computer system. Cameras monitor all of the inmate areas in Stronghold. The computer has access to all the cameras in real-time, and swings through each about once a turn. Additionally, a separate video recording is made of one half of each level. That is, three hallways are covered on one tape, feeding to a VCR in the controlling guard shack. There are four cameras in each hallway, as marked on the map. They are aimed, in order, at the entrance and the guard shack, down the hallway from the opening, down the hallway from the midpoint, and up the hallway from the far end. Each tape cycles through the twelve cameras, recording each for one second. The pattern starts at the outside and works from hall to hall, then inward. Thus, each hall is covered for one second out of every three. Every location is covered one second out of twelve. Time and date is superimposed in one corner of each video picture.

Reviewing the murder

The players may wish to view the videotape of Salamander's cell at the time of the murder. Unfortunately, when the power switched off, the active system got jammed, and the tape was destroyed. However, when the power came back on, a backup system kicked in, so footage is available from immediately after the power outage.

Careful scrutiny of this tape can be extremely valuable. This will take 1 hour, and is treated as Research (see above). Roll vs. sight PER -4 or unmodified skill. Appropriate skills include PS: Video Production or Video Editing, and so on.

A successful roll lets the character realize that the number of people who came out of Salamander's cell is 1 greater than the number who go in. This is not as easy to see as it seems; first, the six guards go in. One guard runs for help. Other guards go in. Some robots show up. The warden shows up. The doctor shows up with two more guards carrying a stretcher. And so on.

Once the researcher realizes this, he can try to figure out who the extra person is. It takes one more successful research attempt at -2 to recognize the person as one of the guards.

SIGNS OF THE BREAKDOWN

While the heroes are in Stronghold, events should occur that make it clear to them that the situation is disintegrating. The following are a few suggested short encounters for the GM to flesh out for that very purpose.

GUARD RUNS AMOK

"I can't stand it anymore!" Screaming, a guard goes crazy from the stress of waiting for the other shoe to drop. He might run around frantically, become destructive and violent (especially dangerous in one of the turbine rooms!), or threaten to do harm to himself or others. Somebody will have to calm him down, then get him to the emergency room.

FISTFIGHT

Somebody makes a stupid remark in the break room or the guards' mess. The result is a fistfight between two or three techs or guards. Everybody else is standing around cheering them on. The heroes must break up the fight, then get the combatants to medical.

ESCAPE ATTEMPT

Some particularly clever villain takes advantage of the situation to try and escape. The details of this encounter are left to the GM.

ROBOT MALFUNCTION

Careless maintenance has allowed a robot to develop a quirk in its programming. This could range from the amusing (Talks to the microwave) to the downright dangerous (All humans are enemies, and must be killed).

BOB GETS DECKED

Bob Ryan makes one too many obnoxious comments, and somebody (preferably someone the players have come to know and like) punches him out—on camera. Melinda is going to air the tape on the six o'clock news. This would ruin the puncher's career, at least—not to mention assault and civil charges. The players must talk her out of it—with Bob, videotaping every word of their persuasion attempt.

BREAKOUT!

This encounter may appear to be part of Signs of the Breakdown, but it's not. In reality, Proteus is testing his control of the computer system by releasing a number of supervillains. A logical time for this to occur, then, is right after the computer code (see above) is isolated and removed. Proteus wants to reassure himself that his control is unimpaired (since the computer code will automatically rebuild itself). If the heroes don't find the computer code, use this encounter anytime.

He doesn't release an army (not yet!), only a few villains. One low-powered villain for each hero, or one or two powerful villains, that's all. He doesn't want to tip his hand and have the heroes rooting around in the computer again.

Use villains from the back of the *Champions Rulesbook*, or from your own campaign. Salamander can be used for this encounter—just change his name. If you're experiencing a shortage of available villains (shameless plug!), there are a number of published *Champions* villain compilation books such as *Classic Enemies*, *European Enemies* and *High Tech Enemies*.

THE SUSPECTS

Once the heroes have pieced together the information from the videotape, they'll probably want to question the guards. Anyone can tell them that Moe Green found the body. By questioning him first, then the other guards, they can get the names of all the guards in the cell—except one...

Moe Green — Moe is a fat, jovial guy who is going bald. He tells the heroes that when he entered the cell, there was nobody in it—nobody but himself and the unfortunate Salamander, that is. He doesn't remember exactly who entered the cell behind him, but he does remember the other two Stooges (Barney Lawrence and Don Curley) being among the others.

Mike Ewing — Mike's a swarthy guy with dark, curly hair. He makes jokes constantly about not being related to "J.R. and those Southfork Ewings." When questioned about who was with him when they found the body, he will, at first, recall only himself and Moe, but then will recall that Don Curley was immediately behind him.

Don Curley — Don's name is a total misnomer. His hair is long, blonde and straight as an arrow. He is one of the youngest guards at Stronghold, at the tender age of twenty-two. He remembers Moe and Mike Ewing being in front of him.

Barney "Larry" Lawrence — Along with Moe Green and Don Curley, Larry rounds out the trio known throughout Stronghold as the Three Stooges. The three are drinking buddies of great local notoriety, and Larry is the worst of a bad lot. He isn't fat, but shows a lot of paunch—courtesy of too many beer-blasts and too little exercise. He remembers the three men who entered before him—Moe, Mike Ewing and Don Curley—and that "Allah" was immediately behind him.

James "Allah" Muhammad — James is a very tall (6' 4"), skinny black man. He was nicknamed Allah by his coworkers because of his last name—fortunately, he is not a Muslim. He talks as though he is fresh off the street, though he is well-educated. He remembers all of the guards (since he and Ron Diaz were the last ones to enter)—except Jerry Ryerson. To uncover that name will require special measures (see below).

Ron Diaz — Ron is a Hispanic guy, and he's new—he doesn't remember anybody. He was also the guard at the desk who buzzed Ryerson into Salamander's cell (on the pretense that it was a routine inspection of a neighboring cell). He doesn't remember that either—it was a routine inspection, and they occur regularly. Besides, he's new and barely knows what he's doing right now, let alone what he did a week ago. He's very apologetic, though.

Jerry Ryerson — Most of the other guards will recall that there were seven people that entered the cell in the initial rush. However, all will admit to virtual amnesia regarding the person's identity. This is not due to any arcane process on the murderer's part. It is just that none of the others saw him enter. They merely glimpsed him at some point, and though they remember his presence, his identity doesn't really register to them consciously. All is not lost, however. If the heroes can get three or more of them together, they'll go into a huddle ("Wasn't it Dickstein?" "No, but he looked like Dickstein.") and call upon their group memory to come up with Ryerson's name.

Lt. Fenster can tell the investigators that Jerry Ryerson is in the Emergency Room. When they go to check it out, however, he is nowhere to be found. That is because Proteus has killed Dr. Kilmer and assumed his identity, so Jerry is effectively no more.

ONCE THEY THINK THEY'VE GOT IT FIGURED OUT

Once they've successfully interrogated the guards, the heroes are likely to proceed with all possible speed to the infirmary. There, they hope to find the last link in the chain—Ryerson himself, or some indication of where he has gone.

They're destined for disappointment. Proteus' identity switch was thorough to the point of sneaking Ryerson's uniform into the laundry bin in the barracks. The only clue to where the guard (and presumed shapeshifting murderer) has gone is a note in his medical file—treated for general symptoms of illness, and released two days before the heroes arrived.

Doubtless, some players will be greatly disappointed to come up against this roadblock. This is good! That means they will be all the more satisfied when they finally do catch the villain. And they're closer to catching him than they realize. There are two different ways for them to finish it.

Why is Proteus there?

For the ring, of course. Even the dumbest criminal in the world would have cut and run by now, unless he had another objective. In Proteus' case, he knows that, once this Incident is over, the ring will be shipped off to the Faceless Bureaucratic Government Research Agency. If he doesn't get the ring now, he won't have another chance any time soon. And leaving to face Amaryllis without it is suicide, so he's risking everything for a last, desperate attempt to recover it.

If the players can't figure this out themselves, NPCs can drop hints—e.g., "I just can't understand what would keep him here, now that he's done what he came to do." This will lead them to the vault, where, of course, they'll find the good doctor in the process of breaking in.

How can Proteus be identified?

By his smoking habit. Sure, lots of people smoke. But there have been several places during the adventure where it was shown that Salamander's killer smoked heavily, and smoked only Marlboro Menthols. Casual comments from NPCs can spark this connection in the minds of the players. Investigation will uncover supporting evidence—a strong odor of smoke in the doctor's quarters, a pack of cigarettes found in his personal belongings, and so on.

Once the heroes figure out who Proteus is, he will find them. One likely scenario is that they will figure out what he did with the body. They proceed to the morgue, where the villain lies in wait for them. Once they've discovered the doctor's body, he reveals himself. Proceed to *The Culprit Unmasked!*

And if they're still blundering about aimlessly?

You've given up hope, and feel that there's no shot of them figuring out the mystery. It's late, everybody's tired, and you're looking for a spectacular way to just finish this damn thing and go to sleep. Instead of being subtle about trying to break into the vault, Proteus grabs the Warden, holds him hostage, makes him open the vault, and threatens to activate the self-destruct while he escapes.

THE CULPRIT UNMASKED!

The final confrontation can occur in either the testing lab or the morgue. This is determined by the heroes' actions, as described under the preceding encounter.

During the confrontation, Proteus has his variable pool set to Armor—probably split evenly, unless the group's attacks seem to favor either PD or ED, or if one of them has a big Killing Attack. Once uncovered, he holds up his hands, as if to surrender. He gives them a big speech about how much he's enjoyed watching them run around like idiots, stalling for time. "But I think you should know," he says, "I've just initiated a cycle that will level this mesa and everything in it."

Unless the PCs have completely removed the code, he's not bluffing. Before confronting the PCs, he used his remote control to activate a program buried in the computer. It opens every cell in the place, cuts the power (so the complex is in near-pitch darkness) and begins a power buildup in the Core Tap generators which, if not released, will cause them simultaneously to blow sky-high within five minutes. The lights go out moments after Proteus finishes his soliloquy.

If Proteus knows the characters have removed the code, he is bluffing. He will give the same speech in an attempt to escape. If Proteus doesn't know that the PCs have removed the code, he will look very surprised when the lights do not go out.

THE VILLAINS

The villains should not be too difficult to handle. Remember, most of them will have just as much trouble in the darkness as the heroes. Plus, they may not know their way around, as the players do (since most were unconscious when delivered!), and many of them will be fighting among themselves. Mostly, they're provided here as an impediment. Any time it seems like the heroes will easily defuse the reactors with plenty of time to spare, throw in a villain to slow them up. Be sure and leave them just enough time to defuse the reactor—if they've got more than ten seconds left at the end, they've gotten off easy!

DARKNESS AND CONFUSION

Immediately after the power goes out, battery-backed up emergency features activate. These consist of emergency lights, red and white exit signs and an automated evacuation warning over the PA system. The evacuation warning will occasionally be interrupted by an alert proclaiming that the power generators are overloading and will self-destruct in X minutes and Y seconds.

Moving around in the dim light should be complicated. Characters without special senses suffer a -4 penalty to actions requiring that they see what they are doing (including combat and sight PER rolls). Additionally, many of the normals on the first level will be panicking—they're normally very cool-headed, but they've been under a lot of stress, power has gone out (again), and they're getting those evacuation warnings...

The elevator

In case of a power outage, you should never use the elevator. The one in Stronghold is pretty well dead right about now. Characters without Flight or Clinging will have to climb the maintenance ladder—2" per PHA at a cost of 1 END per hex of movement. A quicker, but more dangerous, way to descend is to slide down the ladder. Treat this as a normal fall (per p. 175 of the *Champions Rulesbook*), with +5 to Breakfall skill and no penalty for distance fallen. Note that the shaft is 8" high per Stronghold level—the levels are not stacked closely together, but are separated—and there are no emergency lights therein.

The top of the elevator shaft is covered by a panel which normally rises hydraulically when the elevator reaches the top. In case of an emergency, there is an escape hatch in the panel. A release handle mounted on the hatch can be unlocked with a key the warden carries. Pulling the handle triggers explosive bolts which blow the hatch. The lock on the handle is weak, and should pose no problem to the heroes (or Proteus!): DEF 3 BODY 3. If an attempt to break the lock does more than 10 BODY total, however, the handle snaps off with it! The hatch controls must then be jury-rigged or set off with Demolitions skill, or the hatch must be removed by main force (DEF 12, BODY 8).

THE EXPLOSION

To shut down the geothermal generators requires the character to go to the control room on level 5 and make two successful rolls each against two skills from the following list (that's four rolls total): PS: Power Engineer (or something similar), Mechanics, Computer Programming -2, Electronics -2, Security Systems -4, Inventor -4. It is not necessary that one character have both skills being used; two or more characters can cooperate. If none of the PCs have appropriate skills, consider having them stumble across an NPC who does. Paul Yamamoto would be a good choice.

Once the catastrophe is averted, power can be restored to the prison immediately—no skill roll is required. All unoccupied heroes should proceed to the landing area atop the mesa immediately to stop the murderer's escape! Go to The Big Finish.



If, by some chance, they do not deactivate the plant before the turbines explode, Stronghold is levelled by the explosion. Everyone on Level Five takes 8d6 killing damage; those on other levels take 5d6. Getting out of the prison is no longer an issue, since the explosion creates numerous exits...

The GM should consider carefully before allowing things to go this route, as the adventure as written will be over at this point—the heroes will be far too busy rescuing trapped people, capturing escaping villains and so on to bother with Proteus.

CHASING PROTEUS

By the time the heroes encounter him, Proteus has already gotten the ring out of the vault. The exact details of this operation are left to the GM. However, if the players have taken the ring somehow, he uses a hostage to force them to turn it over to him before revealing the fact that he's prepared the power plant to self-destruct.

As soon as the lights go out, he makes for the elevator. (Remember, he's expecting it.) He pries open the elevator doors, switches his cosmic pool to Clinging, and scrambles up the shaft. He moves vertically at half his running rate (3"). Heroes who can get around in the dark can give chase. Heroes who can't see in the dark (or otherwise overcome it) haven't got much of a chance.

If he gets caught, he'll fight, but will run if the opportunity presents itself. He won't hesitate to injure or endanger someone as a distraction, or take a hostage. Indeed, he expects to be creamed in a stand-up fight, and will take such actions instead of facing his opponent fairly, if possible.

Unless he is pounded into unconsciousness or otherwise restrained, Proteus reaches the roof in short order. He cuts the lock off the hatch controls with a claw and blows the hatch. Unless the heroes are very industrious about chasing him, they should arrive on the roof just in time to see him dusting off in an armored helicopter.

THE BIG FINISH

If everything goes as planned, Proteus is picked up in an armored gunship as the heroes arrive at the landing pad. He's 50 hexes away before anyone can do anything. The helicopter's got a DCV of only 4, but with the range mod of -8, there isn't much hope of heroes with ranged attacks stopping it from getting away. Flying heroes (fast ones!) can give chase, but chances are they'll be outclassed.

The GM should let the PCs stand on that mesa a few moments, watching in frustration as the helicopter dwindles to a dot on the horizon. Then, when all seems lost, they hear a sound... and, as they look to the north, a Stronghold VTOL craft appears, coming straight toward them.

The VTOL lands, but keeps its engines hot. With a grin, the pilot explains that the Albuquerque police picked up a strange burst of noise on Stronghold's distress frequency, and Sheriff Collins reasoned it might be the mysterious killer calling for a taxi. Figuring that nobody at the prison would be able to catch any kind of air vehicle, Sheriff Art called the Stronghold hangar at the Albuquerque airport... and the rest is history.

IF YOU HATE

THE VEHICLE COMBAT RULES

Run the finale abstractly. The GM rules on the effectiveness of any maneuvers the various pilots wish to try and gives range modifiers for attacks. The latter should always run between -6 and -12. Use the vehicles' attack Powers, DEF etc. from the *Champions Rulesbook*, as described below.

RUNNING THE FINALE

AS A VEHICLE COMBAT

Refer to the vehicle combat rules on p. 192 of the *Champions Rulesbook*. The GM, especially, should be thoroughly familiar with them, and it won't hurt if some of the players are, as well.

Setup

For Proteus' gunship, use the stats for the AH-1 Huey Cobra from p. 195. The pilot has SPD 4, DEX 20 and Combat Piloting 14-. The helicopter starts 1400 hexes south of Stronghold, traveling south at maximum noncombat speed (168 hexes/PHA, 672 hexes/turn). They're headed for the Mexican border, 50,000 hexes (100 km) south of their current position.

For the VTOL, use the Learjet Century III, ignoring its Stall Velocity. It starts at Stronghold, with a velocity of 0. It can accelerate by 48" every PHA, until it reaches its max noncombat velocity of 1536" per turn (8 PHA of acceleration). The pilot of the VTOL is identical to the pilot of the gunship, unless one of the PCs (preferably one with Combat Piloting skill!) prefers to assume control.

The plane should catch the chopper well before it crosses into Mexico (the VTOL pilot, if it is being flown by an NPC, won't cross the border). However, once it catches up, what are they going to do about it? Once within the VTOL's MAX, the aircraft enter dogfight combat—but only the helicopter is armed! He may opt to simply hover and launch missiles at the plane until something connects. The PCs, however, can use ranged attacks on the helicopter. If they do so while moving, be sure and calculate DCVs from velocity rather than DEX (per p. 142 of the *Champions Rulesbook*).

There are three possible endings to the adventure:

Crash landing

The helicopter gets shot down. The heroes can then encounter Proteus and the pilot (possibly injured in the crash) on the ground. Or, if you don't wish to drag this out any further, have them found unconscious (or dead). The PCs find the ring, to do with as they please.

Fireball

The helicopter explodes in a burst of flame and shrapnel. Bits of aircraft are scattered over a square mile of desert. The ring disappears, and Proteus enjoys a Mysterious Death.

Escape

Proteus clears the Mexican border—or the heroes are shot down. Either way, he gets away. (If they chase him into Mexico, a bunch of fighters belonging to a South American drug czar appear to chase them back to the U.S. Use four F-15s from p. 195). Not suggested, unless you wish to use this adventure as the basis of an ongoing campaign.

AFTERMATH

The most important thing to consider once the adventure is over is what happened to Proteus. If he gets away, he can return to plague the group later. Jaeger and Amaryllis can also appear later, at the head of a powerful new criminal organization. Use the stats for Mindlock from the *Champions* book for Amaryllis (or make up your own!). Remember that once she has the ring, she'll have several strong Movement Powers and various Powers with fire as a special effect.

Any payoffs due the characters for solving the mystery can be collected. Information offered as compensation can provide hooks for further adventures. Similarly, if Rex Ryder bribed the heroes with info he hasn't really got, this should make for an interesting bit of roleplaying!

If Tigress survived, she'll be grateful to the heroes who saved her life. If they bother to keep in touch with her, they will have themselves a valuable ally (each PC can demand one Favor from her). In the same vein, Maizie can become a romantic interest—or a patron. You see, it seems Salamander was filthy rich, and now Maizie wants to establish a super-team to honor the ideals he believed in...

EXPERIENCE

Each player character should receive a base of four character points for successfully completing this adventure. This is because it is a difficult, drawn-out adventure that should take more than one play session to complete. If the players managed to solve the mystery, that's one more point. A bonus experience point can be awarded for each incident in which a player did something extremely clever, successfully fast-talked an NPC, stayed in character even when it hindered the rest of the group, performed especially brilliantly in combat, or personally connected a clue that nobody else was even close to figuring out. Likewise, players should be penalized for bad roleplaying (or not roleplaying at all, e.g., "My character says this"), unnecessary violence or brutality (unless the character is violent and brutal!), failing to solve the mystery or allowing Proteus to escape. (Double penalties if he makes off with the ring!)

SALAMANDER

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 6
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6
25	CON	30	ECV: 4
12	BODY	4	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
13	INT	3	
11	EGO	4	
18	PRE	8	
12	COM	1	
8	PD	5	Costs
13	ED	8	Char: 112 Base: 100
5	SPD	22	+ +
8	REC	0	Powers: 146 Disad: 150
50	END	0	= =
33	STUN	0	Totals: 250 250
Cost	Powers	END	
25	Elemental Control: Fire Powers		
a-50	10d6 EB at END, Personal Immunity	4	
b-17	Damage Reduction 75% resistant vs. fire only (-1)		
c-18	8d6 EB Explosion, Pers. Immunity, No Range, 3x END	21	
15	Force Field +7 PD +8 ED	1	
4	Superleap, +10" 8x noncombat multiple (total 13", 104" noncomb.) linked to Explosion, 8x END cost	16	
3	Life Support, safe in extreme heat/cold		
6, 3, 3	+3 with EB; Streetwise 13-; Oratory, 13-		
2	PS: Insurance salesman, 11-		

100+ Disadvantages

20	2x STUN from cold- and water-based attacks (Grp Unc)
20	2x STUN from mystical attacks (Grp Unc)
15	Psych Lim: Feels it's his duty to reform criminal supers (Com, Strong)
15	Distinctive Features—radiates heat (NC, recog)
10	Reputation, as a preachy hero (11-)
10	DNPC wife Maizie (Norm, 8-)
15	Hunted, Amaryllis (Mo pow, 8-)
20	Hunted, "the Underworld" (Mo pow, ext NCI, 8-)
10	2d6 Unluck
15	Secret ID

Background: Larry Banks was a precocious child. Throughout his school years, he always achieved high grades. The adults around him let him know just how bright he was. Larry came to think of the world as his oyster; he truly believed the world owed him a living because he was so brilliant.

Unfortunately, that isn't the way the world works, and Larry found out the hard way. He did so poorly his first year in college that he had to withdraw. He returned home and began working as an insurance salesman.

After a short time, he and his girlfriend were married. The bills started piling up, and when he began to think of returning to college, it was out of the question.

Larry was constantly angry and frustrated. He had been cheated out of his due! All the things people had told him when he was a kid—that he was bright, that he would go far—they had all lied to him!

Then, Larry met Warren Applegate. The super-criminal was struck by Larry's great potential, despite the fact that apathy and laziness left it largely unrealized. By pandering to Banks' ego, Magus earned his loyalty. He gave Larry flame powers by symbiotically joining him with a salamander (fire elemental). Naturally, Larry assumed the name Salamander in his alternate identity.

Salamander worked for Magus right up until the time of the villain's death. He tried to go solo thereafter, but didn't have the planning or tactical skill Magus had, and his first few outings were dismal failures. After one robbery attempt, during which he barely escaped capture, he retired as a super-villain.

Larry settled down and did some cold, hard thinking about his life. Gradually, he realized that Magus had used him, and he resented it. As his antisocial attitude came around to normalcy, he began to think of his powers as the great gift he had been destined to receive. He buckled down and practiced with his pyrokinetic abilities. In so doing, he learned ways to use his powers that he had never dreamed of.

Finally, he decided he was ready to make his mark on the world. Since nobody had ever identified him as Salamander, he kept the name. He became a scourge of the low-level supervillainy, but none of the criminals he defeated in combat ever turned up in jail. Instead, they got turned loose, with a "word of warning" and a lecture about using their natural talents for the common good.

Quote: "Listen, kid, I know what you're going through. I've been there, see?"

Personality: Larry Banks is a born-again sterling citizen. Because, as a youth, he was led to believe that he was a special person, he felt that good things should happen to him without having to work for them. Eventually, he wised up and tried to make something of his life. Now, he's a crusader, taking down young super-punks and preaching to them to go straight.

Powers/Tactics: Salamander has the ability to generate fire and heat. He is immune to his own flame, as well as normal temperature extremes, and nearly so to other fires. He can also generate a weak force field by superheating an envelope of air around his body. He cannot fly (he lacks the necessary fine control), but can release a burst of flame which will hurl him over 200 yards. However, this costs him a whopping 37 END!

During his criminal days, Salamander was an average combatant, but a poor tactician. Magus used him for sniping and fire support. When he went solo, his standard tactic was to grab the loot and blast anybody who got in the way.

As a hero, Salamander is a little more experienced and comfortable with his powers. He will attack from surprise to make up for his weak defenses. He aims his attacks to disable, not kill, targeting his opponents' legs or foci.

Appearance: Salamander sports an orange bodysuit with flame patterns trailing from red gloves and boots. The orange cowl has red flames around the eyes. Out of costume, he is of average build and good-looking, with blond hair and blue eyes. He is 5' 9" tall, and weighs about 145 lbs.



PROTEUS

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
20	STR	10	OCV: 6
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6
23	CON	26	ECV: 5
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
13	INT	3	
14	EGO	8	
10	PRE	0	
10	COM	0	
10	PD	6	
10	ED	5	
5	SPD	22	
9	REC	0	
46	END	0	
37	STUN	0	

Cost	Power	END
40	Shape Shift into any human form, 0-END, Persistent	0
39	Images vs. IR, UV, Smell/Taste group, -8 PER, 1 hex, 0-END, Persistent, No Range, only broadcast "white noise" (-1)	
75	Variable Power Pool (30 pt. pool), Cosmic	
24	A armor (+8 PD/+8 ED)	
6	Regeneration 1 BODY per hour	
8	N-Ray Vision (Only through organics) No Range, +1 turn ("CAT" Scan)	
5	UV Vision	
9	Telescopic Vision +6	
11	Life Support: No need to eat, excrete or sleep, immune to disease and aging	

Cost	Power	END
3	Disguise, 12-	
3	Acting, 11-	
3	Mimicry 11-	
2	Science: Anatomy, 12-	
9	Computer Programing, 17-	
3	Mechanics, 11-	
2	PS: Doctor, 11-	
3	Paramedic, 12-	
15	+5 w/Disguise, Acting and Mimicry	
9	+3 w/Medical skills (SC: Anatomy, PS: Doctor and Paramedic)	
5	+1 w/HTH combat	
10	2d6 Luck	
10	Eidetic Memory	
3	Simulate Death	

100+	Disadvantages
10	2x STUN from radiation
30	2x STUN from electricity
15	Psych Lim: Confused about human nature (Unc, Tot)
20	Psych Lim: Casual killer (V Com, Str)
15	Psych Lim: Fanatically loyal to Amaryllis (Com, Str)
15	Phys Lim: Addicted to tobacco; smokes only Marlboro Menthols (Com, Str)
10	Reputation among law-enforcement agencies: Armed and extremely dangerous (Som, ext)
15	Watched: Amaryllis, 14- (Mo Pow, NCI)
15	Watched: Mystery watcher (due to unknown origin)
20	Hunted: FBI (As Pow, NCI, 11-)
150	Villain bonus

Background: Proteus is an android, an organic robot. He remembers nothing of his origins; his earliest memories are of his duties to Master Magus. The other members of Magus' group believed that the villain had something to do with Proteus' creation—either he was directly responsible for it, or that he commissioned the android from another master villain.

Quote: "Kill you? I'm not going to kill you—I'm going to become you."

Personality: Although fully-developed, Proteus has been "alive" only a few years. There are many intricacies of human interaction that puzzle him, although he emulates them very well. He is cool and observant, which contributes to his extraordinary skill in mimicking people. However, he does have a tendency to come out with strange questions about people's behavior, and this (along with his compulsive smoking) can sometimes betray his disguise.

Proteus can assume female forms, even down to sexual characteristics. However, it is clear from his speech and behavior that he thinks of himself as male, and prefers to assume male forms unless it is inconvenient.



Powers/Tactics: Proteus's primary power is the ability to mimic the appearance of any other human. He does this by controlling organic micromachines within his body. At his mental command, the micromachines will reconfigure his body down to the cellular level. He uses a short-range, full-body CAT scan to mimic a subject exactly. His other abilities stem from his shapeshifting power. He uses his cosmic pool to give himself specialized body modifications—claws (2d6 HKA, 3d6+1 w/STR), for instance, or a poisonous sting. He has also used it to give himself wings (15" of Flight) and chameleon powers (Invisibility).

The micromachines which give him his shapeshift ability will also let him recover from wounds more quickly. Unfortunately, exposure to radiation or electricity tends to destroy these micromachines; thus, these attacks inflict additional

damage upon him.

Proteus prefers to avoid a stand-up fight. Obviously, he isn't equipped to take very many super-blasts or blows, so he likes to strike without warning. His favorite tactic is to sneak up on a character, using a familiar form, then use his cosmic pool (configured as an HKA) to attack with surprise. When he must fight, he will use the most lethal tactic he can, to take down his opponent quickly so he can escape.

Appearance: Proteus has no true form—he looks like whoever he is currently impersonating. When he doesn't need to look like someone for "business reasons," he'll assume the image of an alias (like Harry Bell) or a famous person.

JAEGER

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
10	STR	0	OCV: 7
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7
18	CON	16	ECV: 5
11	BODY	2	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
18	INT	8	
14	EGO	8	
20	PRE	10	
20	COM	5	
16	PD	14	Char: 125 Base: 100
16	ED	12	+ +
5	SPD	20	Powers: 243 Disad: 268
6	REC	0	= =
36	END	0	Totals: 368 368
25	STUN	0	

Cost	Powers	END
30	EC Light manipulation	
a-20	4d6 RKA Laser 2x END 12	
b-30	Invisibility to sight group with no fringe at 0-END	
c-32	Images affecting sight group at -7 PER in 1 hex at 0-END	
d-32	10d6 EB Light Burst END	3
8	+6 w/RKA, must Set (-)	
10	Instant change to any clothes	
7	Telescopic Sense on sight and hearing	
	+6 IIF Spy scope	
3	Well-connected	
5	Well-off	
1	License to practice law	
1	Notary public	
10	Contacts (various)	
2	Favors (4)	
3	PS: Lawyer 13-	
3	KS: Law 13-	
3	Conversation 13-	

Cost	Powers	END
3	Oratory 13-	
3	Deduction 13-	
3	AK: The city 13-	
3	Acting 13-	
3	Bureaucratics 13-	
3	High Society 13-	
3	Streetwise 13-	
12	+4 w/lawyer skills (PS: Lawyer, KS: Law, Conversation)	
10	+2 w/PRE-based skills	

100+	Disadvantages
10	2x STUN from darkness-based attacks
20	Psych Lim: Ruthlessly amoral (V Com, Str)
15	Psych Lim: Relentless, must see his enemies destroyed utterly (Unc, Tot)
15	Psych Lim: Not satisfied with simply killing his opponents, must see them disgraced, dishonored or humiliated (Com, Str)
20	Phys Lim: Low resistance to pain and easily stunned. Treat CON as 9 when checking for STUN.
20	Susceptibility: 3d6/Turn from Darkness Power
10	Reputation: Well-known, successful lawyer (Frequent)
20	Hunted: The Mob 11- (As Pow, NCI)
5	Unluck 1d6
15	Secret ID
118	Villain bonus

Background: Drake D'Amico is the son of Anthony D'Amico, multi-billionaire owner of the D'Amico department store chain. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, raised in the luxurious Long Island Hamptons, Drake led an idyllic life. After high school, he attended Harvard Law, graduating fifteenth in his class with several honors.

He went to work immediately for a prosperous firm, quickly rising through the ranks. Within a few years, he was made a junior partner and was allowed to try several important cases. Ultimately, he made an enemy of a notorious Mafioso. This lord of organized crime had him kidnaped and slowly tortured over the course of days.

He would likely have died if not for Master Magus. For reasons of his own, the mage rescued Drake, winning his friendship and gratitude. When he offered Drake the chance to avenge the wrongs done to him, the young lawyer jumped at the chance.

Magus took him to an underground scientist who was looking for a test subject. The plan was to use fiber-optic technology, implanted just below the surface of the subject's skin, to allow him to become invisible. The experiment was successful; after hours of complex surgery, and weeks of recovery, Drake could turn invisible at will. Later enhancements allowed him to use his ability to manipulate light in several different ways.

Nearly a year had passed since Drake D'Amico was kidnaped. During that time, he had changed a great deal. His experiences had driven him to erase the ethical line he had always drawn for himself; he was a man without scruples. He lived only to satisfy his own desires, and his first satisfaction was in the destruction of the mob boss who tortured him. He didn't simply sneak into the boss' headquarters and roast him, however. He used his illusions to sow suspicion and fear within the man's organization. Within a matter of months, the power structure crumbled. Drake's enemy, the mafioso, committed suicide in shame and despair. Drake, now known as Jaeger (German for hunter), revelled in the destruction he had wrought. Since that time, he has desired only one thing: control. And now that he no longer serves the interests of the late Master Magus, he is beginning to reach out and seize what he desires...

Quote: "Perhaps you should reconsider before you say what you are about to say, hmm? You could be looking at a major lawsuit."

Personality: Jaeger was, in his youth, a charismatic, outgoing person. He can still turn on the charm, but this behavior is only a counterfeit. Something that was a part of Drake D'Amico died at the hands of the Mafia's torturers, and what remains is merely a power-hungry imitation of a man. Still, he is careful to separate his life as Drake from his life as Jaeger. Very few people realize what his true nature and his goals really are. This works to protect his secret ID; even though the heroes may know perfectly well who he really is, no one will believe them...

Powers/Tactics: Jaeger has the ability to manipulate light in a number of ways. He can become invisible by passing light through the fiber-optics in his skin to the opposite side of his body. He can emit a focused beam of coherent light (a laser), or project holographic images. If he takes a turn to aim, he can use his laser at low power to project a dot showing where the blast will hit (very much like a laser sight). He wears a tiny headset that works as an image enhancement and parabolic mike device.

As a result of the torture inflicted upon him by the Mafia, Jaeger has a low tolerance for pain. Any STUN which gets through his defenses is doubled when considering whether he is stunned by the attack. Further, he is at -5 (or his opponent is at +5) to any skill or characteristic rolls to resist interrogation when torture is involved.



Jaeger is the ultimate hunter. He stalks his prey, invisible, eavesdropping on them with his spy scope. This makes him a great intelligence-gathering and recon man, as well as a formidable assassin. He usually avoids combat, but when he does get into a fight, he prefers to manipulate others rather than be involved directly. He'll use his hologram powers to overlay a hero with the image of a villain, hoping that his teammate will blast him. Or he'll put such an image between two heroes. Usually, these tactics allow him to remain aloof from the battle, but he will occasionally run into an opponent with enhanced senses. He isn't stupid, however, and keeps an eye out for such individuals. Since they can see through his illusions, they can spot him, and he'll make an effort to take out anyone who presents this danger. Barring that, he'll make a run for it.

When he must use his RKA, he prefers to use his targeting power and strike from surprise, for maximum effect.

Appearance: Jaeger is a tall, attractive blonde man, 6'0" and 185 lbs. He usually wears a bodysuit that does not interfere with his powers. That way, he can just project whatever clothing or costume he wishes around himself.

BUZZSAW

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 7
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7
23	CON	26	ECV: 5
15	BODY	10	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	INT	0	
14	EGO	8	Costs
20	PRE	10	
10	COM	0	Char: 130 Base: 100
9	PD	6	+
10	ED	5	Powers: 110 Disad: 140
6	SPD	30	=
8	REC	0	Totals: 240 240
46	END	0	
35	STUN	0	

Cost	Power	END
30	Vibration multipower	
3u	+10d6 HA (13d6 total)	3(4)
3u	2d6 HKA (3d6 w/STR)	3(4)
3u	6" Tunneling through DEF 6 (12" noncombat)	1
37	Force Field +18 PD +12 ED END	1
9,3,3	Streetwise, 15-; Stealth, 13-; AK: Campaign city, 12-	
3,3,10	Shadowing 11-; Oratory 13-; +2 w/HTH combat	
3	English, fluent w/accnt (Spanish is native)	

100+	Disadvantages
20	2x STUN from sonics
15	Psych Lim: Loves to get into fights (Com, Str)
10	Psych Lim: Stubborn (Com, Mod)
5	Psych Lim: Loyal to his old gang (Unc, Mod)
15	Dist. features: Buzzes when excited (Con, Maj Re)
15	DNPC Kid sister (Inc, 8-)
15	Hunted: Police, 8- (As Pow, NCI)
20	Hunted: VIPER, 8- (Mo Pow, NCI)
10,10	Rival: gang leader (Prof&Rom); Public ID (Luis Ortega)
5	Villain bonus

Background: Luis Ortega grew up on the streets of the big city. Like many slum kids, he was involved with the youth gangs that prowled the Spanish neighborhoods. He committed his first crimes when he was still a teenager.

Eventually, he rose to control a gang. The older he got, the more extreme their crimes became. One night, he and his gang broke into a warehouse. They had scouted it out, and knew it contained electronics components. They were hoping to steal a few radios, but got more than they expected—the warehouse was a VIPER nest under construction.

A fight broke out between the VIPER agents and the gang members. Of course, the gang members lost. With their superior firepower, the agents mopped most of the gang in short order. The remainder were scattered and demoralized.

Luis himself took a hit from an experimental sonic blaster and was left for dead. He was found and taken to a hospital, where he was in a coma for a long time.

Eventually, he recovered. Discovering he had superpowers, he returned to his gang. However, he found that in his absence, a former troublemaker had taken control of the gang—and his girlfriend! His first thought was to kill his rival. But too many gang members, especially new ones, favored his opponent. Killing the new leader would sunder the factions which favored Luis and his rival. Its numbers already

slimmed by the fight with VIPER, the gang would be destroyed in such a split. Instead, Luis vowed to win over the dissenting gang members by demonstrating his superior power and leadership. Calling himself Buzzsaw, he freelanced as a street villain for hire. He hopes that by becoming a "real villain," he will show his rival who is really fit to be the leader.

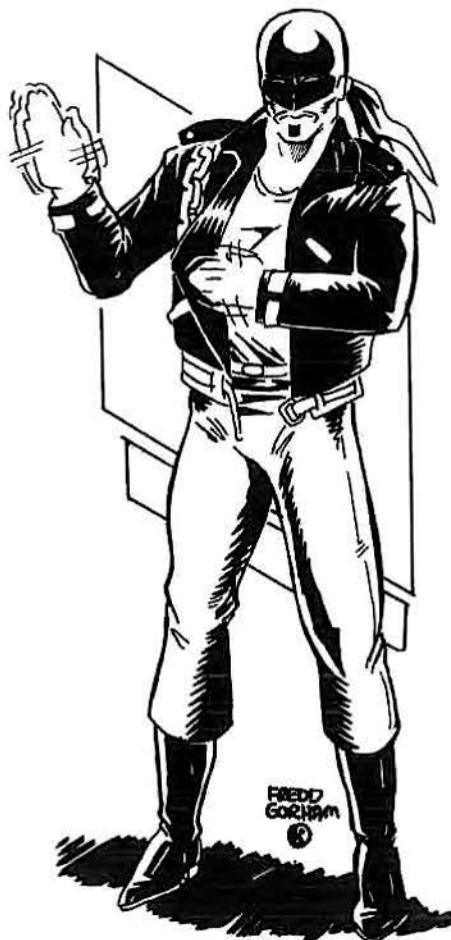
Quote: "No! Nobody's going nowhere 'til I cut this pig good!"

Personality: Luis keeps hoping to make that big score, and use the money (and infamy) thus generated to wrest control of the gang from his rival (and win back the attentions of his woman!). One day, he'll get that perfect job—but until that day, he is content to be a typical super-powered thug for hire.

Powers/Tactics: Luis' body vibrates constantly at a very low frequency. This is not enough to interfere with his leading a normal life. When he wishes, he can speed up the oscillation, causing specific parts of his body to vibrate rapidly. By vibrating his hands at high speeds, Buzzsaw can deliver a devastating slap, or can strike with the edge of his hand, using it like a knifeblade. Luis has learned that slapping people is usually just as effective as cutting them, and it keeps him out of trouble with the police—so he will use his regular hand-to-hand attack before resorting to the HKA.

As a skilled knife-fighter, Buzzsaw knows how to handle himself in a fight. As a gang leader, he knows how to use numbers to his best advantage. Consequently, he could be a dangerous threat if he ever regains control of his gang.

Appearance: Luis is a rather seedy-looking Hispanic man in his mid-twenties. He has dark hair, and sports a ratty moustache. The costume he wears is a variation on his gang's colors—bluejeans, a leather jacket, and a mask. Buzzsaw is tall (6' 0") and well built (200 lbs)



WALLBANGER

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
20	STR	10	OCV: 6
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6
23	CON	26	ECV: 4
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	INT	0	
11	EGO	2	
10	PRE	0	Costs
10	COM	0	Char: 105 Base: 100
10	PD	6	+
10	ED	5	Powers: 145 Disad: 150
5	SPD	22	=
9	REC	0	Totals: 250 250
46	END	0	
37	STUN	0	

Cost	Powers	END
15	Elemental Control: Kinetic Absorption	
a-60	Absorption 5d6 vs. physical attacks, max 100, loses 5 pts. per minute. Absorbed points split between STR and SPD	
b-20	Absorption +30 PD, only up to amount rolled on Absorption (-)	
c-10	+30 PD, only up to amount rolled on Absorption (-)	
d-10	+30 STR, used as "point matching" for points Absorbed to STR (i.e. each point Absorbed gives +2 STR, up to 60) (-)	
10	Absorption +10 ED OIF Costume	
8	+4 w/Move Through	
4	+2 w/Haymaker	
3	Streetwise, 11-	
3	Stealth, 11-	
2	AK: Campaign city, 11-	

100+	Disadvantages
30	2x STUN from energy attacks (Grp Com)
15	Phys Lim: Illiterate (Freq, Great)
5	Dist Features: Mutant, appears on detectors (E Con, Not)
10	DNPC: Wife (Norm, 8-)
20	Hunted: UNTIL (Mo Pow, NCI, 8-)
20	Hunted: VIPER (Mo Pow, NCI, 8-)
10	Hunted: Genocide (Mo Pow, NCI, 8-)
15	3d6 Unluck
10	Secret ID: Joe Deluca
10	Reputation: Jinx

Background: Joe Deluca was an unemployed factory worker living near the waterfront. He was also, though he didn't know it, a mutant—and unfortunately, a very unlucky guy. A blood test during a routine physical revealed his nature to a Genocide agent working undercover at a public health clinic. Genocide decided to manipulate VIPER into eliminating him. UNTIL spies uncovered this plot, and dispatched a team of agents to stop it.

Joe found himself in the middle of a gunfight between the two organizations. He was shot—but, to his surprised, the bullets didn't harm him! Instead, they made him stronger and faster. Joe mopped up UNTIL and VIPER agents alike, and, pausing only to grab his wife, fled from his home.

They managed to establish themselves under assumed names, but Joe couldn't go back to work—not with those organizations chasing him! To earn his living, Joe resorted to



crime. Taking the name Wallbanger, he became a regular at Flanagan's—and a well-known street villain for hire.

Quote: "Go ahead—hit me again! I dare you!"

Personality: Joe is not a bad person, but he is in an untenable situation. He loves his wife, and wants only the best for her. However, the only way he can earn money without risking capture (and, more importantly to him, his wife's) is through crime. He's not much of a planner, so he prefers to work for someone, rather than on his own.

Powers/Tactics: Wallbanger is nearly invulnerable to physical damage—until his Absorption pool is full, anyway. He uses this ability to maximum advantage. At the beginning of a fight, he will throw himself at the biggest brick he can find, using a Move Through maneuver. The damage he takes from this helps charge up his STR and SPD! He'll continue to use Move Throughs until his pool is about half full. Then, he will pick slow characters and use his high SPD to Haymaker them before they can react.

Wallbanger takes enormous damage from energy attacks, and he will make a point of avoiding characters with these types of attacks.

Appearance: Joe Deluca is a handsome fellow with dark, curly hair. He stands 5' 2" tall and weighs 140 lbs. As Wallbanger, he wears a blue and red costume with a cowl. His costume protects him from energy attacks and has big, padded muscles to make him look tough, so bricks will attack him.

COIL



COIL

COIL

COIL

INTRODUCTION

Defender's Private Log, 10 December:

"I had been searching for the VIPER Supreme Serpent's base. But what I found was even more intriguing, even though it had nothing to do with VIPER.

"What looked like a group of VIPER agents, from a distance, turned out to be something quite different. I followed their van to the parking lot of a bowling alley. As they unloaded the black van, I noticed a symbol marked on several boxes they were carrying. The symbol of the villain group COIL. I had seen reports of COIL and radioed for the rest of the Champions to back me up. The agents emptied the van before my friends arrived and, not wishing them to escape, I followed them into the bowling alley.

"I was prepared to find anything inside that building. I was not prepared to find what appeared to be a completely normal bowling alley.

"There were families bowling, children running about, employees running to help customers on the lanes and a large sign declaring league play every Tuesday. But no sign of the COIL agents. No one seemed to have seen them, or had any idea where they may have gone. Confused, I asked to see the manager.

"As soon as I stepped into the office I realized my mistake. Sitting in the chair that swiveled to face me was Boa Constrictor, bodyguard to King Cobra. There were also six COIL agents, in full gear. I fired my jets, intending to break through the ceiling, but was grabbed from behind by someone who slammed me into the concrete floor. The last thing that I saw was a nine foot tall, walking alligator staring down at me. Then everything went black.

"I opened my eyes to see Seeker and Solitaire standing over me. They said they had found me shackled to the wall, unconscious, my armor scarred but still sealed. Seeker explained that when the rest of the Champions arrived, they found COIL agents loading black vans at the back of the bowling alley. Obsidian called for them to stop and, when the COIL agents opened fire, they were subdued.

"Upon entering the building, Jaguar noticed a concealed elevator that I had missed leading to a hidden basement. As they exited the elevator, more COIL agents attacked. Quantum caught a glimpse of Boa Constrictor and Alligator fleeing down a tunnel just as an armored door blocked it.

"Searching the base thoroughly, we now realize that the COIL's disguise as a minor group of supervillians was just a cover for a much larger group bent on bringing the world under the domination of King Cobra. We have informed UNTIL of our discovery, and they now list the COIL with the likes of VIPER, DEMON and PSI."

WHAT IS COIL?

King Cobra wants to rule the world and created COIL to aid him in this conquest. COIL is a world wide terrorist organization that uses a massive force of agents with specialized equipment and weapons. King Cobra also has created a cadre of paranormals to add power to COIL's ranks using the dreaded COIL-gene formula he developed.

HISTORY

COIL started out as one man's quest to rule the world. Timothy Blank was a scientist in a project to map out the human genetic code. After being forced to resign for engaging in unauthorized research and falsifying results, Dr. Blank started his own tests. Experimenting on himself, he added the DNA from a king cobra to his own and became the super powerful King Cobra, proclaiming himself emperor of the world. Deciding that a King needs loyal minions to serve him, he began the next phase of experimentation.

Newspaper ads promising food, lodging and long term employment drew the desperate, the homeless and others looking for the "new life" promised by Regis Elapidae Enterprises. Taking them to a remote laboratory, King Cobra began his experiments. The majority of the subjects died. Some mutated as King Cobra anticipated, but most were savage, uncontrollable and had to be destroyed. The slight few that remained were inducted into COIL.

Realizing that a massive doses of the COIL-gene formula destroyed only the weak, King Cobra hired a group of mercenaries and brought them to his laboratory. Not only would they form the core of his COIL army, but they could be given small doses of the COIL-gene formula (without their knowledge) on a daily basis.

Two things were discovered by King Cobra. The agents that mutated had a significantly lower death rate and all the agents, mutated or not, were fanatically loyal to him. This new method of creating mutates gave King Cobra a large group of mutated agents in his now growing COIL.

Having refined his ability to successfully create COIL mutates, King Cobra created an elite group of "knights" to serve him. Calling them the Serpentine Circle, after King Arthur's Round Table, they led King Cobra's operations wherever COIL struck.

COIL quickly created powerful enemies, the chief of which is VIPER, who wasted no time or effort retaliating against COIL. In response to their assaults, King Cobra created an elite guard of agents to protect him, should enemies of his empire strike too close to the heart of COIL. He gathered sixty-four of his best agents and placed them on a rigorous physical and mental training program. The thirty-two survivors were dubbed the Constrictor Commandos.



As the Constrictor Commandos foiled VIPER's attacks, King Cobra decided COIL must go on the offensive and called for volunteers to form his personal attack squad. The six agents that emerged victorious in the brutal contests won a place in the Alpha Squad, and King Cobra's personal attention in perfecting and enhancing their mutations.

The COIL was expanding. King Cobra added Queen Cobra, Ringhals, and Naga to his Serpentine Circle. COIL bases and agents achieved remarkable successes.

And COIL continues to expand...

TACTICS

COIL has specific tactics for almost every possible scenario. On every mission, COIL will determine the importance of the objective, the expected resistance and send an appropriate number and type of agents. Most missions are carried out by squads of COIL agents. If the defenses are not completely known, or heavy resistance is likely to be encountered, COIL will send one or more members of the Alpha Squad (or the Serpentine Circle itself) with the agents. Critical missions may be assigned to the Constrictor Commandos, or to a member of the Alpha Squad leading several COIL squads. Objectives that are personally important to King Cobra will be assigned to the entire Alpha Squad.

If King Cobra wants to make a show of power, he will send a several members of the Serpentine Circle and several squads of COIL agents to accompany them. If the mission has some greater significance to King Cobra's master plan, he will join the mission team himself. Whenever King Cobra enters the field, all members of the Serpentine Circle and two squads of Constrictor Commandos will accompany him.

It is not beneath King Cobra to hire mercenaries for specific jobs, but they are always accompanied by squads of COIL agents to ensure loyalty. There may be exceptions to this rule if the mercenaries prove loyal to COIL's cause.

RELATIONS

COIL does nothing to develop relationships with other organizations and is not well liked by anyone. They have made a number of enemies with in the past.

The biggest of the COIL's enemies is VIPER. King Cobra intends to rule the world and will not tolerate any competition, especially competition as large and well organized as VIPER. A particular thorn in King Cobra's side is VIPER's Serpent Syndicate, which includes several COIL deserters, and is led by Python, one of King Cobra's first COIL mutates. The Serpent Syndicate would like nothing better than King Cobra and COIL's demise.

Other villain groups and organizations have various reasons to hate COIL. Genocide wants to stop King Cobra from creating more "imperfect" mutants and has a standing order to rid the world of COIL, at any costs. DEMON is still angry about King Cobra's acquisition of Naga. VOICE and COIL have clashed, inconclusively, in the past. The list goes on.

Most local law enforcement, and all national and international law enforcement agencies have standing orders to arrest any COIL members on sight. This would include Interpol, UNTIL, the CIA, PRIMUS, SAT, the KGB, STOP, and any government sanctioned hero groups.

Most other organizations are outwardly neutral towards COIL and King Cobra. Expect this to change as King Cobra directs his attention toward them.

THE COIL CITADEL

The building that houses the COIL Citadel was originally constructed in the 1920s by the flamboyant Mafia don "Diamond" Jack Diamato. A monument to graft, corruption and Diamond Jack's ego, the building was the spire from which he ran his extensive Mafia empire, and the city below. This "art deco" monolith was designed with extensively reinforced and armored walls to protect Diamond Jack's holdings. Floors one to nineteen were rented to other businesses, but floors twenty to twenty-five were Diamond Jack's personal world.

Over the years, a succession of Mafia leaders assumed control of these regal penthouse offices, and a succession of city inspectors had their pockets lined to keep a blind eye to the illicit remodeling that took place on those floors. The top floors of this aging monolith hide a state-of-the-art criminal fortification.

A few years ago, the Mafia was faced with a dilemma. Recently elected officials were close to exposing the Mafia's activities in that building. Interested in the imposing edifice, King Cobra posed a solution to their problem. They would sell him the building and the troublesome officials would meet with "accidents" at the hands of COIL.

King Cobra uses floors 20 to 22 as the headquarters of his legitimate business holdings. (All floors, unless stated otherwise, are DEF 8/5 BODY)

Floor 23 is the headquarters COIL's elite agents. This includes living quarters, training and recreational areas and is designed to be self contained. They also have a sound proof target range. The foyer immediately off the private elevator has reinforced walls (DEF 13 / 7 BODY) under the wood paneling.

Floor 24 is King Cobra's main base of operations, complete with his Arthurian conference room, with a replica of the fabled Round Table. This floor also has the living quarters of the COIL Alpha Squad and part of the Serpentine Circle. It also houses the communications and head security station.

Floor 25 is the private penthouse of King Cobra and his Queen. It also has the private rooms of the remainder of the Serpentine Circle. Every luxury is given to the King and his Queen on this floor. Butlers, maids and other servants are part of this "castle in the sky."

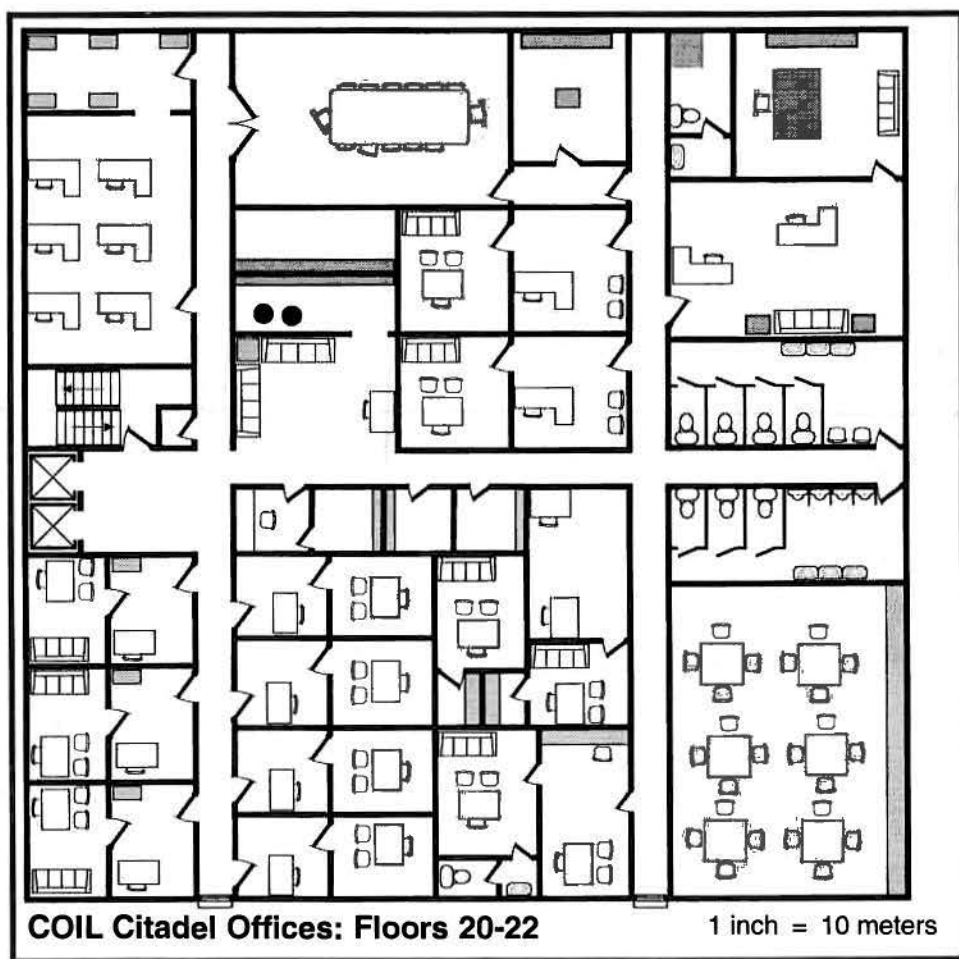
The defenses of the base consist of gas jets that produce a deadly gas (1D6 RKA, Area effect [1 hex], NND, does BODY, DEF is not breathing or having 10 points of Life Support) and an electrified floor (2D6 RKA, AP, Damage Shield [floor]). There are also invisible force walls protecting both the main conference room and the hidden elevator (Force Wall 15 PD/10 ED).

FLOORS 1 - 19

Leased to legitimate businesses.

FLOORS 20 - 22

Generic offices: used for the running of King Cobra's business fronts, some of which are legitimate.



FLOOR 23

1. Elevator from Office Levels: North and South doors into barracks rooms. North, East and South walls are armored (DEF 13/7 BODY) under the wood paneling. There is an expensive tapestry hanging on the wall opposite the elevator doors that shows a scene of knights, ladies and dragons.

2. Barracks for 16 Agents: Set up similar to standard military barracks with bunk beds. The beds are made of reinforced steel. Each individual has a foot locker and a there is storage under each lower bunk. The room itself is very comfortable with wood paneling on the walls, and each agent is allowed to put up pictures in his individual area.

3. Weapons Locker/Armory: Each individual agent has his own locker that he must maintain. All of his equipment must be locked inside and only he and the commander know the combination to the locker. The walls are painted white.

4. Stalls for Target Range: Where each agent stands to practice his marksmanship. The lockers in the back contain extra ammunition.

5. Target Range: The targets are retrieved by tracked rails. This room is sound-proof and all range walls are heavily armored. (DEF 16/9 BODY)

6. Mess Hall: This room is wood paneled in oak and there are prints of the great works of art on the walls. The flatware is sterling silver and the dinner ware is china. The table itself is a solid oak trestle and the chairs are oak with needlepoint seat pads. The carpet is plush and in a deep maroon.

7. Kitchen: Extremely modern with all the best appliances.

A. Pantry

8. Laundry Room: Bulk-load machines

9. Station: For this level and the three office levels below.

A. Monitors

B. Elevator to Citadel floor 24 (see note *)

10. Auditorium: Used to show all the latest movies and training films to the agents. The seats are plush maroon velour. The sound system is the best in the business. This room is sound-proof.

11. Projection Room: Contains the very best video projection equipment in the business.

12. Pool

A. Whirlpool

13. Arcade Room: Contains the latest video games and they are changed on a regular basis. The King sees that most of the games will improve the hand/eye coordination of his agents. This room is sound-proof.

14. Gym/Weight Room: Contains all the best exercise and weight equipment in the business.

15. Sauna

16. Dry Heat Room

17. Restrooms/Shower: Unisex. Done in simple white and green tile.

18. Barracks for 16 Agents: same as #2

FLOOR 24

1. Conference Room: birch wood paneled with a large circular mahogany table in the center of the room. There are 12 mahogany chairs with needlepoint tapestry cushions. Each position around the table has a pop up computer terminal with the main control station at King Cobra's seat. The North and West walls are covered with teleporter terminals. The East and South walls are covered with portraits of King Cobra and his Serpentine Circle. A completely invisible force wall (15 PD/10 ED DEF) covers the doorway and prevents entry while the occupants escape.

A. King Cobra's Seat. Slides back on a track into emergency exit A. The seat is much larger than the others and is more like a throne. It is ornately carved with serpents and has crystal orbs on the top of each back post.

B. Snake's Seat. This seat is the third largest in the room. It is more ornate than the standard chairs but not as fancy as King and Queen Cobra's. His emergency exit is B.

C. Alligator's Seat. This seat is specially reinforced to support his bulk. His emergency exit is C.

D. Frill's Seat. Her emergency exit is D.

E. Water Moccasin's Seat. Her emergency exit is E.

F. Rodriguez's Seat. His emergency exit is F.

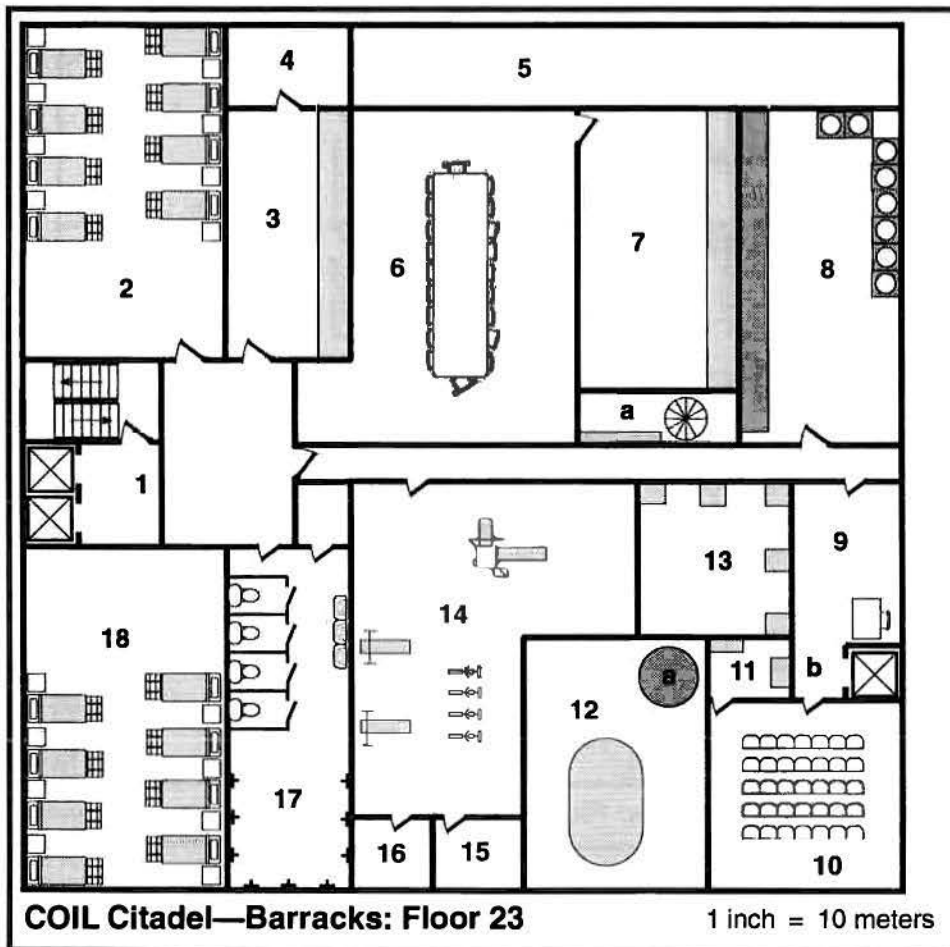
G. Death Seat. This seat is used to eliminate anyone who has displeased King Cobra. It is wired with a disintegration field that will destroy anything on the seat. It is triggered at King Cobra's seat.

H. Constrictor Commando Leader's Seat. Their emergency exit is H.

I. Naga's Seat. Her emergency exit is I.

J. Ringhals's Seat. Her emergency exit is J.

K. Boa Constrictor's Seat. His emergency exit is K.



COIL Citadel—Barracks: Floor 23

1 inch = 10 meters

L. Queen Cobra's Seat. Her seat is the second largest and is just as ornate as King Cobra's. There are carvings of serpents on it, but instead of the crystal orbs, her seat is inlaid with precious gems. Her emergency exit is L.

M. Private Elevator to Penthouse: It is behind a secret door. A secret code is required to open it, and if anyone attempts to gain entry without the code an alarm will sound.

2. Corridor: The East corner has an elevator to the penthouse. The West corner has doorway to #8 Locker room.

3. Frill's Room: She has done the room in blues and has posters of her favorite rock stars and athletes on the walls. It is usually a little messy, with clothing and magazines on the floor. The bedding is simple geometric designs and not overly feminine, and the bed is a plain wooden platform style with storage underneath. There is a picture of her "father" Randall Scott on her desk.

4. Unassigned quarters: No bedding or wall coverings. Done in dark oranges and reds.

5. Alligator's Room: All of the furniture in the room is increased in size and durability to withstand his excessive bulk. His room is always a mess with clothes, wrestling and girly magazines piled everywhere. The walls have posters of nudes on them with an occasional wrestling picture. There are a set of dumbbells and weights scattered in the mess on the floor.

6. Unassigned quarters: No bedding or wall coverings. Done in greens.

7. Water Moccasin's Room: Her bed is a modified water bed frame without the mattress. It holds water for her to sleep in, and keeps it at a constant temperature. There is no carpeting on the floor and everything in the room is plastic. The walls are tile paneling of a pale yellow. The only decorations on the walls are pictures of King Cobra.

8. Locker room: Each agent has a private locker with a security lock.

A. Showers.

9. Pool Room.

A. Whirlpool.

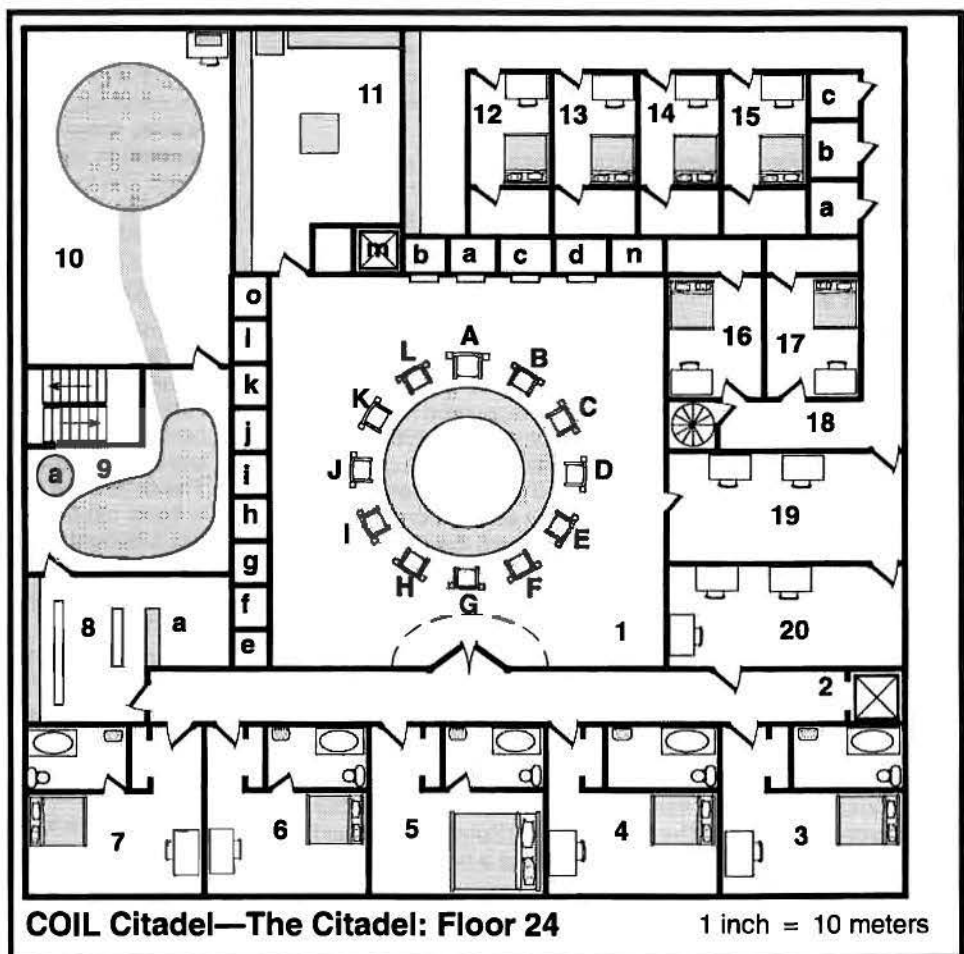
10. Holding Tank: Tank for the storage of various amphibious life forms used in experiments, with access to main pool. Terminal in the Northeast corner controls tank temperature and food distribution.

11. Kitchen: Contains the most modern appliances and equipment.

A. Walk in freezer

12. McMasters's Room: His room is usually clean and neat, with sports magazines stored on the book shelves. His walls are covered with sports posters, mostly basketball. The room is furnished simply and done in browns.

13. Key's Room: His room has a considerable amount of body building equipment in it. There are posters of body builders on the walls and muscle magazines piled in one corner. There are a few posters of women, but most of them are body builders also. The room is not messy, but it is cluttered. The room is done in dark greens.



COIL Citadel—The Citadel: Floor 24

1 inch = 10 meters

14. Bosanek's Room: His room is immaculate. There is a computer on the desk and numerous books on financing and business. He also has an extensive library of the classics and mysteries. The walls are fairly sparse, with only a few collectors' prints by famous modern artists. The room is wood paneled in oak, with modern oak furnishings.

15. Musgrove's Room: This room is extremely messy, and the furniture is damaged. He has piles of muscle and girly magazines strewn everywhere. The walls are covered with nudes, slasher movie posters, and a few hot rods. What can be seen of the rug and the bedspread are in blues.

16. Rodreguez's Room: His room is a little larger than the other Alpha Agent's rooms. He has done his room as if it were a military barracks. He has his military medals and certificates on the walls. The furniture is military issue, as is the bedding. The room is done in grays.

17. Kowalski's Room: The furniture in his room is a little larger than normal to support his bulk. It is made of pine and he has banged it up a lot. He has magazines of everything from Popular Science to The Marine Times neatly arranged on the bookshelves. His military certificates and medals are mounted on the walls, along with pictures taken during his time in the Marines. The room is done in oranges. There is a secret window in the hallway, that enables him to escape.

18. Hallway: with circular stairway up and down.

A. Linen closet

B. Laundry room. Contains bulk loading machines.

C. Rest room. Unisex. Done in greens and white.

19. Communications Room: It has a secret door entrance from computer room and a normal entrance into conference room. There is a large screen monitor in Southwest corner. There is a full radio communications set with full world-wide capability and a system of secure laser communications.

20. Computer Room: has computer terminals that require finger-print scan to activate. This scan includes a body temperature check. If the scan is of a dead or inappropriate hand scan, then the computer will shut down and sound an alarm.

FLOOR 25

1. King and Queen Cobra's living room: This is a huge room done in the style of a medieval castle. The walls are covered with tapestries depicting knights and dragons. The lower half of each wall is oak wainscoting and the upper half is covered with a rich blue silk fabric. A wet bar in the Northwest corner is carved from rose wood with scenes of castle life. The sink is gold with gold fixtures that have large rubies for knobs. The liquor decanters are of Austrian crystal, as are the glasses. The stools are of rose wood and have needlepoint seat covers that match the carvings on the bar. There is an Austrian crystal and gold chandelier hanging over the bar area. The North wall has a glass display cabinet made of rose wood that contains King Cobra's trophies. The whole room has a black and gold marble floor. The furniture in the room is covered with a very rich brocade silk in blues and golds. The sofa and chairs have a modern appearance but the end tables and coffee table are carved of oak in a style similar to the bar. There are Austrian crystal lamps on the end tables. There is a huge wall unit in the Southeast corner carved of oak that opens up to reveal a very sophisticated stereo/entertainment center. The 50" television is connected to a satellite dish on the roof. The Northeast and Southwest corner have windows with armored glass. This area has a large Belgian rug in a maroon and gold.

2. Library: Appears to be a replica of a medieval castle's library. The bookcases are all of mahogany and run from floor to ceiling. The shelves are full of both non-fiction and fiction, with many texts on economy. There is also an extensive collection of Arthurian novels, research papers, etc. What walls there are showing are paneled in mahogany and have pictures of Arthurian legends on them. The furniture is comfortable but resembles medieval furnishings. The chairs are covered with a rich red brocade with gold trim. The mahogany end tables each have a crystal lamp on them. The carpets on the mahogany floor are Persian in gold and blue.

A. Elevator from Citadel conference room.

B. Separate generator to power this floor.

3. King and Queen Cobra's bedroom: This room is fit for King Henry himself. The bed is 12' long of solid rose wood with huge carved bed posts and a canopy covered with gold silk brocade curtains. There are crystal and gold light fixtures over the headboard. The bed cover and sheets are of rich maroon and gold silk. The carpet is a Belgian done in gold, black and maroon. The floor is black marble. The lower half of all the walls are covered with a black and gold marble, the upper half covered with a gold silk fabric. The paintings on the walls are stolen works of art by the masters.

A. Queen's Walk-in Closet. Lined completely in cedar with gold rods and hooks.

B. King's Walk-in Closet. The same as Queen's.

4. Washroom: The lower half of the walls and the floor are of black marble, the upper half is of mirrors. The ceiling is of gold leaf with a gold and Austrian crystal chandelier. The vanity is of ebony wood with gold sinks and fixtures. The faucets are shaped like cobras with rubies for eyes. There are large rubies on the knobs.

5. Toilet: The floor and walls are black marble. The ceiling is of gold with a gold chandelier. The toilet is of gold porcelain with a gold handle. The cabinets are of ebony wood with gold fixtures.

6. Jacuzzi: The floor, lower half of the walls and the jacuzzi are of black marble. The upper half of the walls are mirrors. The ceiling is of gold with a gold chandelier.

7. Whirlpool bath: The floor and tub are of black marble. The walls are of mirrors. The ceiling is of gold with a gold chandelier. The but fixtures are of gold shaped like cobras with ruby eyes and knobs. There is a gold marble fountain in the Northeast corner with a gold rampant dragon spouting water.

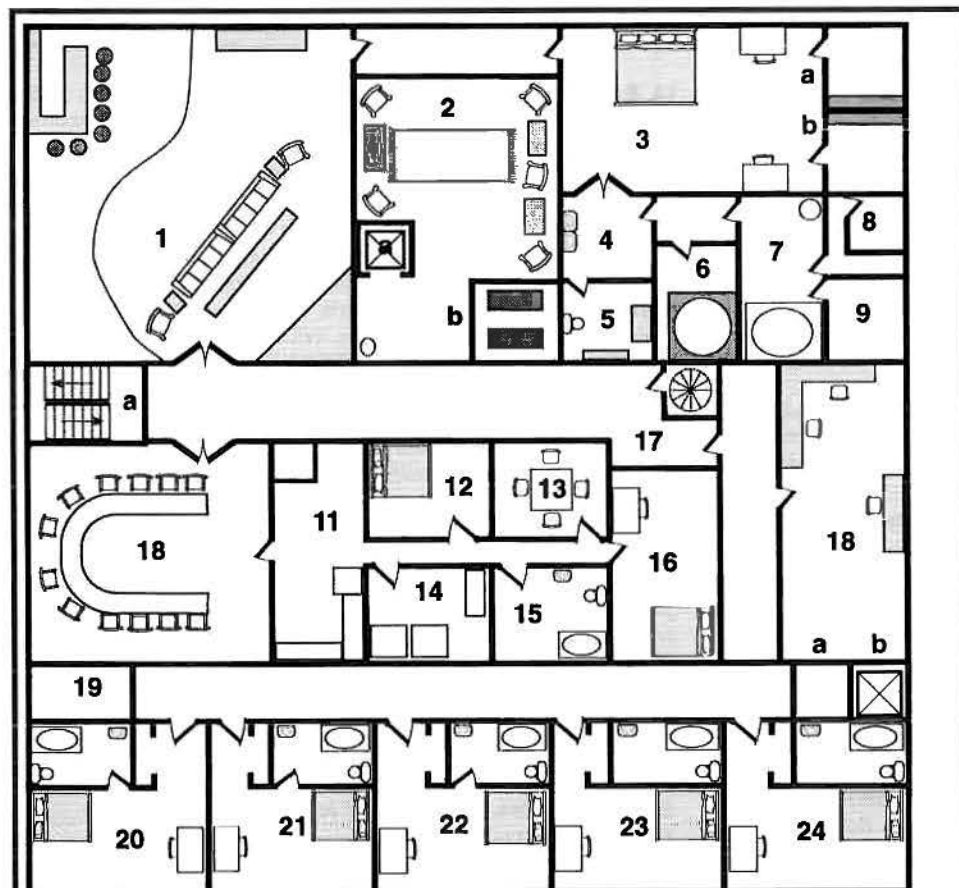
8. Shower room: The floor and walls are of black marble, the shower doors are of stained glass with images of Arthurian legends. The fixtures are of gold.

9. Sauna

10. Dining room: The lower half of the walls are of mahogany and the upper half is of deep blue silk brocade. The floor is of mahogany with a Belgian rug done in blues and golds under the table. The ceiling is of a cream colored tile with a gold and Austrian crystal chandelier. There are stolen works of art on the walls. The table is of mahogany with an Irish linen table cloth. The chairs are mahogany with needlepoint seat covers. The china is Wedgewood with Irish crystal glassware and gold flatware.

11. Kitchen: All the most modern appliances.

12. Chef's quarters: The furniture is of oak. The walls are painted in pale yellow with a cream colored shag rug. The bedding is a pale green and yellow floral pattern.



COIL Citadel—The Penthouse: Floor 25

1 inch = 10 meters

13. Lounge: The table and chairs are of oak and brass. The walls are painted gold and the carpet is a deep green pile. The ceiling light is brass.

14. Linen closet/Laundry: This has the most modern bulk loading machines.

15. Bathroom: The floor is dark green tile and the walls are peach and green tile. The sink, toilet, and tub are peach porcelain. The fixtures are of brass.

16. Butler's quarters: The furniture is of oak. The carpet is rich gold colored and the walls are covered with oak paneling. The bedding is a deep blue.

17. Stairway

A. Elevator shaft. Thick reinforced walls prevent entry.

18. Security Station: Contains monitors for all the hallways and non-private rooms on floors 20 - 25.

A. Generator for elevator and force field

B. Elevator to Citadel (Note *: The elevator is hidden behind an invisible force wall (Force Wall 15 PD/10 ED) and an illusion of solid wall (Images [sight] -5 to PER roll).

19. Weapons locker room

20. Ringhals' Room: This room is always immaculate. The floor is oak with a Persian carpet in reds and blues. The walls are blue and covered with her weapons collection. She has everything from medieval weapons (swords, maces, etc.) to modern firearms. The furniture is Danish modern teakwood. There is a computer on the desk. The bedding is a dark red. The books on the shelves are westerns and studies on weaponry.

21. Naga's Room: This room is done in antiques, most of them several hundreds of years old. The walls are hung with tapestries depicting wizards and dragons, and the desk is covered with ancient alchemical equipment. The bookshelf is full of books that are so old they appear to be falling apart. Several of the more modern volumes are on King Arthur. The room is always filled with a mysterious fog that seems to have no source. This room is done in golds.

22. Snakes' Room: This room is always perfect. The carpet is a dark brown pile. The walls are in cream colored wallpaper with a pale gold and pale green pattern. The furniture is of ash and there is a computer on the desk. The bedding pattern is done in shades of brown. There is a large picture of Sharpes over the bed. The bookshelves are filled with the great works of literature.

23. Unassigned Quarters: This room is a disaster. Boa has covered everything with plastic and stores his Harley Davidson here. There are motor parts on everything and boxes of parts piled in the corners. The room smells of motor oil and grease. Even though he has covered things there are still stains on the walls, doors, and carpet. The bathroom is a replica of a garage bathroom—totally filthy!

24. Boa's Room: This room is usually a mess. There are biker and wrestling magazines piled everywhere. The walls are covered with posters of wrestlers and Harley Davidsons, and there are also photos taken during his wrestling days. He has his wrestling costume in a display case over the bed. The room is done in reds.

THE COIL MOBILE BASE

The COIL organization required the ability to set up mobile bases all over the world. They usually take over one of their many legitimate enterprises and build temporary bases in or under them. The businesses that are generally used are entertainment or amusement centers such as movie theaters, arcades and bowling alleys.

The mobile bases have no actual defenses, with the exception of concealment. COIL takes great pains to hide their bases from everyone. If the hidden base is discovered, COIL will evacuate and relocate on the other side of town. They will lay low, rebuilding their operation in the new locations slowly, and covertly observe the original base.

The bases themselves have a number of agents assigned to them depending on the size of the base and it's expected operations. While each base is unique, all COIL bases have three to five emergency exits that enable fast escape and foil pursuit. These emergency exits only allow pre-programmed individuals to use them.

GROUND FLOOR

1. Standard Video Arcade: This is the typical video arcade with rows of pinball machines and video games. There are sit-down video games and coin changers. In the front of the store, the South side, there is a cashier's desk with prizes and a drink vending machine.

A. Secret Entrance. The pinball machine slides toward the North wall and reveals a staircase.

2. Hallway: This is the "employees only" hallway that leads to the lounge and office.

3. The Lounge: This is the employees lounge, complete with drink and candy machines. There are lockers on the South and South-east walls.

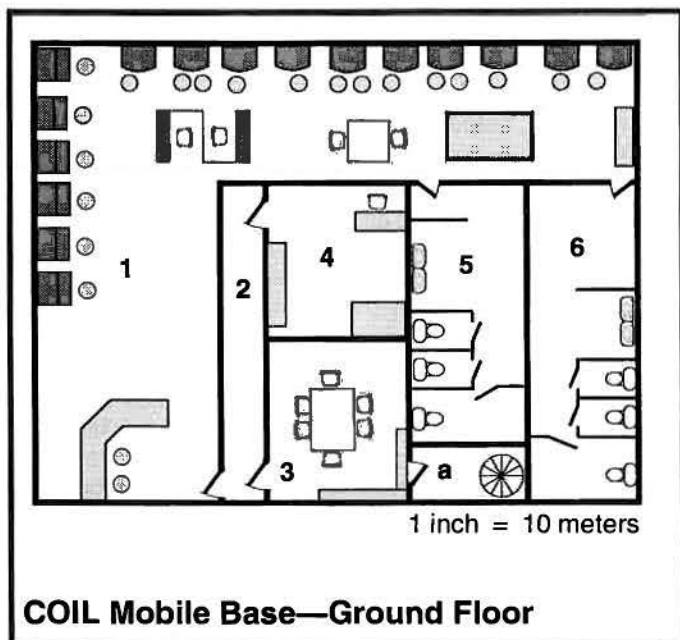
A. Secret Door. This door, located behind the lockers on the East wall, leads to a staircase that goes to the underground base.

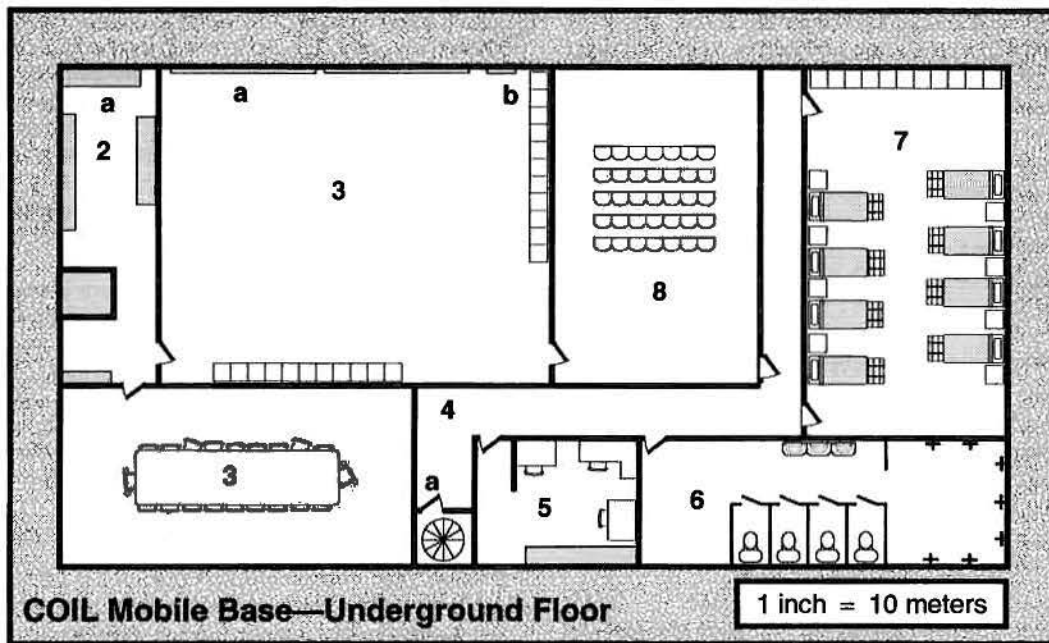
4. The Office: This is the manager's office. There is a safe in the Southeast corner.

5. Female Restroom

6. Male Restroom

7. Garage: This is a parking garage. There are two stories above ground and one below. This is also a secret door for vehicles.





UNDERGROUND FLOOR

- 1. Garage:** This is a secret underground garage for COIL vehicles.
 - A. Dual Garage Doors. These doors lead into the garage next door.
 - B. Secret Door. This secret personnel door also leads into the garage.
- 2. Kitchen:** All of the modern conveniences and is fully stocked.
 - A. Secret Stairs. These lead up to the secret pinball machine entrance.
- 3. The Dining Room:** This room has dining table large enough to seat all the personnel at the base.
- 4. Hallway:** This hallway leads to the heart of the base.
 - A. The Stairway. Leads to the lounge upstairs.
- 5. Communications and Computers:** This room contains communication equipment sufficient to contact agents in the field and most other COIL bases. It also houses the base computer center and has links to at least one other COIL computer center elsewhere. The South wall has 5 private emergency exits for fast escape.
- 6. The Unisex Bathroom:** Full bathroom and shower facilities.
- 7. The Barracks:** This room sports 8 triple-bunks for the agents. There are also lockers on the North and South walls.
- 8. The Briefing Room:** This room is used for large meetings, briefings and demonstrations. There is a wall-sized TV monitor on the North wall.

THE COIL VEHICLES

The Strike Van — This van looks completely normal, with one exception: the back door is hinged as an assault ramp. The interior of the van is set up so that six men could sit on both sides of the walls. There is a weapons locker right behind the driver and passenger's seats.

The Communications Van — Like the Strike Van, the Communications Van looks like a normal van. This van has two different communications and surveillance equipment banks. The back has room for two operators to run the equipment. The van also sports camera drones that are remote controlled by the operators in the van.

The Battle Van — This van looks a little larger than normal. It also appears to be armored. There is a pop-up turret on the roof that is concealed as a sun roof. The turret contains a .50 caliber machine gun (3D6 RKA) that can fire in any direction. The sides of the van have pop-out turrets with M-60 LMGs (2D6 + 1 RKA). These weapons are fired by the three agents inside the van. The van itself is heavily armored (DEF 10/15 Body).

The Covert Limousine — The Covert Limousine looks completely normal. This vehicle is used to haul covert agents back and forth from missions. The limousine itself has been suped-up and can travel at high speeds. The trunk has been replaced with a concealed smoke screen machine and a paint changer that forms a cloud that, when driven through, changes the color of the vehicle. The windows of the car are paint resistant, tinted glass.

The Copter-Limousine — The Copter-limousine is an unusual vehicle indeed. It looks like an over-sized limo with a prominent sun roof. When activated, the blades of the copter come out of the sun roof and unfold, fins unfold from the sides of the trunk and the trunk itself unfolds to form the rear rotor. This vehicle only carries two passengers as the blades take up the back seats.

The Repair Truck — The Repair Truck is a modified semi-tractor and trailer that has back doors that drop down to form a ramp. The trailer itself is a little wider than normal. The ramp enables other COIL vehicles to drive right inside, even while the truck is moving. The truck has several rows of tools lining the walls, a winch, and a small generator in the front of the trailer.

Other Vehicles — COIL also utilizes normal vehicles when needed. The special vehicles should be sparse because of the resources needed to build them. Other normal vehicles can easily be purchased.

THE SERPENTINE CIRCLE

Membership: King Cobra (leader), Queen Cobra, Ringhals, Naga, Snake, Boa Constrictor, Alligator, Frill, and Water Moccasin.

Origin: King Cobra knew he couldn't control all COIL activities directly every second of the day, but he wanted something more than COIL agent leaders. He wanted a group of super-powered knights to lead his inner circle, his Serpentine Circle. It appealed to his sense of majesty.

King Cobra's first experimental subject was a Nobel Prize winning scientist, Dr. Jefferson Durant. Unfortunately, after King Cobra killed his family, Durant (now calling himself Black Mamba) turned against King Cobra and COIL.

The second experiment was on volunteers from the ranks of his fanatical COIL agents. Only one survived. Fred Stiles was an agent with a secret. He was a mutant prior to joining COIL. After the experiment Fred was transformed into Slither, a half man/half anaconda. The power that Slither wielded prompted King Cobra to make him his first member of the Serpentine Circle.

King Cobra's next success was Mary Grant. She served him well as Adder, until King Cobra discovered she was pregnant and ordered the child killed. Terrified, she fled to Europe. King Cobra declared her a traitor to the cause and ordered her hunted down and killed. The child was never discovered.

Later, four mercenaries volunteered to be subjected to the COIL-gene formula. The leader, Malcolm Maxwell, became Python. Jim Carpenter, an ex-cat burglar, was turned into the 40 ft. Hiss. An ex-pro football player named Mack Fog was turned into the powerful Komodo, and Jack Dunnet, an ex-wrestler, became Boa Constrictor.

All went well for a year or so, until King Cobra found the location of Black Mamba's hideout. King Cobra decided to personally deal with Mamba and told the Serpentine Circle to wait nearby for him. Unfortunately for King Cobra, Black Mamba was (at that time) employed by VIPER. Inside, he found Black Mamba, the VIPER operative Brick, and several VIPER squads.

As the VIPER force pounded on him, King Cobra called for his Serpentine Circle. As the battle raged, destroying the installation, the Serpentine Circle was slowly being beaten back. Fearing capture, King Cobra ordered Python, Hiss and Komodo to guard the "tactical regrouping" of Slither, Boa Constrictor and himself.

Python realized King Cobra intended to flee and leave them to be killed and captured. Once King Cobra was out of sight, he stopped the fight and had his men surrender. Black Mamba understood what King Cobra had done to Python and his men and offered them a place in VIPER's Serpent Syndicate. King Cobra exploded with anger when he discovered Python's treachery and placed a price on their heads of every member of the Serpent Syndicate.

Reports of another scientist isolating the COIL-gene formula disturbed King Cobra. He dispatched Alligator and a few COIL agents to Dr. Lancer's house in Mexico with orders to bring the man back to serve COIL. Dr. Lancer refused the invitation. Alligator threatened his family and home, driving Dr. Lancer to desperate measures. He took the COIL-gene formula, in hopes that he might be able to defend his family.

Dr. Lancer was changed into the super-powerful Gila Monster and attacked Alligator and the COIL agents. After the fight, Dr. Lancer's family was dead, his house and laboratory demolished and years of research destroyed. Gila Monster escaped and later joined VIPER. Yet another possible member of the Serpentine Circle gone.

Realizing his mistake with Python and Gila Monster, King Cobra improved the COIL-gene formula to enhance the subject's loyalty to himself. The first successful subject was an ex-circus strongman, now alligator wrestler, named Gene Banks. Banks had asked to be made into a human alligator. King Cobra King was thrilled, and did so. The newly-born Alligator was the third permanent member of the Circle.

King Cobra's search for suitable subjects for transformation continued. He discovered a young woman, running from the law, had been taken in by one of COIL's New York bases. Upon her audience with King Cobra, he promised Kate Malone the ability to hide or run from anyone that might pursue her. Kate decided to accept his offer and was transformed. King Cobra gave her incredible speed and agility along with great running ability. She also lost some of her height and grew a tail, but did not mind the obvious mutation. Kate Malone was now Frill, the frilled lizard.

The last of King Cobra's Serpentine Circle was, in some ways, one of his first successes. King Cobra had heard of a "snake man" that was working for a criminal organization based in England. After some investigation, he deduced that he had found Adder's long-lost child. He contacted the group and discovered that "Snake" considered the group's leader, Sharpes, to be his father. King Cobra told Snake who his real father was and offered him a place in the Serpentine Circle. Sharpes protested, but he and King Cobra came to an agreement; Snake would join the Serpentine Circle in exchange for the COIL's services. Snake still visits his adopted father now and then, doing some odd jobs for Sharpes whenever possible, but he is now a full member of the Serpentine Circle.

His circle of "knights" complete, King Cobra decided that a King must have his Queen. He considered several candidates, including his secretary, the attractive June Smythe. When he discovered she had an identical twin sister, he decided King Cobra must have two Queens. He convinced them both to submit to transformation; Jane became Ringhals, the spitting cobra and June became the very likeness of King Cobra himself. Ringhals hated what she had become but enjoyed the power a leadership position gives her.

One of the first members of the Serpentine Circle, Slither, continued to mutate, becoming bigger and stronger. Slither's loyal to King Cobra weakened. Eventually, he attacked King Cobra while he was swimming and nearly killed him. Other members of the Serpentine Circle stopped Slither and he fled.

While under the care of the best COIL doctors, King Cobra was approached by Dr. Paula Davis, who had been an assistant to Dr. Lancer, a.k.a Gila. She convinced King Cobra that she had been the one who had informed COIL of Dr. Lancer's discoveries. She had stolen a vial of the COIL-gene formula and used it on herself, becoming Water Moccasin. All Water Moccasin wanted was a place in the Serpentine Circle. King Cobra agreed.

Unlike King Cobra's planned and orderly expansions to his empire, the addition of Naga to the Serpentine Circle was pure random chance. A COIL agent on surveillance of a DEMON operation had discovered their objective; a young woman who demonstrated great magical abilities.

King Cobra had the woman brought to his citadel. She claimed to be the daughter of the great sorcerer, Merlin and implored him to take her as his subject. Delighted with her obeisance, he welcomed her into the ranks of his Serpentine Circle and named her Naga, a mysterious, wise, and mythical serpent of the east. Though not reptilian, her powers and insight are respected by the rest of the Serpentine Circle.

Goals: King Cobra has one ultimate goal . . . complete world domination. He is bent on global conquest and will stop at nothing to obtain it. In his mind, his success is just a matter of time. This greater goal has made his other plans seem almost minuscule; he intends to crush VIPER, , Genocide should be crushed for their pitiful, but continued interference in his other plans, the destruction of DEMON would clear up any discussion about Naga's membership, and so on.

The members of the Serpentine Circle know their command of COIL agents is at the whim of King Cobra, who personally commands their fanatic loyalty. Still, each member has individual goals and jockies for position within the COIL hierarchy. Queen Cobra, Alligator, Frill and Water Moccasin intend to enjoy themselves doing whatever makes King Cobra happy. World domination and personal power are enjoyable side-effects of the process.

Ringhals' one goal is to take over COIL, then the world. She believes that King Cobra is a "loon" and will never complete the mission he has set for himself. The one goal she shares with King Cobra is the destruction of VIPER.

Boa Constrictor is in love with Ringhals and wants to please her in any way he can. He knows of her plans and wants to help her, but at the same time will do nothing to cross King Cobra.

Snake also has his eyes on King Cobra's throne. He sees his real "father" as a crazed madman with delusions of grandeur.

No one knows what Naga's goals are, other than to serve her King.

Tactics: If all members of the Serpentine Circle are present, they will place any agents that are present (usually two to four six-teams) will position themselves between King Cobra and any paranormals in the opposition. Boa Constrictor, Alligator and Water Moccasin will join in the front line and help the agents. Frill is a trouble shooter who will run throughout the combat giving aid to those who need it. Snake, Queen Cobra, Ringhals, and Marilyn all stay relatively close to King Cobra to protect him. Any command and support agents from the six-teams will stay by King Cobra's side continually, giving information to the King. The Serpentine Circle has several special maneuvers and call signs they use in combat. These maneuvers are:

Cold Blooded: This means that another character is susceptible or vulnerable to whoever it is directed at. (e.g., "Hey, Alligator, Seeker is cold blooded.")

Slither: Scatter, dive for cover or dodge!

In the Hole: This means that the mission is a bust, get out any way that is possible. Regroup at base or other rendezvous point.

Ignore "?": This means the exact opposite. Everyone hold to coordinate on the person, party or type of person stated. (i.e., Defender, VIPER, any brick)

Bare Your Fangs: The kid gloves are off. Use your most lethal attacks.

Snake Charmer: There is an egoist in the opposition. Find and eliminate.

Eat Enemy's Eggs: Destroy or grab foci of the enemy.

Protect the Babes: Grab any wounded (mutates first then agents), and "bug-out".

Quetzalcoatl: Take out anyone who can fly.

Relations: The Serpentine Circle are a close knit group. They all are mutated, with the exception of Naga, share a certain camaraderie because of this. King Cobra has, personally, chosen each member for their strengths and their weaknesses.

There are a few things that may cause problems in the future. Ringhals and Snake have shaken the loyalty to King Cobra imposed by the COIL-gene formula and are both secretly plotting the downfall of King Cobra. They both feel he is insane and COIL could be better served by deposing King Cobra. However, both know how much power he wields and are biding their time. They will not strike unless King Cobra reveals a weakness they can exploit. Neither knows of the other's plans.

Boa Constrictor knows of Ringhals' plan, but will not act against King Cobra unless he is sure that Ringhals can gain full control. He will not betray Ringhals because he is in love with her and longs for the day when they can rule together. Ringhals loves Boa, but rarely shows her true feelings. Neither will express their affection in front of the others of the Serpentine Circle in order to avoid ridicule.

Alligator, Water Moccasin and Frill are completely loyal to King Cobra and COIL. They will protect King Cobra in dire emergencies with their own lives. Both Ringhals and Snake know this.

Queen Cobra still loves her King even though he mistreats her. She despises her sister but will still side with her in some arguments. She secretly loves Snake but will probably never do anything about this because it would anger King Cobra.

Naga remains a mystery, sometimes aiding one faction or another, other times remaining aloof from what she considers petty bickering. Outwardly, Naga serves her King loyally and follows his orders implicitly. Inwardly, she has come to mistrust King Cobra, but she has kept this to herself. She will not oppose the King because his leadership suits her purposes. She is civil, but cool to the other members of the Serpentine Circle, except for Ringhals and Snake. While she will not aid them at this time, she respects their independence.

All-in-all, the Serpentine Circle will act as a unit in field situations, making sure to follow King Cobra. They know that

if they take any internal arguments with them into combat, it will be their own throat that they cut.

Reputation: All of the members of the Serpentine Circle are individually and collectively known to most law enforcement agencies. Their reputation is that of very dangerous and deadly organization that shows no mercy to opponents.

The general populace has heard of the Serpentine Circle and COIL but certainly lacks knowledge of specifics. Most people will recognize King Cobra, his fanatical ways and that he is the leader of COIL.

KING COBRA

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
20	STR	10	OCV: 10
29	DEX	57	DCV: 10
30	CON	40	ECV: 6
15	BODY	10	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
18	INT	8	
18	EGO	16	Costs
30	PRE	20	
6	COM	-2	Char: 210 Base: 100
20	PD	16	+ +
20	ED	14	Powers: 624 Disad: 734
6	SPD	21	= =
10	REC	0	Totals: 834 834
60	END	0	
40	STUN	0	

Cost	Powers	END
33	3d6 cumulative major transformation: only has an 11- chance of ever affecting someone, must be imbibed, IIF—potion bottles, 0 END	
75	Multi-power	
5u	6d6 NND: END, no range (not vs. force field)	3
7u	10d6 EB: 0 END	
6u	3" stretch: 0 END +35 STR, 0 END (squeeze only)	
20	+10/+10 armor: OIF—battlearmor	
15	2d6 HKA: (3d6+1 w/STR) OAF—sword	1/5
25	Sonar (360 degrees)	
5	I.R. vision	
3	Perk: leader of COIL	
10	Perk: wealthy	
3	Acrobatics 15-	
3	Breakfall 15-	
3	Stealth 15-	
3	Scientist	
4	S.C.: Biochemistry 14-	
4	S.C.: Chemistry 14-	
4	S.C.: Zoology 14-	
4	S.C.: Genetics 14-	
100	Followers (130,000 agents, 75 pts. base) agents costing 165 pts. each	
52	Followers: 32 agents, 100 pts. base, agent costing 225 pts. each	
100	Headquarters: one 500 pt. base (The Citadel)	
100	Other bases and vehicles: 500 pt. reserve 20 +2 overall levels	

Cost	Powers	END
20	Comic book martial arts:	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage	
	Kick -2 +1 8d6	
	Punch +0 +2 6d6	
	Throw +0 +1 4d6 + V/5	
	Block +2 +2 Block	
	Dodge 0 +5 Dodge	
100+	Disadvantages	
10	2 x STUN from fire attacks	
10	2 x STUN from cold attacks	
10	Enraged if orders are not obeyed 11-/8-	
15	Treats humans like experimental animals	
20	Reputation (extreme, evil monster) 14-	
20	Hunted by UNTIL 11-	
15	Hunted by police 11-	
10	Hunted by Demon 11-	
20	Distinctive features: reptile	
10	Public ID	
594	Villain bonus	

Background: Dr. Timothy Blank was a research scientist with the Book of Man Project, which was seeking to completely map the human genetic code. After it was discovered that the volunteers in his research had not been fully informed of the possible hazards of the tests he was conducting, he was thrown out of the project.

A minor setback, he reasoned. How could short-sighted bureaucrats truly stop genius? He used his own money to set up a laboratory in secret and continued his experiments.

Timothy had always loved snakes, admired their resilience, ability to survive deprivations, and their ability to create fear in humans despite their size. They became the source of his inspiration.

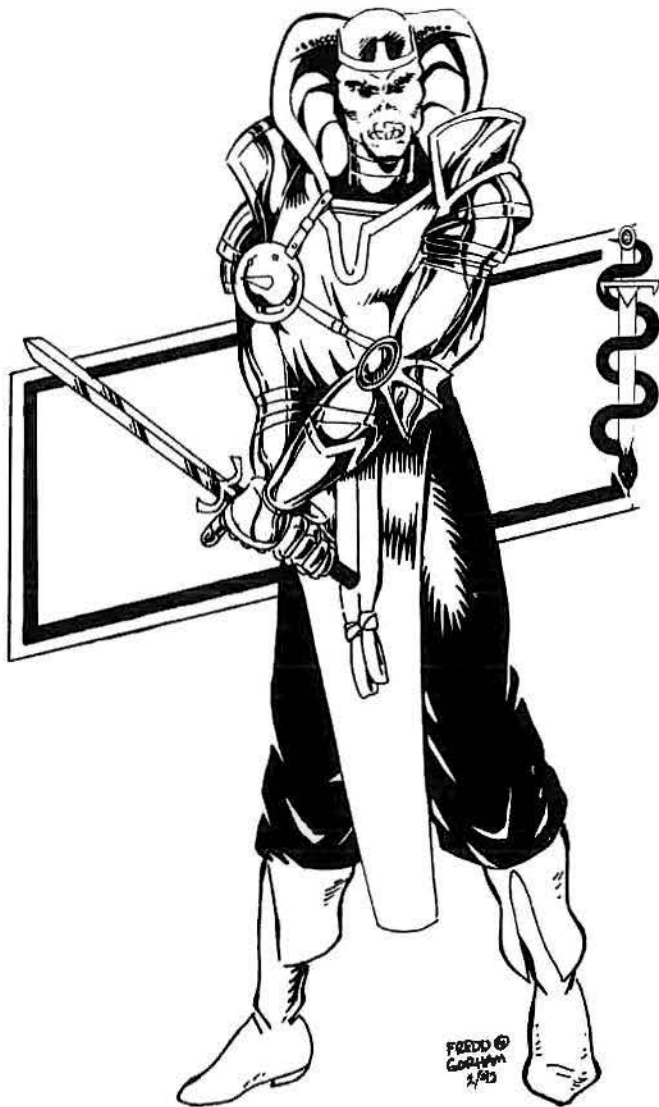
After many weeks of experimentation, he took the genetic material from a king cobra, truly the greatest snake of all, and merged it with his own genetic material. He watched with fascination as his skin changed to scales, his teeth to fangs, and his tongue to an elongated fork. The fact that the pain of the transformation was excruciating was of no consequence, nor was the fact that his body had been twisted into a hideous, inhuman creature. Timothy Black thought of the entire human race as laboratory specimens, and that included himself.

Timothy called himself Cobra, and later declared himself King Cobra. He is a victim of his own twisted brilliance and lack of humanity. Worse for the human race, he wishes to remake the world in his own image. He dreams of one day seeing every human in the world transformed in the same fashion, with King Cobra as Emperor of the New Race.

To this end, he has been injecting captives, unsuspecting volunteers and self-destructive volunteers them with the COIL-gene formula, a genetic bridge between humanity and the snake world that King Cobra created and used on himself.

With his own convoluted logic King Cobra came to the conclusion that his ambitions were similar to those of fabled King Arthur; to unite all men under one inspired, benevolent despot. So he set out to create his majestic kingdom, and people it with men and women of his New Race. As agents were hired and trained, he slowly administered his incredible COIL-gene formula to them in the food they ate and the water they drank.

However, King Cobra was not satisfied simply with "loyal minions" by the thousand. If he were to be King, he would need "knights" to serve him and take up his quests. Persevering in the face of betrayal, treachery, and minor failures, the Serpentine Circle was formed.



With thousands of loyal agents and his circle of faithful knights, King Cobra and COIL are ready to sweep aside lesser nations before them and secure their rightful place as rulers of the world.

Quote: "Bow before me or be crushed in the coils of the snake!"

Personality: King Cobra (Dr. Timothy Blank) is an extremely dangerous megalomaniac. He is arrogant, insufferably rude, and has delusions of godhood. King Cobra also believes that he is, somehow, the reincarnation of King Arthur and treats most people like serfs or slaves.

King Cobra seeks to dominate the world and transform all humanity into reptilian horrors like himself. He has no regard for human life and sees everyone and everything as his personal experimental laboratory.

For all of his madness, King Cobra is neither stupid, nor blindly overconfident. He is a brilliant madman. Those who laugh at COIL's threats are grossly underestimating him.

Powers/Tactics: King Cobra's powers involve a genetic transformation. This transformation will turn anyone affected into a snake-hybrid much like King Cobra or Black Mamba.

Approximately 40% of the population seems to be immune to this transformation, while (in addition) not everyone who is not immune is transformed. If the subject proves immune on their first exposure (i.e. the 110 activation roll fails) they will never be affected by the COIL-gene. If they are affected on the first exposure, the COIL-gene will always affect him, even if they are not immediately transformed, or any transformation is reversed.

COIL-gene transformations may be reversed within seventy-two hours of exposure by bombarding the victim with low levels of radiation, destroying the delicate balance of the COIL-gene formula.

After seventy-two hours the process can only be reversed if the COIL-gene can be isolated and removed from the victim's DNA. This should be an extreme challenge for any scientist ability (Black Mamba, a Nobel Prize winner, hasn't been able to accomplish this.)

King Cobra has transformed a number of agents. Half of his COIL agents are mutated. The other half are failed mutations, most of which retain the loyalty imposed by the COIL-gene formula. The 40% who are immune receive extensive conditioning to insure their loyalty to King Cobra. King Cobra realizes that, until his eventual rule, "merely human" agents are required for his more subtle schemes.

In combat, King Cobra will assess the battle and either not engage in the fray at all or use his NND on those who do not have visible force fields. Then he will use the EB on those the NND did not affect. He rarely gets into hand to hand combat but when he does, he will try to squeeze the life out of his foe.

Once a foe of his is unconscious, King Cobra may inject his fallen victim with the COIL-gene formula. This is rarely done in the field because the test subject must be restrained.

Appearance: King Cobra is 6' 2" tall and weighs 200 lbs. His scales are green and gold. Proud of his "superior physique" he rarely wears more than a white silk loincloth and golden arm and leg bands.

When dealing with "business matters" he wears the most expensive and tasteful business suits. While "holding court" King Cobra has been known to dress in Medieval court clothing. Occasionally, King Cobra will wear an armored suit that resembles Medieval plate armor made of modern materials and carry a sword he calls Excalibur into combat.

QUEEN COBRA

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 8
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8
23	CON	26	ECV: 4
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
13	INT	3	
11	EGO	2	
20	PRE	10	Costs
12	COM	1	Char: 135 Base: 100
15	PD	12	+
15	ED	10	Powers: 190 Disad: 225
5	SPD	17	=
8	REC	0	Totals: 325 325
46	END	0	
35	STUN	0	
Cost	Powers	END	
62	Multi-power 62 active		
4u	5d6 NND, (not vs 15 force field), 0 END no range		
6u	8d6 EB, 0 END		
6	+4d6 H.A.: scepter—OAF		
12	Comic book martial arts		
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV Damage
	Kick	-2	+1 11d6 (w/scepter)
	Throw	+0	+1 7d6 + v/5
	(w/scepter)		
	Dodge	0	+5 Dodge
2	+1" running (7" total)		
5	IR vision		
25	Sonar (360 degrees)		
30	Armor (+10/+10)		
7	Mind link (see agents)		
7	Acrobatics 11-		
5	Breakfall 15-		
5	Stealth 15-		
3	Acting 13-		
1	K.S. circus performing 8-		
10	+1 overall level		
100+	Disadvantages		
10	2 x Stun from fire attacks		
10	2 x Stun from cold attacks		
20	Hunted by VIPER 8-		
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-		
15	Loyal to COIL and King Cobra		
20	Regal attitude (comm/total)		
15	Superiority complex (comm/strong)		
20	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable		
10	Public I.D.		
95	Villain bonus		

RINGHALS

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 8
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8
23	CON	26	ECV: 5
20	BODY	20	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
18	INT	8	
14	EGO	8	
20	PRE	10	Costs
10	COM	0	Char: 151 Base: 100
10	PD	7	+
10	ED	7	Powers: 214 Disad: 265
5	SPD	17	=
10	REC	4	Totals: 365 365
46	END	0	
40	STUN	0	
Cost	Powers	END	
75	Multi-power: (75 active) (spit)		
7u	5d6 flash vs. N-ray and all vision: END		
4u	4d6 RKA: END, reduced penetration, reduced by range, no knockback		
6u	2d6 flash vs. N-ray and all vision: END linked to 2D6 RKA: END, reduced penetration, reduced by range, no knockback		
26	2d6 RKA: AP, OAF—pistol, 6 uses in 4 (speed loader) clips, recoverable (bandoleer)		
26	2d6 RKA: AP, OAF—pistol, 6 uses in 4 (speed loader) clips, recoverable (bandoleer)		
20	+10 PD/+10 ED armor: OIF—battle suit		
10	+5" running (11" total)		
5	Infrared vision		
7	Fast draw 16-		
3	Ambidexterity		
3	Combat sense 13-		
3	Acrobatics 14-		
3	Sleight of hand		
4	W.F. small arms, common missile weapons		
3	P.S. trick shooter (DEX) 14-		
6	+3 w/ pistols		
3	+1 w/ multi-power		
100+	Disadvantages		
10	2 x Stun from cold attacks		
10	Enraged if subordinates disobey orders 11-/8-		
20	Hunted by VIPER 8-		
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-		
15	Loyal to COIL cause (com/strong)		
10	Hatred of King Cobra (com/moderate)		
15	In love with Boa Constrictor		
5	Hides any emotion from sister (uncom/moderate)		
20	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable		
10	Public I.D.		
140	Villain bonus		

Background: Jane and June Smythe were identical twins; so identical that even their parents had trouble telling them apart. As they matured there was no mistaking who was who.

Jane and June were the daughters of the Amazing Smythe, a circus knife thrower and sharp shooter. He was the headliner for a small family circus that was based in London and toured Europe. Their mother was the leading aerialist for the trapeze act and the assistant for her husband's knife throwing act. As the girls grew they learned to work in both of their parents' acts, and loved it.

Jane showed an affinity to the knives and often played target for her father to liven up the act. June preferred the trapeze and spent hours perfecting her swings and flips.

The girls' grandfather was the circus' ringmaster and, secretly, an agent of COIL. He was constantly trying to recruit his daughter and son-in-law in to the COIL. They continued to refuse, even though they wouldn't have to give up their circus careers, and could make themselves wealthy. If they wouldn't do it for themselves, wouldn't they do it for their daughter's future, he asked?

They said that for the sake of the children they wanted nothing to do with criminals. After one of these heated arguments the girls' parents warned the grandfather that if he didn't stop pressuring them, they would turn him over to the authorities as a spy. The grandfather didn't believe them, but mentioned the threat to another COIL agent. The London commander found out and dispatched some agents to arrange an "accident" for the girls' parents.

When the girls were ten years old, both of their parents died in a car crash when the brakes failed on their car. The police investigation proved foul play but no one was ever arrested. The girl's grandfather knew it could only be VIPER. He never did discover the truth.

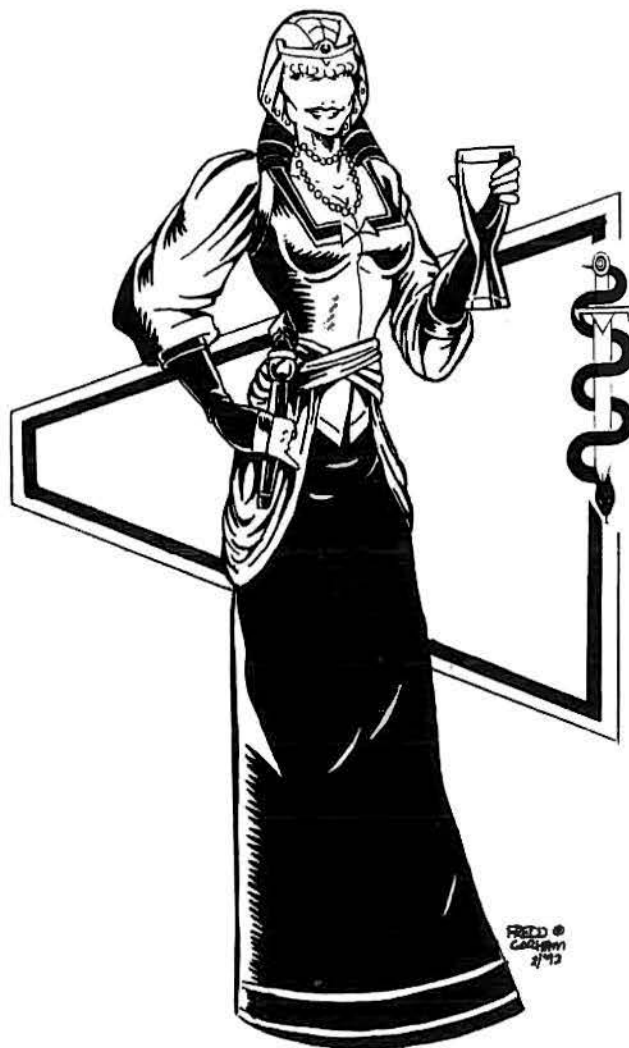
The girls were raised in the circus by their grandfather and by the time they were in their teens they were circus stars in their own rights. The girls were also fully indoctrinated with the COIL philosophy. Their grandfather told them that VIPER had killed their parents and the only way to avenge them was to join COIL. At the age of seventeen both the girls became COIL agents and moved to the United States. Their grandfather remained in London. He was killed in one of the frequent VIPER raids.

Jane took her sharp shooting skills and honed them within the organization. And by the time she was twenty she was the master marksman within the field agents. She became the master of every gun in the COIL arsenal, but she always favored her father's old six guns. June, who unfortunately was not as intelligent as her sister, proved to be the perfect secretary. Within the same two years she found herself promoted to the position of personal secretary to the King himself. This was when the two girls came to the attention of King Cobra and their lives changed forever.

King Cobra was looking for a mate, after the failed affair with Adder, and he found his eyes straying toward his beautiful secretary, June. Then, when he discovered that she had a twin sister, his interest became an obsession. He had to have this matched set for his own, no matter what. King Cobra wine and dined them both and in a short time the two were completely taken in by his charm. In fact, King Cobra found himself in love for the first time in his life, but he couldn't choose which he loved more; they looked so much alike. But the women were very different. King Cobra found himself drawn to June because she was so sexy and bubbly. But Jane attracted him with her high intelligence and cunning. King Cobra finally decided to ask them to submit to his COIL-gene formula and see what happened. The women were so enamored of him that they never questioned. So one day they were both injected and the results were amazing. Even though the twins were administered the exact same formula they became different mutations. None of the doctors were ever able to explain this, but King Cobra loved the results. June became an exact copy of himself, a humanoid king cobra, and yet she retained most of her amazing beauty. But Jane took on the traits of the spitting cobra, a ringhals. So King Cobra dubbed June as Queen Cobra and choose her as his official mate, and he gave Jane the name Ringhals and made her the commander of all his field agents. Both then became members of his Serpentine Circle.

Since their transformations the two women have taken completely different roads. Queen, being just a figure head with no real power, has taken to reading Shakespeare and has become obsessed with becoming the perfect queen. She imitates the way of speech that she reads in the plays of the Bard, and even quotes the famous queens from them when she thinks the lines fit. Unfortunately she often misquotes and comes off as a real "air-head". But King Cobra still loves her and will not tolerate anyone or anything upsetting her. Ringhals has become bitter about her transformation, and jealous of the position of power her sister holds. She believes that she would make a much better queen, and has become the best commander in COIL to prove to King Cobra that she is more worthy of the position.

Quote: Queen: "My prisoner or my guest? by your death verily, one of them you shall be. (misquoted from The Winter's Tale, Queen Hermione); Ringhals: "Let's see how quick you REALLY are. DRAW!"





Ringhals only loves one person other than herself and her sister, and that is Boa. But she refuses to acknowledge it openly; it may jeopardize her position in the organization. Ringhals secretly hopes to kill King Cobra some day and take over COIL.

Powers/Tactics: Queen Cobra has been endowed with a venomous bite since her transformation. But it requires her to hold an opponent tightly to administer it. She doesn't like to "lower" herself to physical attacks if she can help it, so most of her combat consists of striking an enemy with her mace-like scepter. She tends to hold back in a fight and wait for the enemy to come to her. Queen Cobra has also been trained in martial arts by the organization and, in combination with her gymnastics, acrobatics, and enhanced agility, she has become deadly when she uses them. Ringhals has also developed a venom but she is able to spit hers just like her namesake. In fact, she has practiced until she is about as accurate with her spitting as she is with her sharp shooting. As for that, Ringhals has patterned herself after the great gunslingers of the old west. She prefers to use her father's six-shooters, but has had them modified to make them extremely deadly. She uses teflon-coated bullets that will penetrate even bullet-proof vests. Ringhals' fast draw has become legend within the underworld and her flashy gun-fighter style is well known. The COIL-gene formula has increased her already incredible speed to the point that no one will ever beat her. And she has also developed the unerring ability to spot a target's weak spots or find them in the dark with her infrared vision.

Ringhals' favorite maneuver in combat is to verbally taunt an opponent to give her time to spot his/her weaknesses, then spit venom in their eyes to blind them. While they are unable to see, she then draws her guns and drops them. She has developed a reputation of ruthlessness, and is never hesitant to drop her own men if she feels they are not performing up to her standards. She loves to command and is greatly respected, and feared, by those who work for her.

Appearance: Queen Cobra has retained almost all of her beauty despite the transformation. She has a body that men fight over and has begun wearing outfits that enhance it. She believes herself to be Queen Guinevere and tends to dress in the styles she believes they wore in Camelot. She loves jewelry but refuses to wear anything except the very best. Queen is about 5' 8" tall, weighs 115 lbs., and her skin is green gray and scaly, but she uses creams to give it a moist sheen. Her eyes have remained deep blue.

Ringhals found that the COIL-gene formula caused her to grow. She is now 6' 3", 135 lbs. of solid muscle, with grayish-green scales and yellow eyes. She wears a modified field commander's uniform almost all the time with her six-guns on her hips.

Personality: Queen Cobra is sadly not as educated as her colorful sister and has spent her life getting by on her looks. She gives the impression of being an "air-head" and tends to giggle at the most inappropriate moments. She has a terrible memory and forgets things that she is not interested in. She will sit at the "round table" during the meetings, but if you ask her afterwards what was discussed, she can't tell you. And Queen tends to be very trusting, and because of this she is easily manipulated by others. So King Cobra has made it impossible for anyone to approach her without him or Alligator present. He is taking no chances with him Queen Cobra.

Ringhals on the other hand is highly intelligent, and even dangerous. She is extremely cunning and cruel, and will take on any challenge that she thinks she can win. She has become a brilliant tactician and has orchestrated some of the most successful missions in COIL history. The King has become dependent on her intelligence, and even still loves her, but she shows him only cold respect. To her sister she shows contempt, but she secretly still loves her twin dearly.

NAGA (Ninamar)

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 7
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7
23	CON	26	ECV: 7
11	BODY	2	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
28	INT	18	
20	EGO	20	Costs
20	PRE	10	
20	COM	5	Char: 136 Base: 100
5	PD	2	+ +
5	ED	0	Powers: 464 Disad: 500
4	SPD	10	= =
10	REC	4	Totals: 600 600
46	END	0	
35	STUN	4	

Cost	Powers	END
100	100 pt. Magical power pool (uses END from END reserve)	Varies
57	Control Cost: 0 Phase to change, incantations, gestures, DCV concentration	
3	Life support vs. aging	
40	Clairsentience: precognition	
45	+10 PD/+10 ED force field: (the magical aura of Merlin), persistent	4
40	200 pts. END reserve: REC = 20	
20	Regeneration, 2 BODY/turn	
20	20 pts. mental defense (24 pts. total)	
3	Mental awareness	
10	Instant change	
5	Cramming	
10	Eidetic memory	
3	Speed reading	
3	Animal handler	
15	Languages: Latin, Old English, Gaelic (all imitate dialects)	
3	Lip-reading 11-	
3	Oratory 13-	
3	Riding 13-	
3	Seduction 13-	
23	K.S. Magic 25-	
7	K.S. Necromancy 17-	
7	K.S. Arthurian history 17-	
5, 5	S.C. Alchemy 16-; S.C. Magic 16-	
3	P.C. Mage 15-	
8	+1 combat skill level	
10	+1 overall skill level	
10	+2 DCV levels	

100+	Disadvantages
15	Accidental change: if angered 14-
10	Enraged if King Cobra hurt 11-/8-
10	Enraged if BODY taken 14-/11-
10	Distinctive features: bright red hair
10	Distinctive feature: English accent
10	Hunted by DEMON 8-
10	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
10	Monitored by King Cobra 14-
10	Physical lim.: unfamiliar with earth of today
15	Loyal to King Cobra and COIL
10	Hatred of superheroes
10	Vengeful
15	Obeys orders from King Cobra
355	Villain bonus

Background: Back in the age of chivalry, when magic had real power, a court wizard and his sorceress lover had a daughter. They placed the child in the care of a midwife who herself possessed some mystic knowledge. The nurse raised the child with love and care in a secluded hut in the remotest part of the forest. She told the child stories of her magical parents, Merlin and Viviane, the Lady of the Lake. She regaled her with stories of the court of the great King Arthur and his noble knights. The girl was fascinated by the tales and vowed that one day she would be a sorceress to a great king, like her father.

At the age of six the girl began displaying abilities that showed she had the potential to become a powerful sorceress. The nurse began tutoring the little girl in the proper use of her talents and showing her the correct way to cast spells. The girl quickly became proficient enough to cast spells without the need of book or staff. The nurse taught the girl everything she could.

One day, when the girl almost ten years old, an old man showed up at the door of the hut. The air around him seemed electric and her nurse bowed low as he entered her home. The girl was informed that this man was the great wizard Merlin, and her father. He informed them both that it was time for the young girl to take her place at his side in King Arthur's court. The nurse argued with him and, in moments, the two sorcerers were casting spells of attack and defense. The girl became frightened and ran to hide in the hollow of a great oak near the hut. The last thing she remembered was a bolt of green fire hitting the tree. Then everything went black.

What Ninamar later discovered was that with her last breath before dying, her loving nurse had cast a powerful protection spell to hide her from Merlin. Mynapolee had sealed the girl in the tree and the spell could not be broken by either the wizard or his lady. In fact, their magic could not even detect where their daughter had been sent, she just disappeared into another dimension.

It was many centuries later, an old shepherd was watching his flock on a hill, when he noticed a tree that he hadn't seen before. It was an ancient oak that appeared to have a large hollow in one side. As he approached the tree, the hole suddenly opened and a young girl fell out. She was dressed in unusually clothing and seemed to be dazed. The old man picked the girl up and took her to his home where he nursed her back to health. When she was better he noticed that she spoke strangely and told the most fantastic stories. At first he thought she was just simpleminded, but then mysterious things began to happen. She exhibited magical ability, something unknown in the 20th century, and he realized that he had a real treasure.

But Charles also realized that the girl must be shielded from the outside world, there were "things" out there that would do anything to lay their hands on her powers. This was even more evident when a detachment of DEMON agents arrived at the farm on morning. They demanded to know where the surge of magical power was coming from in this location. Charles tried to stop them from searching the house, but they knocked him aside. Ninamar heard his yell and came running from the back of the house. When the DEMON agents saw her they immediately sensed that she was the source of the magical flux.

Ninamar tried to run to her adopted father's aide, but the DEMON agents grabbed her. The young girl was suddenly filled with rage and struck out at them with her magic. When the smoke finally cleared, the DEMON agents were all dead.

Charles decided that the two were not safe in their present location, so he moved them to Scotland and bought another farm. No one bothered them again, so Charles, continued to teach her how to live in the modern world. He brought her books on the legends of King Arthur to help her fill in the gaps of her past, and he told her stories of a king that he had once served loyally, King Cobra. He told how the King had been betrayed by several of his knights, who transformed him and his loyal knights into serpent-men and took his kingdom from him. Charles also told her how the world had shunned their ruler and now called him a criminal. Ninamar, now called Naga, vowed to help King Cobra to regain his throne.

So, when he felt the time was right, Charles contacted COIL and informed them that he had a magnificent gift for King Cobra. When the old man and twenty year-old woman arrived at the Citadel, King Cobra himself spoke to them. He was very skeptical at first, the story the two told was just to fantastical. But, after a demonstration of power from the young lady, he welcomed them both with open arms. Naga was given a position within the Serpentine Circle and appointed as King Cobra's personal adviser. She uses her magical powers to guard the King and warn him of eminent danger.

Quote: "You must bow to the rightful king of the world, King Cobra."

Personality: Naga is very intelligent and quiet, but not shy, and is gaining knowledge of her new world at a tremendous rate. She has made friends with several of the COIL agents, and uses them as information sources. She even has them buy her informational magazines to read. She has also become a TV addict, because she watches endless hours of news and informational programs. They have helped her form a truer picture of the world outside the Citadel.

Naga now understands that King Cobra is not really a deposed ruler, but a master criminal, and has decided to stay with him because of the power he presently wields. She has

remained loyal to King Cobra, never showing him that she knows the truth. She has secret plans of her own, but she understands that she must know her new world better to implement them. She also knows of all the secret conspiracies being planned behind King Cobra's back, but will say nothing. She hopes to one day use them to her advantage.

Naga is obsessed with collecting ancient books of mysticism and magic. Her library is one of the largest in the U.S. She hopes to gain more power from these books to help her with her secret plans.

Powers/Tactics: Naga is a mage, with all the power inherited from her legendary parents. There is nothing that she cannot accomplish with her magic. She has also learned a spell, through researching ancient books, that her father created. This spell, called the Magical Aura, protects the caster for as long as he/she concentrates on it. But Naga has enhanced it to make the effect permanent.

Naga also has the ability to look briefly into the future. She uses this power to assist King Cobra, and herself, avoid dangerous situations. And she has recently discovered that, due to the spell cast on her by Mynapolee, she no longer ages as normal humans do. Naga is in effect immortal. She has also gained the power of regeneration. In combat, Naga likes to stand next to her King, thus protecting him. She will cast spells from this point and assist the agents.

When King Cobra is not with her, she will remain in the back and assist from a concealed position.

Appearance: Naga is 5'5" tall and weighs 114 lbs. She has long, flaming red hair and dark green eyes that seem to look through everything. She dresses in modernized Medieval clothing, always made of silk, and prefers to wear black or royal blue. She loves jewelry, but demands the best.

When casting a spell, Naga's power can be seen emanating from her hands in the form of a dark green flame. And when she is gazing into the future, the pupils of Naga's eyes become large and a green flame forms around them.



SNAKE

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
40	STR	30	OCV: 8
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8
23	CON	26	ECV: 4
13	BODY	6	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
13	INT	3	
11	EGO	2	
20	PRE	10	
6	COM	-2	
15	PD	7	
15	ED	10	
5	SPD	17	
15	REC	4	
40	END	-3	
50	STUN	5	
Cost	Powers	END	
15	1d6 HKA: (2D6 w/STR penetrating, must grab	2	
25	Linked to: 5d6 NND (not vs. regeneration, 15 pts. life support, or not taking Body from K.A.), no range, must grab, 0 END		
15	+5/+5 armor		
7	END on STR	2	
18	2d6 RKA: +1 Stun multiplier, OAF—44 automag, 8 shots		
10	10 pts. power defense		
5	I.R. vision		
10	+5" run (11" total)	2	
6	+3 enhanced vision		
5	Streetwise 14-		
3	Climbing 14-		
3	Contortionist 14-		
3	Disguise 11-		
3	Security systems 12-		
3	Stealth 13-		
3	Simulate death		
2	+1 with pistol		
20	+4 w/all hand to hand combat		
100+	Disadvantages		
5	1 x Stun from cold attacks		
5	1 x Stun from fire attacks		
10	Enraged: if Body taken 11-/8-		
25	Hunted by Interpol 11-		
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-		
15	Loyal to Sharpes (com/strong)		
15	Loyalty to COIL cause (com/strong)		
10	Hatred of King Cobra (com/moderate)		
10	Vindictive (com/moderate)		
10	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable		
10	Public I.D.		
85	Villain bonus		

Background: Until he was a grown man, Snake never knew his true origins. To him the only father that he ever knew was Sharpes, who had found the abandoned infant in a storm drain. He recognized the humanity in the child despite its snake-like appearance and raised it as his son. But the true origin of the snake-man was even stranger.

Snake's true mother was the prize winning biochemist Dr. Mary Grant, who had become mixed up with the COIL organization. She was one of the leading researchers on the COIL-gene formula project for King Cobra. And after mutating herself, she became his lover.

Mary continued her research, helping to administer the formula to other volunteers, until the day she announced to the King that she was pregnant with his child. Without hesitation he ordered the abortion of the child, because fathering a child was not in his master plan. Mary protested but King Cobra refused to waver. So late one evening Mary escaped from the Citadel to save her unborn child's life.

With hidden funds, Mary Grant was able to fly to London where she changed her name and took a menial job at a local restaurant to support herself. With the help of the local Red Cross she got free medical help and eventually gave birth to a son. But the baby had not escaped the COIL-gene formula. His skin and facial appearance was that of a snake. The doctors tried to talk Mary out of keeping the child but she refused to give him up.

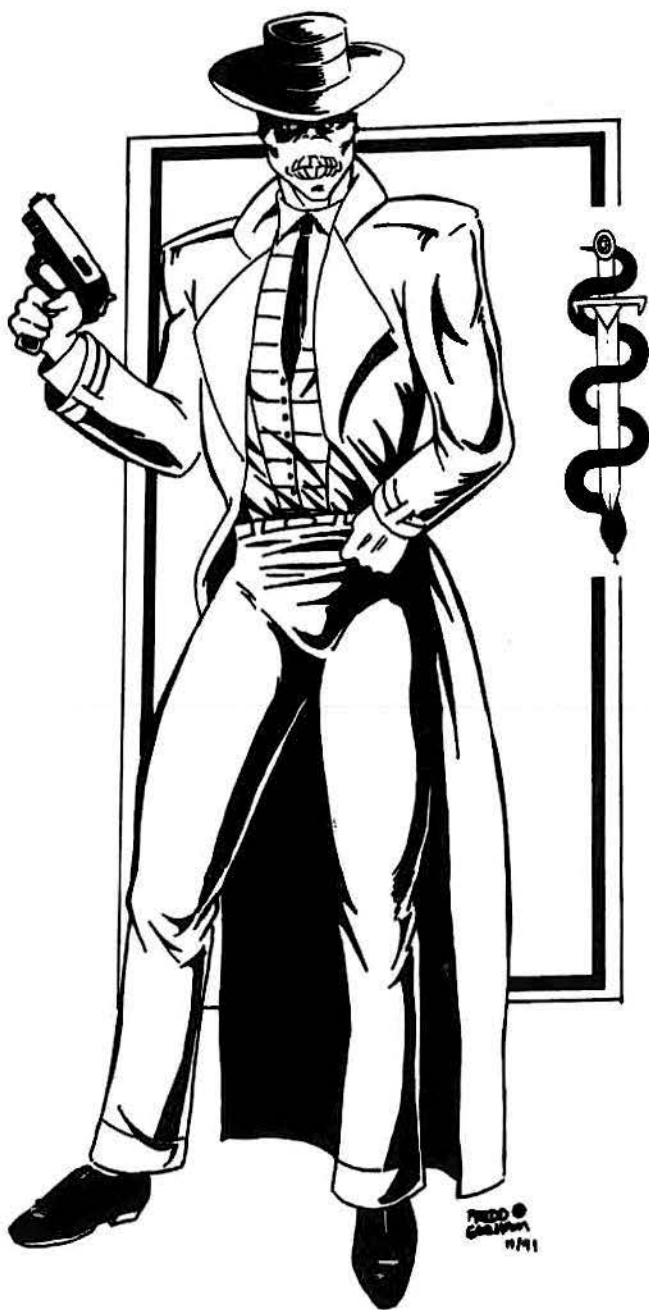
Within days of his birth, Mary learned that a COIL strike team had discovered her true identity and were coming for her. She ran with her son to the English countryside and contacted the Red Cross in a village outside London. She begged them to find a good home for her crippled son, because she was unable to raise him. The volunteer in the office was repulsed by the child but felt sorry for this "wayward mother". She told Mary that a home would be found and that she wasn't to worry. As Mary left the Red Cross office, crying over the loss of her son, she was ambushed and killed by the COIL strike team. None of them were aware of why they were after her, so they never bothered to look for the child.

It took a bit of doing, but the Red Cross volunteer finally found a family who said they were willing to take in a crippled child sight unseen. But they soon changed their minds when they had to care for the snake child. His eating habits were not human, and he made the most inhuman noises. Within weeks they could take it no more, and decided to put the poor child out of its misery. They later told the Red Cross volunteer that the child had died of pneumonia, but they really abandoned him in a storm drain.

Snake's youth with Sharpes in London was actually a happy one. Sharpes doted on the boy and raised him in secret with the hope that he would someday take over the organization. On his eighteenth birthday, Snake was introduced to the organization the Blackguard as Sharpes' son and body guard. Many in the group loudly protested, but Sharpes informed them that he was in charge and he would not accept questioning of his authority. In the next five years Snake learned all the tricks of the trade. He proved to be a good student but his looks prevented him from being a good thief. Sharpes depended on him for the inner workings of the organization, which he had a talent for. With his assistance the criminal group became well known in the underworld and became part of the World Wide League of Crime.

And it became common knowledge that the "snake-man" was involved. When this fact came to the attention of King Cobra, it wasn't long before he put two and two together and realized that Mary Grant's child had survived. He quickly flew to London and made the acquaintance of Sharpes, informing him that Snake was really his son. Through testing he was able to prove this. But Sharpes did not want to give up the only "son" he had to some outsider. And Snake did not like his "father" once he discovered the truth of his origins. It took weeks before the three came to a compromise.

In the end it was decided that Snake would return to the State with King Cobra to be trained in the ways of COIL. King Cobra would in turn provide Sharpes and his organization with full support from the London COIL branch. Sharpes only had to give up his son.



Snake is now King Cobra's right hand man and his personal advisor. The King depends on Snake to argue the other side of any plans he is making. What he does not realize is that Snake resents him and is just waiting for the opportunity to return to his "real father". Snake is taking his time to learn everything he can about the running of a large organization in the hopes of using it to run Sharpes' group someday.

Quote: "I know I'm ugly, but I'm ten times the man you could ever be!"

Personality: Snake is the perfect English gentleman. He is always soft spoken, polite and reserved in his actions. He is highly intelligent and realizes that those around him are not as refined and educated as he is. He is extremely slow to anger, but he never forgets a slight or offense. He has high aspirations, hoping to someday head Sharpes' Blackguard organization, and maybe even his "father's" COIL agency. Snake is still totally loyal to Sharpes, still loving the only father he ever knew, and will do anything for him. On the other hand he totally despises, and even hates, King Cobra. He only tolerates staying in COIL headquarters for the sake of Sharpes. He realizes that the help his adoptive father is getting from King Cobra is just what he needs to improve his organization. But Snake does not approve of King Cobra's tactics and is totally repulsed by the bloodthirsty nature of the COIL agents.

Powers/Tactics: Snake has been endowed with enormous strength which he uses to grab his opponents and use his most powerful weapon -- his bite. Snake's bite is venomous and, once he has his teeth into the victim, can continuously inject it until they are down. But he must have a good grip on the opponent to inject this venom. Snake tends to spar with an opponent until he is sure he can move in to grab and bite. He has learned to make his venom supply unlimited.

In combat, Snake prefers to stand back and coordinate the actions of the other agents. He will help "hold" an intended victim till the others can deal with him. And he likes to work as back up for the field agents. He prefers not to fight himself unless it is necessary.

If Snake is cornered or captured he uses people's belief that ugly means stupid to work to his advantage. He will speak and act the moron, until his captors believe that he is of no use and release him. He is also known to use this tactic to discover the true motives of new recruits to COIL who don't know who he is. Snake realizes that people tend to have loose tongues around children and those they think are stupid. Many a spy has been caught using this method.

Appearance: Snake is 6' 7" tall and weighs about 200 lbs. His skin is light green and scaly and his eyes are yellow. Snake has a reptilian appearance but has enough of a humanoid look that he can pass as a very ugly man. He dresses very stylishly, preferring three piece suits and the latest out of GQ. But when he is out in public he always wears a large fedora and trench coat. He has even been known to wear a toupee, colored contact lenses and dark skin-colored make-up to complete the look. When Snake returns to London to help Sharpes he tends to dress less flashily, preferring to wear street clothes, his fedora and trench coat.

BOA CONSTRICTOR

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats			
60	STR	50	OCV: 7			
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7			
28	CON	36	ECV: 3			
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12			
8	INT	-2	Costs			
8	EGO	-4				
25	PRE	15	Char: 173 Base: 100			
6	COM	-2				
25	PD	13	Powers: 107 Disad: 180			
20	ED	14	Totals: 280 280			
4	SPD	10				
18	REC	0				
60	END	2				
60	STUN	1				

Cost	Power	END
10	Wrestling:	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage	
	Slam +0 +1 12d6 + v/s, oppon. falls	
	Escape +0 +0 75 STR vs grabs	
	Hold -1 -1 Grab, 70 STR for hold	
10	10 pts. power defense	
5	-5 lack of weakness	
20	2 Body regeneration	
5	I.R. vision	
10	Clinging: 60 STR	
11	12/10 damage resistance	
10	+5" run (11" total)	2
10	END on STR (grabs only)	3
8	+4 levels w/ grab	
5	Stealth 14-	
3	Climbing 13-	

100+	Disadvantages
5	1 x Stun from cold attacks
10	Enraged: at sight of hunted or someone who has done him wrong 11-/11-
10	Enraged: in combat situations 8-/8-
25	Hunted by police 11-
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
20	Hunted by Interpol 8-
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-
10	Vengeful
15	Show-off (com/strong)
15	In love with Ringhals
10	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable
10	Public I.D.
20	Villain bonus

Background: Jack Dunnet worshipped his older brother, Dave, and would do anything to gain his approval. That's why when Dave left the family, after a violent fight with their father, twelve year old Jack followed him. Dave was member of the biker gang, the Black Death, who were terrorizing the city of Milwaukee. Dave, known as Slasher, convinced his buddies to take in the little Jack as an apprentice.

Jack proved a quick study, and by the time he was sixteen, the gang decided it was time for his final initiation; he had to earn his bike. So one night, Slasher, his friend Monk and Jack stood outside a local bar waiting to see what showed up. It seemed like forever to the young man, but finally he saw what he was waiting for. It was a Hog, the most beautiful machine Jack had ever seen, and the owner looked like one of those rich kids trying to look tough. Slasher told the young man to stay calm while they waited till the coast was clear.

When the time was right, Slasher gave Jack the high sign. The three ran to the bike, and Jack mounted his "dream machine" just as the owner came out of the bar with several other men. The two groups froze. It was Slasher who pulled out a Saturday night special and fired on the group. The sound of the shots echoed in Jack's ears as he sped away with his trophy.

The paper the next day said that Jack was wanted by the police. So the gang decided it was time to move its headquarters to Chicago till the heat was off. But even there Black Death found themselves at odds with an established gang who resented the "new blood" on the streets. One day at a local bar, Monk got into a verbal battle with the leader of the rival gang. Before long, weapons were pulled. Jack took out his opponent and turned just in time to see Monk go down, a knife in his chest. The young man went berserk and jumped on the man. In only a few minutes the rival biker was dead, torn apart by Jack's bare hands. Police sirens broke up the fight. Jack and Slasher hopped their bikes and headed for Canada. They settled in Montreal and tried to make a fresh start by getting jobs at a truck stop. Things were great for a while, then one day a trucker came in to complain about the way his truck had been repaired. Slasher, the mechanic, argued with him until the manager came along and broke it up. The trucker drove away without paying his bill and Slasher was given a warning that "the customer is always right." That night, as the two men rode home, a semi appeared on the road and ran them off into a ditch. Jack managed to see the driver, it was the complainer. But a shout from his brother sent him running. Slasher was trapped under his bike with his body twisted at an unnatural angle. The young man vowed vengeance no matter what it took.

Slasher recovered his health, but not the use of his legs. And to make matters worse, Jack's single paycheck could not cover their bills. Jack made a call to their old gang and asked for help. Several of the guys showed up and things seemed to be getting better.

One day several months later, a familiar truck pulled into the garage. Jack watched as the trucker who had crippled his brother climbed out of the cab. When the big man returned to his truck, Jack was waiting. The bully laughed when the young man threatened him, but in a few minutes he regretted that action. All the rage and hatred exploded from Jack, and when he was done, the big man's legs and arms were broken and bleeding. Again the gang had to move, but at the Canadian border, Jack was recognized and taken into custody. He was extradited to Milwaukee and eventually convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to fifteen years. In prison, Jack made friends with an ex-wrestler who taught him the "ropes" not only of wrestling, but of prison survival. Within two years, Jack was the prison's model prisoner and top wrestler. He called himself the Black Death and several exhibition matches were arranged that took him outside the prison walls.

Jack was released after five years, for good behavior, and began to wrestle professionally on the outside. He became a favorite, earning enough money to insure his invalid brother proper care. But one night, as he was leaving the arena, he noticed someone was robbing the box office. In the fight that ensued, Jack was overwhelmed and knocked unconscious. The first thing Jack became aware of was pain. When he opened his eyes, he found himself in what seemed to be a hospital. He looked around and was two other guys strapped to tables like he was. Then a large man in a lab coat and surgical mask entered the room. Jack noticed that the skin around the mask was of a greenish color.



The "doctor" walked up to the man on the first table and talked to him softly for a moment. Jack watched as the "doctor" pulled a gun and shot the man. Suddenly Jack was scared, as he watched the same thing replayed with the second man. Then the green man was standing over him. The "doctor" introduced himself as King Cobra, the head of the organization called COIL. He calmly asked Jack if he was interested in joining, listing off the benefits that would be his. Jack quickly reasoned that joining would be much better than the alternative, and said yes.

Jack learned quick, and when a memo came down asking for volunteers for a special assignment, Jack jumped at the chance. The message stated that King Cobra was looking for over-achievers who were willing to undergo a series of tests.

Jack had already seen the results of some of these tests and wasn't worried. So he and three of his buddies accepted. The four were taken to one of the COIL labs, strapped down to tables and given anesthetics. When Jack awoke, he noticed several men in lab coats bending over him. He felt cold and achy. As his eyes cleared he glanced over at his companions and screamed. Next to him were three half-men/half-snakes, the ugliest things Jack had ever seen. The doctors tried to calm him, but the COIL-gene formula had enhanced his strength, and he broke his straps. His fist instinctively lashed out at the nearest person and the doctor went sailing across the room. Another doctor shouted for help and Jack stood waiting for the third to make a move. It was then that he noticed his hands; they were scaly and grayish-green. Jack looked up to see his reflection in one of the metal cabinets and realized he was also a snake-man.

He was still standing and staring at his reflection when reinforcements, and King Cobra, entered the room. King Cobra soon soothed the young man's fears. He explained that Jack was the first of what the King was going to call his Serpentine Circle, a group of elite knights for his round table. Only the very best were chosen for the privilege. King Cobra then gave Jack the name of Boa Constrictor and proclaimed him his personal bodyguard.

Boa has pledged his undying loyalty to his King, and has never regretted his decision.

Quote: "Hey, boy, you think you're tough? You ain't seen notin' yet!!"

Personality: Boa is still a biker at heart and has never forgotten his lessons on the streets or in prison. He is very vindictive and violent, and believes in "an eye for an eye." He has an extremely volatile temper and a very long memory.

Boa likes to exploit his enhanced strength and boasts about his abilities on a regular basis. He will taunt his opponents, hoping they will slip up and give him an edge. In short he's a braggart and a bully, a real showoff.

Boa has fallen in love with Ringhals, but they are keeping it secret.

Powers/Tactics: Boa is extremely dangerous when you combine his incredible strength, faster reflexes, enhanced recovery and extensive knowledge of wrestling. Add to this the ability to regenerate and he is the perfect killing machine.

In combat, Boa's favorite maneuver is to grab and squeeze his chosen opponent. If the enemy can withstand his crushing grasp, then Boa will resort to his wrestling training to gain the upper hand.

Boa prefers to attack bricks and martial artists; they put up the most interesting fights. He will attack until his opponent is out, then quickly move on to the next one. But he is always willing to make room for someone who lends a hand, even though he never asks for help.

Appearance: Boa is 6' 4" and weighs 240 lbs. His skin is a grayish-green and has all the markings of a boa constrictor. He still wears his biker leathers, complete with boots and fingerless gloves.

WATER MOCCASIN

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats		
45	STR	35	OCV: 7		
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7		
33	CON	46	ECV: 4		
20	BODY	20	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12		
5	INT	-5			
11	EGO	2	Costs		
20	PRE	10			
4	COM	-3	Char:	167	Base: 100
10	PD	1		+	+
10	ED	3	Powers:	183	Disad: 250
5	SPD	20		=	=
20	REC	8	Totals:	350	350
66	END	0			
60	STUN	0			

Cost	Powers	END
20	Snake martial arts:	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage	
	Strike +0 +2 11d6	
	Full Strike -2 +1 13d6	
	Weave +0 +5 Dodge, abort	
	Squirm +0 +0 60 STR vs. grab	
	Squeeze -1 -1 Grab, 55 STR for hold	
20	1d6 RKA: penetrating, uncontrolled, continuous, fully invisible, 6 uses lasting 1 minute each, only does penetrating damage (- lim), Body only, no range, linked to mind control, concentrate DCV, must grab (*)	
34	22d6 mind control: telepathic, single command (stop and do nothing), must grab, concentrate DCV, 6 uses, no range, mental power based on CON, (bite)	
20	+10 PD/+10 ED armor: OIF—costume	
6	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: only in water	
10	6d6 Aid: (healing) only to starting value, only in water	3
10	Life support: breathing is self-contained	
10	10 pts. lack of weakness	
10	1 Body regeneration	
20	20" swimming	
11	Combat sense 14-	
5	Defense maneuver	
1	Immunity to water moccasin venom	
3	Breakfall 13-	
3	Contortionist 13-	

100+	Disadvantages
5	1 x Stun from fire based attacks
20	1 x effect from drugs
15	Enraged in combat 14-/11-
25	Berserk if body taken 14-/8-
15	Enraged if pinned, shackled, entangled, etc. 11-/14-
0	Dependence on water: every 5 hours, 3d6 damage
10	Hunted by Gila 8-
10	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
13	Monitored by King Cobra 11-
15	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable
15	Casual killer
15	Loyal to COIL
10	Vengeful
10	Public I.D.
72	Villain bonus

(*) GM Note: the ways to break the penetrating RKA are:

- 1) Break the paralysis mind control
- 2) A paramedic skill roll at -1 per 3 resistant defense of target
- 3) Aid Body/ "healing type power"/ regeneration
- 4) Immunity to water moccasin venom
- 5) No circulatory system (i.e., a robot, rock being, etc)

Background: Paula Davis was smart, probably too smart for her own good. At the age of fourteen she graduated high school with honors and entered a prestigious college. Scholastically she was a teacher's dream, but socially she was a bust. Paula may have had the intellectual level of a professor, but emotionally she was still a kid, and a spoiled one at that. So none of her classmates had the time or patience to deal with her frequent tantrums, and they even began to torment the poor girl. After a while even some of the teachers became tired of her tirades and came down hard on her, except for Dr. Mike Lancer.

Dr. Lancer was her professor of genetics and one of the leaders in the science. He was young, handsome, and gentle—everything an impressionable, lonely girl could fall for, and Paula did. Paula worked hard in his class and was soon promoted to class assistant. But Dr. Lancer was so engrossed in his work he never noticed the signs of the young girl's growing affection. At the time he was attempting to perfect a cure for the COIL-gene formula.

Dr. Lancer began asking Paula's assistance in his private experiments, and she proved a perfect helper. But this added attention only increased the girl's increasing obsession with the doctor. Finally one day she couldn't stop herself, she blurted out her love for him while they were alone in the lab. He was shocked. Dr. Lancer was happily married and had two wonderful children, and the thought of anyone else loving him had never entered his mind. But suddenly here was this attractive, intelligent girl professing her undying love for him. After the shock wore off he found himself extremely flattered, and surprisingly interested. In the following months the two began a relationship at the school that could only be considered dangerous. Dr. Lancer did not fully understand the emotional instability of his young assistant and treated her as if she were a grown woman, not the sixteen year old she really was. Their affair was intense and often volatile, but this seemed to stir the doctor even more.

But all good things must come to an end, and this one did with a bang. After a year Paula became discontented with sharing Dr. Lancer with his family and demanded that he choose between the two. The doctor really enjoyed the sense of danger in his affair with Paula, but when it came down to reality he chose the love and stability of his wife and children. Paula did not outwardly react, in fact she told him that she admired his commitment to his family, but secretly she vowed to get revenge on her former lover.

In the following months Paula threw herself into the COIL-gene research, and helped Dr. Lancer make some tremendous advances. Then one day the doctor was called into the dean's office and confronted with his private research. He had been using college time and equipment without permission and the dean informed him that if he did not stop he would be terminated. Dr. Lancer handed in his resignation that day because he felt his research was too important to abandon. He then packed his family up and moved to the Mexican desert where he could continue his work in peace.

Before he left, Paula begged to come along, using the fact that she knew his research and would be of valuable help to him. Dr. Lancer reluctantly agreed.

Paula began making herself an asset to the whole family. She helped with the housework, watched and tutored the children and kept Dr. Lancer's paperwork filed. No one suspected the depths of hatred brewing in the young girl's heart. She at no time stopped planning her revenge, and after two years in the desert she finally saw her chance. Dr. Lancer finally perfected the duplication of the COIL-gene formula, which he needed to create the antidote, and went into the local village to ask for a test subject. While he was gone Paula, who had developed a contact within COIL over the years, called her "friend" and informed him of what the doctor was doing. When King Cobra heard what was happening he demanded details and she informed him of everything, including the location of the lab. Not wanting to be around when the ceiling caved in, Paula secretly packed her bags then went to the lab and took the only vial of COIL-gene that she knew of. While she was rummaging through the files to destroy the paperwork, Dr. Lancer walked in on her. When he asked her what she was doing, she only laughed and said, "You'll find out soon enough", and left. Paula ran to one of the larger cities in the area and hid out for a week. But her curiosity got the best of her and she returned to the lab. All she found was a burned-out ruin. When she questioned the local villagers, they told her that a huge lizard-man had attacked the doctor and his family—they found no survivors. Paula returned to the ruins and cried over her lost love.



The attractive twenty-year-old now found herself out of a job and alone. So she moved back to the U.S. and settled in Austin, Texas. She advertised in the newspaper as a tutor, but no one answered her add. And in just a few weeks what funds she had managed to save were gone. She was forced to take a position at the local fast food joint, which she hated. Not being emotionally stable, and having very poor social skills, this job did not last long. Her boss fired her in just a few weeks after she argued with a customer over the price she had charged him. Paula found herself back on the street looking for work.

Sitting in her efficiency apartment that night Paula suddenly remembered her contact in COIL. Maybe he could find her work inside the organization. So she called him and begged for a job interview. She mentioned her scientific background and training with the COIL-gene formula and offered her help in its development. Then she remembered the vial she had taken from Dr. Lancer's lab. She told her contact that she had salvaged something from Lancer's lab that she wished to present to King Cobra in person. The contact at first balked at the idea, but finally said he'd try to get her in. For three days Paula sat by her phone nervously waiting for his call. When it finally came the news was good, King Cobra would see her at three that afternoon, but only for a few minutes. Paula was getting dressed when two of the King's agents, Ringhals and Alligator, showed up to escort her to the meeting. They searched her before allowing her in the presence of King Cobra to make sure that she carried no weapons. When they found the vial in her pocket she informed the King that this was his present. She quickly grabbed it from Ringhals' hand and swallowed the COIL-gene formula in one gulp.

Paula's screams could be heard echoing throughout the citadel. She had never anticipated the pain the change would cause, but she never lost consciousness. Right before everyone's eyes the lovely young woman became a half human/half water moccasin. The change was not pretty and seemed to drag on forever. When it was all over Paula had a puzzled look on her face. King Cobra had her escorted to the laboratory for his doctors to examine and they discovered that much of her memory had been wiped. In fact, the once brilliant young woman now had the intelligence of an average fourteen year old.

Water Moccasin, as she became known, has proven to be an invaluable part of the Serpentine Circle. She may not be smart anymore but she's a great fighter.

Quote: DIE!! DIE!! DIE!! AHHHH!!!!

Personality: Water Moccasin can be qualified as insane. Because of her lack of emotional development while young and her subsequent bad relationship with Dr. Lancer, she has become completely unstable. Her emotions are never under control and no one can anticipate what her reaction to a given situation will be. One time she may laugh and the next time she'll become berserk and attack. Only the presence of King Cobra will keep her calm. She has transferred her unrequited love from Dr. Lancer to King, and will do anything to gain his approval. In combat she is incredibly dangerous, and many of the COIL agents will not go into a fight with her around. She becomes as deadly as her namesake and has been known to attack her own people when all other opponents are down. The only people who are willing to spend any time with her are the Circle members, who realize more than anyone what she has lost since her transformation.

Powers/Tactics: Water Moccasin is more snake than human in combat. She has the cunning and instincts of her deadly namesake. And has even gained the speed, strength and agility of the snake. Water Moccasin has a venomous bite that will destroy the nervous system of a victim and eventually causes paralysis. She has also developed a dependency on water and must always be near it. She is now a fantastic swimmer. In combat, Water Moccasin is totally berserk. She uses her increased strength to grab an opponent and bite to inject her venom. She uses a form of martial arts that has been taught to her and is similar to a snake's movements.

Appearance: Water Moccasin is only 5' 1" tall and weighs 85 lbs. Her skin is grayish-brown and has all the markings of her name-sake. The COIL- gene formula has caused all the hair to fall from her body and she must now constantly keep her skin moist or it will crack and bleed. Water Moccasin even has to sleep in water or she becomes sick. When she is forced to wear clothing, she prefers black because it is hard to see underwater.

ALLIGATOR

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
50*	STR	20	OCV: 7
20	DEX	30	DCV: 7
25	CON	30	ECV: 3
20*	BODY	16	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	INT	-5	
8	EGO	-4	
25	PRE	15	
2	COM	-4	
10*	PD	2	
12*	ED	5	
5	SPD	20	
15	REC	8	
50	END	0	
75*	STUN	26	
			Costs
			Char: 159 Base: 100
			+ +
			Powers: 187 Disad: 246
			= =
			Totals: 346 346
Cost	Powers	END	
10	EC of alligator type powers (10 pts)		
10	2 levels of growth: always on, 0 END persistent (* = figured) -2" KB		
10	2 levels of density increase: always on, 0 END, persistent (* = figured), -1 DCV, -2" KB (+4" total) +1 to PER Against character		
42	+20/+8 armor		
22	+11" run (*) (17" total)	5	
32	2 d6 HKA (*) (5d6+1 w/STR), no knockback	4/8	
20	30" swimming (*)	6	
5	Life support: may breath under water		
9	+3d6 H. attack (13d6) with tail		
5	Extra Limb: Tail		
2	PS Acting 11-		
6	+2 w/HKA, tail, moveby		
3	Survival swamps 11-		
1	P.S. alligator tamer 8-		

100+ Disadvantages

5	1 x Stun from cold attacks
10	Enraged if made fun of 11-/11-
10	Enraged if body taken 14-/14-
15	Hunted by the Champions 8-
15	Hunted by Gila 11-
13	Monitored by King Cobra 11-
25	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable
15	Physical lim.: size and weight (freq/great)
20	Loyal to King Cobra and COIL
15	Hatred of heroes
15	Overconfidence
10	Public I.D.
78	Villain bonus

Background: There was a time when the circus coming to town was the highlight of the month, but times change and most circuses have vanished. One of these vanished circuses employed Gene Banks as its strongman.

When Gene's circus finally closed he had to find another job where he could utilize his great strength. Traveling to Florida, he found a place that needed a person to demonstrate alligator wrestling. After all, he thought, how hard could it be? It took him a month to really get the hang of his job.

After a near fatality that put Gene into the hospital for two months, he realized that in order to successfully win over the opposition he needed to think like them. He even started to bed down near the gators in order to gain their trust. This worked great until one day, the alligator farm for which he was working was shut down for illegally transporting gators to wealthy businessmen as exotic pets.

Broke and out of a job again, Gene began taking "odd jobs" that required a strong, brutal man. One day he overheard someone talking about a guy offering one thousand dollars a week for "muscle" with only one catch. He insisted you "pledge fealty" him. This was fine with Gene and he applied for, and got, the job.



Several months later, Gene found out that he had been working for the super-villain King Cobra. Gene didn't care that his new boss was said to have killed over one hundred people with his bare hands. Actually, he respected King Cobra's strength. Besides, Gene was now making money and enjoying his job.

Gene envied the abilities of the agents with strange powers and was still fascinated by the fierceness of the alligators he fought. Since the stories of King Cobra mutating people were true, he asked to be part of the testing procedures in hopes of getting more power and money.

When Gene was accepted, he asked if King Cobra could turn him into an alligator mutate. After a long pause, King Cobra agreed realizing the potential of the raw power in some other reptiles. Gene smiled as the anesthetic was administered.

When Gene awoke he noticed that he was strapped to a hospital table. Groggily, he realized he did not like this, he had to be free. Gene sat up, even though he was strapped down. There was no mirror in this room so Gene could not see what he had become. He did know a few things though; he was much stronger than he was ever in the past, his perspective was much higher so he assumed that he was taller, his arms were now leathery skin and scaled, and he found out he now has a tail.

Unsure exactly what had happened, he panicked and started to wrecking the lab. In the process he killed a doctor and two assistants. Boa Constrictor and King Cobra entered, calming him down, telling him that he was not alone and that as a member of the Serpentine Circle, he would always have an ally. Gene stood and pledged his loyalty to the man who gave him his new, more powerful form. He would be called Alligator from this day forth.

Quote: "You think you have a headache now, wait till I'm done with you."

Personality: Alligator is a thoughtless killer. He enjoys the sound of bones breaking and the screams of his victims. If he had his way, all enemies of King Cobra would be dead by his hands. As much as this thought pleases King Cobra, Alligator has orders not to kill unless ordered. As always, Alligator obeys his King.

Alligator is a bit sullen and seldom confides in anyone other than King Cobra or Boa Constrictor. As far as he is concerned, both of them are his only friends.

At times, Alligator will go into a frenzy, killing anyone in his path. He is a very angry individual who likes to flaunt his new found strength.

Powers/Tactics: Alligator has increased size and bulk. With this, he has increased strength and stamina. Alligator sports a tail which he can use in a variety of ways. His mouth is lined with razor sharp teeth that can rip through almost anything. He is an incredible swimmer.

In combat, Alligator likes to rely on brute strength in conjunction with his deadly bite. He likes to use his tail and sweep several opponents off their feet while squeezing or biting yet another. Another maneuver that Alligator has perfected is to run through several people and use his tail as a "clothesline", thus dropping more foes.

Appearance: Alligator is 8' 2" tall and weighs about 1200 lbs. He has a thick, grayish green leathery hide and the appearance of an alligator. He wears an oversized COIL agent's outfit with the arms ripped off and black leather pants tucked into black combat boots. The pants have been altered to accommodate Alligator's tail.

FRILL

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 7
32	DEX	66	DCV: 7
23	CON	26	ECV: 4
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
14	INT	4	
10	EGO	0	Costs
15	PRE	5	
8	COM	-1	Char: 147 Base: 100
5	PD	2	+ +
5	ED	0	Powers: 143 Disad: 190
7	SPD	28	= =
9	REC	2	Totals: 290 290
46	END	0	
35	STUN	0	
Cost	Powers		END
10	EC of frilled lizard powers (10 pts)		
16a	2d6 HKA (3d6 w/STR), reduced penetration (claws)		
			4
7b	+20 PRE, offensive only		
7c	1 level of shrinking, 0 END, persistent, always on		
20d	Armor (+10/+10)		
53e	+21" running (27" total), 0 END		
			0
5	Extra Limb: Tail		
4	Mind link with any commander of a COIL squad, IIF—wire radio implant, others must have mind link		
10	Armor (+5/+5) OIF—COIL armor		
5	Acrobatics 16-		
3	Breakfall 15-		
3	+1 level to dodge/block/dive for cover		
100+	Disadvantages		
5	1 x Stun from cold		
5	1 x Stun from fire		
15	1 x Stun from killing attacks		
15	Hunted by the police 11-		
10	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-		
13	Monitored by King Cobra 11-		
15	Distinctive feature: (reptile) concealable		
15	Loyal to COIL		
15	Hatred of the police		
15	Hatred of the media		
10	Public I.D.		
57	Villain bonus		

Background: Kate Malone was a fifteen year old Olympic hopeful who was on her way up in the world of track. But a freak accident destroyed that dream. Kate was in the shower alone after a practice, when she felt a hand on her shoulder. This frightened her and she struck out at the person behind her. There was a yell and then a loud thud. When the young girl turned around she saw her coach lying on the shower floor with a trail of blood coming from her head. Kate panicked. The young girl ran from the shower, pulled her clothes on and left the locker room.

Kate wandered the streets for hours, terrified, before she found herself cowering in an alley. She made herself as comfortable as possible and began to cry. At some point she fell asleep, because the next thing she remembered, someone was touching her. She screamed and kicked out at her assailant. He hit the far wall with a solid thud and lay still. When Kate finally got up the courage to approach him she discovered that it was a man who looked to be sixty and hadn't bathed in a very long time. Beside him lay a paper bag which was starting to show signs of moisture from the broken bottle inside.

Kate was terrified that she had killed again, but a moan from the limp form told her that he would live. She was trying to make him comfortable when he lashed out at her. The young girl went flying into a pile of garbage bags and lay there crying. The man informed her that she was too soft for a street kid and asked her what she was doing in "his alley." She told him her story and the man offered to teach her how to survive on the street. His name was Bob and that he had once been a Wall Street executive. But he had caught his boss skimming profits from the company. When he confronted his boss, the man feigned regret, then framed Bob for the crime. Bob was really only thirty-nine and had been running from the authorities for two years.

The next day Kate found a copy of the newspaper and read about the death and possible murder of her coach. The article said that they were looking for Kate to bring her in for questioning. Bob suggested that the best thing for the girl to do was leave town, and the bigger the city she went to the better. He said he still had contacts in New York and had saved just enough money for two bus tickets there. Kate was too confused to argue and agreed. So the two cleaned themselves up and headed for the bus station.

What they hadn't counted on was a single police officer, off duty, sitting in the station coffee shop. He spotted the girl and called into police dispatch. Within minutes two police officers arrived and asked Kate to accompany them to the police station. Before she could answer them, Bob jumped one of the officers and yelled for Kate to run. In the struggle, the police officer's gun went off and Kate turned around to see the policeman on the floor, a red stain spreading across his shirt front. The remaining officer fired at Bob, who fell and dropped the gun he was holding. It went flying across the floor towards Kate, who picked it up without thinking and shot the remaining officer. With his dying breath, Bob screamed for the girl to move, and she did.

Kate hid on the street for several days before deciding what action to take. Her final decision was to fulfill Bob's last wish. Fleeing the bus station, she began hitchhiking to New York. It was a rough trip for the sixteen-year-old, begging for food money and sleeping by the side of the road and in rest stops, but she eventually made it. When she arrived, the first thing she did was look up the address that Bob had given her. It was for an old associate, a Mr. Randall Scott. He was disturbed to hear of the death of his old friend, but he welcomed Kate into his home.

In the months that followed, Mr. Scott began to take a liking to the young girl and the two quickly formed a strong friendship. He began referring to her as his adopted daughter, and Kate began to think of him as her father.

Many months later, while at their favorite Italian restaurant, several black limousines pulled up outside and automatic weapons began to spray bullets into the building front and everyone inside. Kate and Mr. Scott's bodyguards grabbed the old man and rushed him out the back of the restaurant, but not before he was struck by the gunfire. They rushed him to a private clinic he owned and waited for word from the doctors.

Mr. Scott finally came out of surgery and the doctor informed Kate that he would be fine. When she went in to see him, he told her that the shooting was "family" business. Mr. Scott was an important member of the Mafia. He told her how worried he was about her and was sending her to live with a friend who was not a member of the family. Kate was hurt, but agreed to go live with Mr. Scott's friend, an agent of COIL.

When King Cobra heard about this young, athletic woman living in the New York base, he began collecting information about her. His research indicated that she might have some latent paranormal power. Upon his arrival in New York, he visited her. After several hours of conversation he was able to charm the frightened young girl.

After several visits by the powerful King Cobra, she began to feel comfortable with the strange snake-men and began to ask questions about his hopes and dreams. Within weeks she seemed eager to join with King Cobra. He agreed, on the condition that she would submit to a few tests. He told her of his suspicions about her paranormality and promised her that when he was done she would be able to run faster than the wind. Isn't this what she had always wanted?

King Cobra administered the COIL-gene formula and observed the transformation. The results were dramatic. The small, wiry girl shrunk even more and grew a tail. Her young skin took on a green tint and she developed a "frilled" collar around her neck. But the most dramatic change was her speed and unbelievable agility. Suddenly nothing could catch her, and with her prior training, it made her unstoppable. King Cobra dubbed her Frill. He was most pleased with his new subordinate.

Quote: "I may be small but you know how the old saying goes: 'The bigger they are the harder they fall!'"

Personality: Frill is a smart-aleck. She enjoys making a fool out of her opponents. She likes taunting and aggravating her foes till they make that one error that she can utilize. She is also very cocky. Frill tends to be happy-go-lucky and "perky" most of the time. Whether or not this is a facade is unknown.

Powers/Tactics: After the COIL-gene formula was administered, Frill gained the speed and agility of a frilled lizard. She has physically shrunk and gained a tail, plus sharp claws, a naturally tough skin, and incredible running ability. She is also able to "flare" the frill around her neck to appear more imposing.

In combat, Frill likes to keep moving. She will enter combat by hissing and showing off her frill. She will then run through combat and slice anyone who gets in her way. If she finds someone who is not affected by her claws, she will move on to another target knowing that she is not doing any damage.

Appearance: Frill has shrunk to 4' 6" tall and weighs only 89 lbs. She tends to wear clothing that is not restrictive and will let her run freely. Because of her frill she must wear things that do not go over her head, or that stretch to accommodate it. The spikes on her arms prevent her from wearing anything with long sleeves. She has found that shoes slow her down, so she never wears them. Her skin is a deep green and her eyes are yellow.



THE COIL ALPHA SQUAD

Membership: Rodreguez (leader), Kowalski, Key, McMasters, Musgrove, and Bosanek.

Origin: King Cobra took a good look at his troops and realized that he needed to create something that would inspire them. He called a meeting of the Serpentine Circle and proposed the creation of what he called his Alpha Squad. These individuals would be the best in their fields, selected from the different COIL agency branches, and they would receive special privileges and benefits.

So the Serpentine Circle called for a competition within all of COIL to find the six persons who were the best. Everyone interested had to compete against other agents from the same branch; the final winner was to become the Alpha Agent and the runner-up would be sent to another country to start all over. In this way the loser would not "lose face" and could try again in the future, if a vacancy occurred.

The Circle was flooded with applications from all over the world and it took them weeks to weed through this mountain of paperwork. Their first task was to choose a commander for this new group. When all the finalists were in, the logical choice came down to a mentalist by the name of Jesus Rodreguez. He was from the Command Branch and was known as a tough egg. He had been making a name for himself by rising faster through the COIL ranks than anyone else. But because he had killed a fellow agent with his mental powers he had been knocked back to sergeant. It was discovered that his mental powers allowed him to control other people, which he did with the men under his command. The Circle felt that he would be perfect as the commanding officer of the Alpha Squad and gave him the code name of Sarge. The next individual chosen was from the COIL Standard Branch. His name was Joe Kowalski and he was A.W.O.L. from the Marines. He had been a drill instructor who had killed a superior officer in self defense. When he had tried to present his side of the situation, he was "made an example of", so he escaped at the first opportunity. The Circle admired his ability to follow orders without question, and they gave him the code name of Grunt. Number three was from the Covert Branch and was named Cliff Key.

He was an ex-body builder who had a burglary business on the side. He used to break into the homes of the wealthy clients of the athletic club he worked at. He knew when they would be at the club and used this information to his advantage. But he was finally discovered and ran to COIL to hide out. Within the organization he quickly made a name for himself, thanks to his strength and cunning. The Circle chose him for these abilities and code named him Smash, because he tended to "walk" through things. The Heavy Weapons Branch provided the fourth member, who would not have been considered had he not tried so hard to attract the Circle's attention. He did not fit into the guidelines laid out by King Cobra, who wanted the Alpha Squad to be humans. Zack Musgrove had been mutated by the COIL-gene into a half man/half crocodile, but had retained a more human appearance than others. He was from Australia and was the very best in his field. The Circle admired his persistence and decided to give him a chance. They gave him the code name of Scales.

The next two applicants made their submissions in person. They walked into the Circle offices and challenged any member of the Circle to a one-on-two combat. Alligator, ever the overconfident bully, took them on. In just a few minutes he wasn't bragging, in fact, he was unconscious on the floor. This convinced the Circle that they had found their last two agents. They were Ted Bosanek from the Support Branch and Russ McMasters from the Front-Line Branch. The Circle gave Ted the code name of Support because that's where his strength was, and they called Russ by the name of Stretch after they discovered his mutant ability to elongate his body. Thus the Alpha Squad members were "born", and King Cobra announced that they would be treated as his personal field generals, with all the benefits.

Goals: As a group, the members of the Alpha Squad will do anything to succeed in every mission that they are assigned by King Cobra. They will do anything to remain in their elite positions as Alpha Squad. Individually, they may have minor goals, but they have not given any indication of what they are. The only exception is Musgrove, who desperately wants to become a member of the Serpentine Circle. He believes that with his mutated abilities and his position in the Alpha Squad he can eventually achieve his dream.

Tactics: The Alpha Squad have a specific battle plan that they use for any confrontation. The members themselves have worked these plans out. In a general situation, McMasters and Key enter the combat first, with Kowalski giving them air support and Bosanek handling the fire power. Musgrove then moves into the best position to aid his comrades. Bosanek usually stays close to Rodreguez, who stays back to coordinate the combat. (All combat scenarios are based on this tactical plan)

When the Alpha Squad are in the field they are usually accompanied by a squad or two of COIL agents. All the Alpha Squad are familiar with COIL combat codes but they have added a couple of their own. They are :

Fish out of Water: Rodreguez orders Kowalski to grab a land based foe and carry him/her up to his maximum flight in one phase, then drop them. All other Alpha Squad are to target the falling opponent.

Pop, 2, 3: Rodreguez orders Key, Kowalski or McMasters to prepare an attack on someone in the middle of the combat. Then Rodreguez orders Bosanek to teleport the chosen Alpha Agent to that chosen opponent.

Relations: Each of the member of the Alpha Squad has been extensively trained to work as a team. There is almost no bickering or disagreements between them. If a problem does crop up, it is taken to Rodreguez to resolve, then to the Serpentine Circle if necessary. The six members are completely loyal to each other and would rather die than betray a fellow Alpha Agent.

Reputation: The Alpha Squad are the most famous of the COIL operative groups. This is due to the phenomenal number of successful missions they have been on, and because King Cobra has made sure they are in the limelight. All law enforcement agencies know of the Alpha Squad and there are standing warrants for the arrest of any members.



RODREGUEZ

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats			
13	STR	3	OCV: 6			
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6			
18	CON	16	ECV: 6			
11	BODY	2	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12			
14	INT	4				
18	EGO	16	Costs			
20	PRE	10				
10	COM	0	Char:	123	Base:	100
5	PD	2		+		+
5	ED	1	Powers:	127	Disad:	150
7	SPD	42		=		=
7	REC	0	Totals:	250		250
36	END	0				
30	STUN	3				
Cost		Powers	END			
10	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—battlesuit					
8	+8 PD/+8 ED force field: OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute each					
4	Mind link with the rest of the Alpha Agents: IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link					
4	Mind link with superior: IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link					
3	I.R. vision: OIF—goggles					
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—goggles					
6	+3" running (9" total)					
10	Find weakness with martial strike 11-					
2	+1 level with the stasis pistol					
3	K.S. COIL 12-					
12	Standard comic book martial arts:					
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Damage		
	Throw	+1	+1	3d6 + v/5, target falls		
	Block	+2	+2	block, abort		
	Full Strike	-2	+1	7d6		
17	40 STR telekinesis: grab only (-1 lim), OAF—stasis pistol, 4 shots lasting 1 turn each					
3	Concealment 12-					
3	K.S. super heroes 12-					
3	Tactics 12-					
28	Multi-power of mental mutations: (63 active) DCV when in use, full phase to switch slots, activate 14-					
3 u	5d6 EGO attack: END					
3 u	10d6 mind control: telepathic					
2 u	7d6 telepathy: END, explosion, no range					
100+		Disadvantages				
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-					
20	Hunted by Genocide 11-					
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-					
10	Distinctive feature: (COIL agent uniform)					
15	Loyal to COIL					
10	Likes discipline					
10	Verbally rude					
15	Superiority complex					
40	Villain bonus					

Background: Jesus Rodriguez was a mutant from birth. He grew up using his unique mental abilities to get what he wanted. And he used them, secretly, to get him into COIL command branch. He was there a month before he noticed that something strange was happening to him, and to the others around him. But his change was not noticeable, his mental powers increased, so he continued to keep it secret.

Rodriguez used his enhanced abilities to improve his position in COIL and was soon recognized as one of the fastest rising troops in the organization. Then he decided that it was time for him to rise even farther. So Rodriguez used his powers to "influence" two other men to eliminate their commander. Once that was accomplished, he began planting suggestions in everyone's minds that he would be the perfect commander. It worked.

Then the memo came down from the Serpentine Circle announcing the formation of the Alpha Squad. Rodriguez knew that this was just what he wanted, so he applied. His record spoke for him and he was quickly chosen as the commander of the new elite unit. The Circle dubbed him Sarge.

Quote: "Where did you learn to fight, dimwit? A correspondence course?"

Personality: Rodriguez is an ex-Marine who uses his training to command those under him. He loves to verbally abuse his enemies, and anyone else who gets in his way. But he treats his fellow Alpha Squad as equals and shows respect for his commanders. He is really rather cold and can be heartless to weaker individuals on the battlefield.

Powers/Tactics: Rodriguez is a mentalist who reads the minds of those around him. He can plant suggestions in minds and even cause excruciating pain by stimulating the pain centers. The COIL-gene formula has increased this ability, and has also given him better reflexes and speed. In combat, Rodriguez likes to hold back and control the flow of battle. Whenever he sees an opening he will use his mental powers to assist his troops. He tends to disguise himself as a normal agent so that the enemy will ignore him.

Appearance: Rodriguez dresses as a normal COIL command agent and wears the rank of sergeant on his uniform to throw the enemy off him so he can control the battle. He is 6' tall and weighs 215 lbs. His hair is thick and black and he has deep blue eyes.

KOWALSKI

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
40	STR	30	OCV: 6
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6
28	CON	36	ECV: 3
15	BODY	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
8	INT	-2	
8	EGO	-4	
25	PRE	15	Costs
8	COM	-1	Char: 113 Base: 100
10	PD	2	+ +
6	ED	0	Powers: 137 Disad: 150
3	SPD	0	= =
15	REC	2	Totals: 250 250
56	END	0	
50	STUN	1	

Cost	Powers	END
10	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—battlesuit	
8	+8 PD/+8 ED force field: OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute each	
4	Mind link with the commander of the Alpha Agents: IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link	
3	I.R. vision: OIF—goggles	
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—goggles	
3	K.S. COIL 11-	
10	Find weakness with laser rifle 11-	
4	+2 levels with laser rifle	
4	+2 levels with claws	
3	+1 level with all martial arts	
12	Standard comic book martial arts	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage	
	Throw +1 +1 8d6 + v/5, target fall	
	Block +2 +2 Block, abort	
	Full Strike -2 +1 12d6	
9	2d6 RKA: OAF—laser rifle, activate 14-, 6 charges	
11	2d6 flash vs. normal vision: OAF—flash grenade, explosion, -1 D.C. per 2", + indirect, must be thrown (- lim), 2 uses	
3	Contortionist 13-	
33	20" flight: END, OIF Wings, cannot use in cramped areas (- lim)	2
17	2d6 HKA: (4D6 w/STR) (claws) reduced penetration, 2 x END cost	3/6

100+	Disadvantages
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
20	Hunted by U.S. military 11-
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-
10	Distinctive feature: (COIL agent uniform)
15	Loyal to COIL
15	Always obeys orders of superiors
10	Loves a good fight
10	Rivalry with Stealth from VIPER Force-1
40	Villain bonus

Background: Joe Kowalski's only dream while growing up was to be a Marine. His time in boot was everything he thought it would be and his first assignment was perfect, at least in the beginning. After a year his unit received a new lieutenant. This new officer made impossible demands of the troops and doled out punishments for the slightest infraction. Joe made frequent complaints, and when the lieutenant heard about it he decided to make an example of Private Waters. Private Kowalski and the lieutenant eventually came to words which lead to a fight. It was over in just a few minutes and he left the officer on the ground with a huge gash in his head. He had fallen against the side of a truck.

Joe panicked, as striking an officer was a court martial offense, it didn't matter that the officer had provoked the incident. So Joe went A.W.O.L. He soon found himself roaming the streets. But eventually he caught the attention of COIL.

COIL reminded him of the Marines, so he fell quickly into the routine and soon proved himself the perfect troop. He became known for his unwavering loyalty and willingness to obey any order to the letter. This brought him to the attention of the Serpentine Circle when they were putting together the Alpha Squad. He was given the code name Grunt, in honor of his Marine training, and given the position of second in command.

Quote: "No pain, no gain!"

Personality: Kowalski is the classic Marine. He is honorable, loyal, obedient, and willing to defend his commander to the death. But he also believes in fairness and tolerance. He loves a good fight, and doesn't believe you can be too ready or too trained. He is very loud and boisterous in the field. But he is still a very angry individual.

Powers/Tactics: Kowalski is incredibly strong thanks to the COIL-gene formula and has grown large bat wings. These wings are fully functional and can carry him at great speeds and altitudes.

In combat, Kowalski carries the equipment of the standard agent and likes to use his rifle while aloft. He will rarely land and fight hand-to-hand, preferring to provide air support to the Alpha Squad.

Appearance: Kowalski is 5' 11" tall and weighs 190 lbs. He has black eyes and is bald. On his back he sports a large pair of bat-wings.

KEY

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats			
40	STR	30	OCV: 6			
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6			
23	CON	26	ECV: 3			
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12			
13	INT	3				
11	EGO	2	Costs			
20	PRE	10				
12	COM	1	Char:	123	Base:	100
10	PD	2		+		+
5	ED	0	Powers:	127	Disad:	150
4	SPD	12		=		=
13	REC	0	Totals:	250		250
46	END	0				
50	STUN	3				
Cost		Powers			END	
10	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—battlesuit					
8	+8 PD/+8 ED force field: OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute each					
10	+3 PD/+3 ED armor					
4	Mind link with the commander of the Alpha Agents: IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link					
3	I.R. vision: OIF—goggles					
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—goggles					
6	+3" running (9" total)					
10	Find weakness with main attack (punch) 11-					
4	+2 levels with punch					
2	K.S. COIL 11-					
18	4d6 NND (not vs. L.S.: self contained, force wall, poison immunity), invisible to normal sight, personal immunity, IAF -needler gauntlets, 2 shots					
3	+4d6 HA: OAF—electro-knuckles, full phase to start up, 4 charges, no knockback					
5	Concealment 13-					
5	Stealth 14-					
5	Streetwise 14-					
10	10 pts lack of weakness					
10	Danger sense 11-					
3	Security systems 12-					
3	Lockpicking 13-					
5	+1 level in hand-to-hand combat					
100+		Disadvantages				
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-					
25	Hunted by UNTIL 11-					
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-					
10	Distinctive feature: (COIL agent uniform)					
15	Loyal to COIL					
10	Showboat					
15	Likes to act stupid					
45	Villain bonus					

Background: Cliff Key was a successful body builder and athletic instructor who used his job at a posh athletic club to supply his other job. You see, Cliff was really a cat-burglar who robbed the homes of the club's clients while they were busy exercising. This continued for quite a while, until the day he saw two policemen enter the club asking for him. He was in the back room and heard what they said. The last place he had robbed had had hidden cameras, so they had beautiful pictures of him in the act.

Cliff slipped out the back of the club while no one was looking and contacted his underworld friends. They got him in touch with COIL and Cliff was soon recruited into the covert branch. His skills of breaking and entering came in handy. And he began to notice that his strength was increasing every day. He did not realize that the COIL-gene formula was in his food.

One day a memo came down from the Serpentine Circle about an elite group being formed from the different branches. Cliff immediately put in his application, and in no time he was the chosen troop from the covert branch. He was given the code name of Smash because of his tendency to bulldoze through things.

Quote: "Smashing you will be as easy as taking candy from a baby!"

Personality: Key is a very aggressive person who loves to demonstrate his great strength by destroying people and things. Yet his outward appearance is always calm and controlled. He very rarely boasts and is very calculating in everything he says. He is very smart and well read, but he will play the "dumb brick" if that will give him an advantage. Key has a tendency of kissing his fist prior to punching someone.

Powers/Tactics: Key has been given incredible strength, defenses, agility and speed by the COIL-gene formula. He uses these to their full advantage in any combat. Key will jump immediately into any conflict and attack the brick-types first. He will pummel his opponent until he discovers a weakness, then he will target that. His favorite maneuver is to grab an enemy and pin him for one of the other Alpha Squad to attack.

Appearance: Key is 7' 3" tall, weighs 350 lbs, and has blond hair and blue eyes. He wears the standard COIL agent uniform and equipment but with special gloves. He also carries the electro-knuckles and a wrist dart shooter from the covert branch equipment list.

McMASTERS

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats	
25	STR	15	OCV: 8	
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8	
23	CON	26	ECV: 3	
15	BODY	10	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12	
8	INT	-2		
8	EGO	-4	Costs	
20	PRE	10		
8	COM	-1	Char:	Base:
5	PD	0	+	+
5	ED	0	Powers: 150	Disad: 150
4	SPD	7	=	=
10	REC	0	Totals: 250	250
46	END	0		
40	STUN	0		

Cost	Powers	END
10	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—battlesuit	
8	+8 PD/+8 ED force field: OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute each	
4	Mind link with the commander of the Alpha Agents: IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link	
3	I.R. vision: OIF—goggles	
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—goggles	
2	K.S. COIL 11-	
12	Standard comic book martial arts	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Damage
	Throw	+1 +1 8d6 + v/5, target falls
	Block	+2 +2 block, abort
	Strike	-2 +1 12d6
16	Dirty infighting:	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Damage
	Punch	+0 +2 10d6
	Low Blow	-1 +1 3 d6 NND (1)
	Disarm	-1 +1 50 STR, disarm
	Kidney Blow	-2 +0 2d6 + 1 (w/STR)
12	+3 D.C. with all martial arts (Added in)	
8	+4" running (10" total)	2
2	+1" swimming (3" total)	1
20	Find weakness with all martial attacks 11-	
20	PD damage reduction	
30	6" stretching	2

100+	Disadvantages
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
20	Hunted by Canadian police 11-
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-
10	Distinctive feature: (COIL agent uniform)
15	Loyal to COIL
10	Prankster
10	Loves sports
15	Overconfidence
40	Villain bonus

Background: Russ McMasters was a rising basketball star for the Canadian league who loved his job. But his salary did not support his expensive tastes and gambling habit, so he took up crime to supplement his income. His bookie needed a collection man and he gave Russ the opportunity to work off his debt by "roughing up" the deadbeats who didn't pay. Unfortunately some of the clients fought back and Russ' injuries interfered with his basketball career.

About this time he heard about a local criminal organization looking for new blood. He applied and was accepted into the front-line branch of COIL. He received extensive combat training and, thanks to the COIL-gene, the ability to elongate his body. He also made a friend of one of the support branch, Ted Baker. The two were inseparable, constantly practicing combat maneuvers to perfect themselves.

When the memo came down from the Serpentine Circle to recruit for an elite force, the two friends rushed to the COIL citadel to apply in person. They challenged the members of the Circle to combat, and Alligator accepted. After the two knocked him unconscious the Circle made them Alpha Squad. Russ was dubbed Stretch because of his unusual abilities.

Quote: "You think I can't reach you? Think again."

Personality: McMasters has a good natured, happy go luck personality and has become something of a practical joker. He is always cracking jokes, even in combat, and has become well known for his pranks. Even his best friend, Bosanek, does not appreciate some of his jokes. But everyone really likes McMasters.

Powers/Tactics: McMasters has gained the ability to elongate his entire body and uses this to its full advantage. His favorite tactic is to stretch himself so thin that he can blend into the drain pipes and electrical wires on a building. He can also scale the sides of buildings and use his long arms to swing from one spot to another.

In combat, McMasters tends to hold back and strike from a distance. He has learned to combine his abilities with his martial arts, making him dangerous.

Appearance: McMasters is 7'4" when not elongated and weighs 250 lbs. He is an albino, so his skin and hair are pure white and his eyes are pink. He always keeps himself covered when outside and wears sunglasses at all times. He wears his hair long and has a mustache.

MUSGROVE

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats		
30	STR	20	OCV: 8		
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8		
23	CON	26	ECV: 4		
20	BODY	20	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12		
8	INT	-2			
11	EGO	2	Costs		
25	PRE	15			
6	COM	-2	Char:	138	Base: 100
6	PD	0		+	+
5	ED	0	Powers:	112	Disad: 150
5	SPD	17		=	=
11	REC	0	Totals:	250	250
46	END	0			
50	STUN	3			

Cost	Powers	END
10	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—battlesuit	
8	+8 PD/+8 ED force field: OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute each	
10	+3 PD/+3 ED armor	
4	Mind link with the commander of the Alpha Agents: IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link	
3	I.R. vision: OIF—goggles	
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—goggles	
6	+3" running (9" total)	
10	Find weakness with main attack (electro-blaster cannon) 11-	
4	+2 levels with electro-blaster cannon	
2	K.S. COIL 11-	
12	Standard comic book martial arts	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Damage
	Throw	+1 +1 6d6 + v/5, target falls
	Block	+2 +2 Block, abort
	Full Strike	-2 +1 10d6
20	11d6 EB: OAF—electro-blaster cannon, 6 shots	
3	+2 range levels with electro-blaster cannon	
4	+2 levels with electro-blaster cannon	
3	U.V. vision: OIF—eyescopes	
5	Extra Limb: Tail	
3	+1 with martial arts	
2	+1 with strike	

100+	Disadvantages
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
20	Hunted by Australian police 11-
10	Monitored by King Cobra 8-
10	Distinctive feature: (COIL agent uniform)
15	Loyal to COIL
10	Vengeful
15	Loves to fight
10	Tries to prove himself
40	Villain bonus

Background: Zack Musgrove was a tracker in the outback of Australia who was considered the best, but he had a mean streak a mile wide. Every once in a while he would "lose" a party, and then go on a drinking and gambling spree with his sudden wealth.

A "friend" of his did not like the bad reputation that guides were getting because of Zack's greed. He informed the local constable and set up a trap for Zack. This trap entailed undercover officers hiring Zack and waiting for him to make his move. They foiled his attempt but he escaped into the underbrush. A warrant was issued for his arrest. This brought him to the attention of the local COIL leader who hunted him down and invited him to join. Zack saw the advantages of joining and soon proved himself. Then he noticed he was changing, and so was everyone around him. When he learned about the COIL-gene formula in the food he began trading others for their rations. In no time at all Zack was sporting a tail and became covered with scales, he was a walking crocodile. Zack then applied for a position in the Serpentine Circle, but was rejected. He was not quite what King Cobra was looking for. But the King directed him to apply for a position in the newly formed Alpha Squad. He was chosen right away as the heavy weapons member and they gave him the code name Scales.

Quote: "Ay! If youse wants ta die, 'den youse came ta da right place!"

Personality: Musgrove is an excessively violent and cruel person. He loves to fight and will provoke others just to amuse himself. He believes that he will someday become a member of the Circle and does everything he can to gain the attention of King Cobra.

Powers/Tactics: Musgrove has gained the tough skin and tail of a crocodile, and his strength has increased dramatically. He uses his tail as a weapon.

In combat, he likes to carry his COIL heavy weapons equipment, preferring his electro-laser. He likes to stand back and blast things but he will engage in hand-to-hand when necessary. In hand-to-hand he will revert to his martial arts training.

Appearance: Musgrove is 6' tall and weighs 210 lbs. His skin is a dark green-brown in color and he is covered with scales, hence his name. He has no hair on his body and has grown a tail. His eyes are green.

BOSANEK

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
15	STR	5	OCV: 6
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6
18	CON	16	ECV: 4
11	BODY	2	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	INT	3	
11	EGO	2	Costs
15	PRE	5	
10	COM	0	Char: 100 Base: 100
5	PD	2	+ +
5	ED	1	Powers: 150 Disad: 150
5	SPD	22	= =
10	REC	6	Totals: 250 250
36	END	0	
40	STUN	12	

Cost	Powers	END
10	+5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—battlesuit	
8	+8 PD/+8 ED force field: OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute each	
4	Mind link with the commander of the Alpha Agents, IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link	
3	I.R. vision: OIF—goggles	
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—goggles	
10	+5" running (11" total)	
10	Find weakness with main attack (AVLD) 11-	
4	+2 levels with the AVLD	
2	K.S. COIL 11-	
20	50 pts. active multi-power: OAF—shoulder lasers, bulky	
2 u	missile deflection: ranged, no range modifier	
2 u	teleport 10": usable vs. others, ranged, not vs. unwilling targets, 16 uses	
2 u	4d6 AVLD vs. sight flash defense: 16 uses	
2 u	tunneling 10" through defense	10
2	+2 levels, OCV with missile deflection: OAF—helmet sight	
10	Invisibility to normal sight: x 3 END	6
20	10" teleport	2
22	Savate	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage	
	Back Kick +1 +3 5d6	
	Coup de pied bas +0 +2 7d6	
	Coup de pied chasse -2 +1 9d6	
	Block +2 +2 Block,abort	
	Disarm -1 +1 35 STR, disarm	
8	+2 D.C. with all martial arts	
3	K.S. savate 10-	
3	+1 level with back kick/coup de pied chasse/disarm	

100+ Disadvantages
20 Hunted by PRIMUS 8-
25 Hunted by UNTIL 11-
10 Monitored by King Cobra 8-
10 Distinctive feature: (COIL agent uniform)
15 Loyal to COIL
20 Paranoid
15 Straight forward in deed and thought
35 Villain bonus

Background: Ted Bosanek was a corrupt businessman who for five years skimmed funds from his company. He was caught off guard one night by an alert security guard as he manipulated the computer files. Ted tried to run but the guard caught up with him on a stairwell. In the struggle the security guard fell from the thirteenth floor landing and died. Ted took his secret funds and ran to Canada where he hid out at a mercenary camp. This camp was under the control of the criminal organization COIL. He soon found himself involved and was accepted into the support branch.

In the next year he noticed a change coming over him, as everyone else did, and soon discovered that he could make himself invisible. After much experimentation he learned to teleport himself short distances. With his friend, Russ McMasters, they learned to combine their powers and became a formidable team.

When the Serpentine Circle sent out memos about the formation of the Alpha Squad, Ted and Russ applied in person at the Circle Citadel. They challenged any Circle member to combat, and the two proved themselves by beating Alligator. The two became the next members of the Alpha Squad and Ted was given the code name Support.

Quote: "It is futile to resist the inevitable. The Alpha Squad will crush you!"

Personality: Bosanek is a very straight forward, serious individual. He is highly intelligent and wastes no words when he talks. His real strength is in tactics and strategy, but he can still hold his own in hand- to-hand.

Powers/Tactics: Bosanek has obtained the ability to teleport and make himself invisible. Even if he is knocked unconscious the invisibility will remain on. In combat he uses this ability to stay near Rodriguez and protect him. He will sometimes move around in a conflict to prevent his detection. He uses the standard COIL support branch weapons.

Appearance: Bosanek is 6' 1" tall and 200 lbs. His hair is black and his eyes are green. He carries himself in a very authoritative manor, with his head held high and his back straight. He speaks with a British accent.

CONSTRUCTOR COMMANDOS

Origin: It was a day of genius and madness that led King Cobra to form what he would come to call the Constrictor Commandos. Cobra had become paranoid that if his domain would ever crumble around him, he would have nobody to aid him. He decided to create a unit of elite agents to aid him and be his personal bodyguards.

This unit would consist of thirty-two agents that would break up into eight to four man squads. Each squad would work four hours a day guarding the King. The rest of the time they would be training or relaxing. King Cobra would treat these thirty-two agents better than anyone else, except for the Serpentine Circle.

The King secretly reviewed all of his agents' files to find these elite agents, who he envisioned to be like the old German S.S. troops. Once he located each of his hand picked men and women, he sent a memo to their commanders to have the agents in question sent to his Citadel. Once at the Citadel the agents were given a replacement uniform and started retraining for their special positions as the Constrictor Commandos. Anyone who chose not to accept the position of a Constrictor Commando was deemed unworthy of COIL and was executed.

After about a year of retraining, the King paraded his new elite guards in front of all COIL to see, and started the legend of COIL's super troops.

Goals: The Constrictor Commandos all have one real goal in life. They have been conditioned to serve and protect King Cobra and the members of the Serpentine Circle. Any mission that King Cobra gives them is obviously very important. Thus they give one hundred and ten percent to any mission. Each of the Constrictor Commandos gladly throw down their lives for King Cobra and will protect him with the same intense loyalty.

Tactics: The Constrictor Commandos have all been retrained in several types of martial arts and have been given an extra dose of COIL-gene formula. Thus their strength, agility, and speed have been enhanced. The King has made certain that the mutated to non-mutated ratio is sixty/fifty.

The Constrictor Commandos have also been given the newest weapons and armor. One of their favorite weapons is the lightning rod. However, the agents have free reign to choose whatever weapons they carry. This randomness may eventually be their undoing.

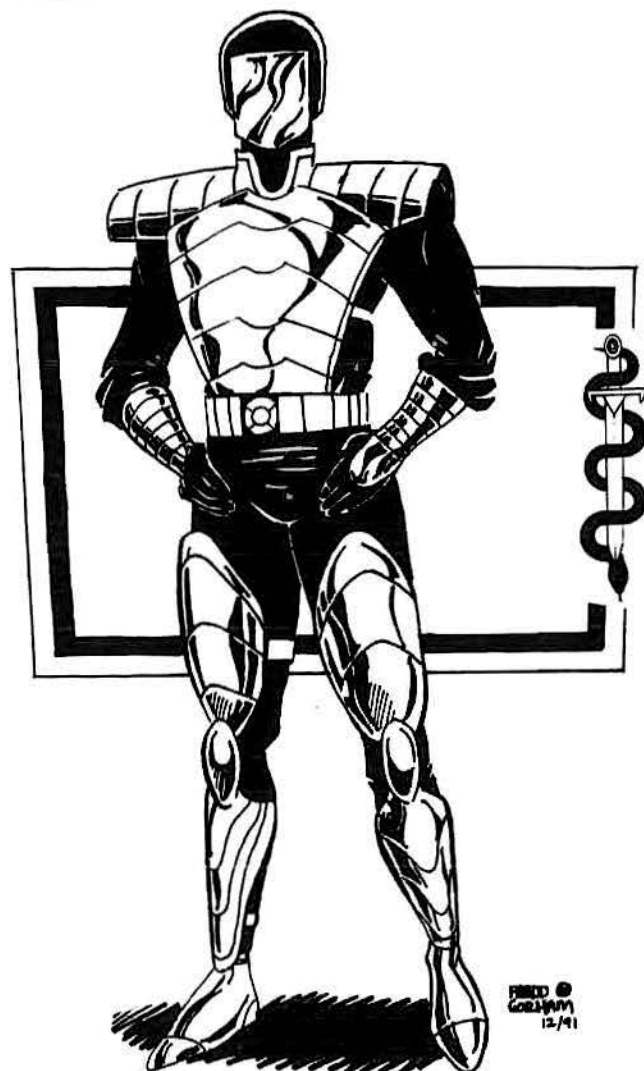
Once in combat, the agents utilize everything at their disposal, including the surrounding environment. All the Constrictor Commandos are primarily used as a distraction while the King and his Circle can escape. If captured, the Constrictor Commandos have standing orders to kill themselves to avoid giving any information to the enemy. In an attempt to insure secrecy, King Cobra has surgically implanted in each of the Constrictor Commandos a false tooth containing a cyanide tablet. Each agent is instructed in how to open the secret cavity and bite the tablet if captured.

The members of the Constrictor Commandos are completely knowledgeable in the COIL command words for combat. In addition they have adapted some new ones that they alone use:

Play football: This means that the Constrictor Commando members should form a defensive wall between King Cobra or any Circle members and the opposition, thus gaining extra time needed for their escape.

Shock wave: This is the command to use all explosion and/or area effect attacks that the Constrictor Commandos may have.

First order: This is the command to stay close to the King or members of the Circle and pick off anyone that may get to close.



COMMANDOS WEAPONS LIST

Cost	Weapons	END
17	(Automatic pistol) 1d6 RKA: AP, auto-fire 5, 2 clips of 16 shots, OAF—pistol	
20	(Assault rifle) 2d6 RKA: AP, 2 clips of 8 shots, OAF—rifle	
18	(Sniper rifle) 2d6 RKA: no range mod., 6 shots, OAF—sniper rifle	
17	(Shot gun w/slugs) 3d6 + 1 RKA: 6 shots, OAF—shot gun, reduced by range	
18	(Sonic ray rifle) 10d6 EB: 6 shots, OAF—rifle	
20	(Lightening rod) 5d6 NND: 4 shots, OIF—wrist rod (not vs. being grounded, not wearing any metal, density increase)	
14	(Net gun) 5d6 entangle: 2 shots, OAF—net gun	
17	(Flash grenades) 2d6 flash: area effect radius, A.P., 4 clips of 1 use, OIF—grenades, must be thrown	
15	(Frag grenades) 2d6 RKA: explosion, 4 clips of 1 use, OIF—grenades, must be thrown	
22	(Boot knife) 2d6 HKA: AP, (3d6 w/STR) OAF—knife	
30	(Garrote) 1d6 HKA: +2 Stun multiplier (2d6—1 w/STR) OIF—garrote	
Armor		
33	(Combat exoskeleton) +16 PD/+16 ED armor: OIF—exoskeleton	
20	(Battle armor) +10 PD/+10 ED armor: OIF—armor	
6	(Battle vest) +5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—vest, act. 11-	
4	(Buckler shield) +5 PD/+5 ED armor: OIF—shield, act. 8-	
7	(Psi-shield) 10 pts. mental defense: OIF—helmet	
Movement		
15	(Skate board) +15" running: OAF—skate board +3	
15	(Jet pack) 10" flight: 0 END, OIF—jet pack, bulky	
12	(Hand glider) 25" gliding: OAF—glider	
Note: in addition to these items, the Constrictor Commandos can also use the laser rifle and flash grenades of the standard agents, and the electro- knuckles of the covert agents.		

Relations: The Constrictor Commandos are all hand picked not only for their loyalty but also for their team spirit. All of the members get along together and enjoy what they do. If any trouble does crop up then the commander of the entire Constrictor Commandos will determine the outcome.

Note: The commander of the Constrictor Commandos stays back at the Citadel and directs everything via the radio link {mind link}.

Reputation: The Constrictor Commandos as a whole are not known of outside of COIL. However, since they have been seen in the field, they are thought to be special agents within the COIL army. Specifics are not known, only that they stay close to the King.

CONSTRICTOR COMMANDOS

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats			
20	STR	10	OCV: 6			
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6			
18	CON	16	ECV: 4			
16	BODY	12	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12			
13	INT	3				
10	EGO	0	Costs			
20	PRE	10				
10	COM	0	Char: 88 Base: 100			
5	PD	1	+ +			
4	ED	0	Powers: 137 Disad: 125			
4	SPD	12	= =			
8	REC	0	Totals: 225 225			
36	END	0				
35	STUN	0				
Cost		Powers		END		
50	50 pt. gadget power pool					
12	Control cost: needs at least an OIF, can be only changed in a lab					
24	Commando training					
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Damage		
	Boxing Cross	+0	+2	8d6		
	Aikido Throw	+0	+1	6d6 + v/5, oppo. falls		
	Karate Chop	-2	+0	2d6 HKA		
	Choke	-2	+0	Grab, 3d6 NND (2)		
	Judo Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 40 STR		
	Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block,abort		
8	+2 D.C. with all martial arts					
15	+10 PD/+10 ED armor: OIF—battle suit, activate 14-					
3	5 pts. flash defense: OIF—helmet					
4	Mind link with the Constrictor Commando commander, IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link					
6	+3" running (9" total)					
3	Acrobatics					
3	Breakfall					
3	Stealth					
3	Streetwise					
3	+1 levels with all martial arts					
100+	Disadvantages					
5	1 x Stun from cold attacks					
20	Hunted by PRIMUS 8-					
20	Hunted by VIPER 8-					
20	Loyal to King Cobra					
15	Overconfident					
15	Always obeys orders of superiors					
15	Secret I.D.					
15	Villain bonus					

THE COIL AGENTS

Origin: King Cobra realized that he needed both super powered and non-supers to succeed in his ventures. He set out to recruit his minions from several mercenary camps. Anyone who did not willingly join with COIL was executed. This weeded out the "riff raff" from those King Cobra wanted as agents.

Once King Cobra was satisfied with the numbers and the selections of his new minions, he set out to create his "super soldiers." He realized that a large dose of his COIL-gene formula was not a good idea because his newly found agents might not be as strong as himself. This was why he put small doses of the formula into the food of his agents without their knowledge. Over a period of time, noticeable differences started to manifest in approximately one half of the COIL mercenary band. The other half were obviously unaffected for some unexplained reason. However, King Cobra now had his superpowered, mutated agents.

The good(?) king would, later, come to the conclusion that working only in the United States was doing him nothing in his quest for world domination. He set out to establish "branches" in most major countries. He found men that he could put his trust in, and had them set up similar mercenary groups in their respective countries. King Cobra, or his generals would then visit these "branches" whenever they saw fit. To this day, King Cobra still secretly mutates about one-half of any new mercenaries that are recruited. The mercenaries that are mutated have all gone under a rigorous mental conditioning in order to instill the belief that King Cobra and the members of COIL are their only friends and stay loyal to the terrorist organization.

Membership: The members of the COIL mercenaries are all cut-throats and rogues that have been recruited from mercenary camps all over the world. Thus, they are a close-knit group that is chosen for merit, as well as any physical requirements.

Goals: The agents of COIL have one thing in mind—aiding King Cobra in ruling the world. However, some enterprising agents have, in the past, gotten some personal goals of their own. These agents have had one of two things happen to them; they ended up in the morgue or as a COIL operative.

Tactics: The individual tactics of each of the COIL branches are going to change and differ from one country to the next. However, when broken down into squads they generally utilize a six-man team. Depending on the mission, the tactics differ. Each "squad" is assigned a "Command" agent that is directly in communication with COIL command through his superior officer.

Super powered mercenaries often work with COIL agents but stay cautious about any long term COIL contracts. The reason behind this is the reputation that COIL has gotten for "mutating" the agents. Each agent is trained using the combat signals. The agents are also trained to cover any retreating supers belonging to COIL. The agents themselves are all trained in one of six fields of expertise. These being: standing foot troops, command, front-line hand-to-hand, heavy weapons, support troops and covert undercover agents.

The squads are broken down into units of six men each. Every squad that goes out on a mission has a command agent and a support agent with them. The squad breakdowns are as follows :

Standard Mission: 1 command, 1 support, 1 front line, and 3 standard agents

Medium Mission: 1 command, 1 support, 1 heavy weapons, 1 front line, 2 standard.

Heavy Mission: 1 command, 2 support, 2 heavy weapons, and 1 standard agent.

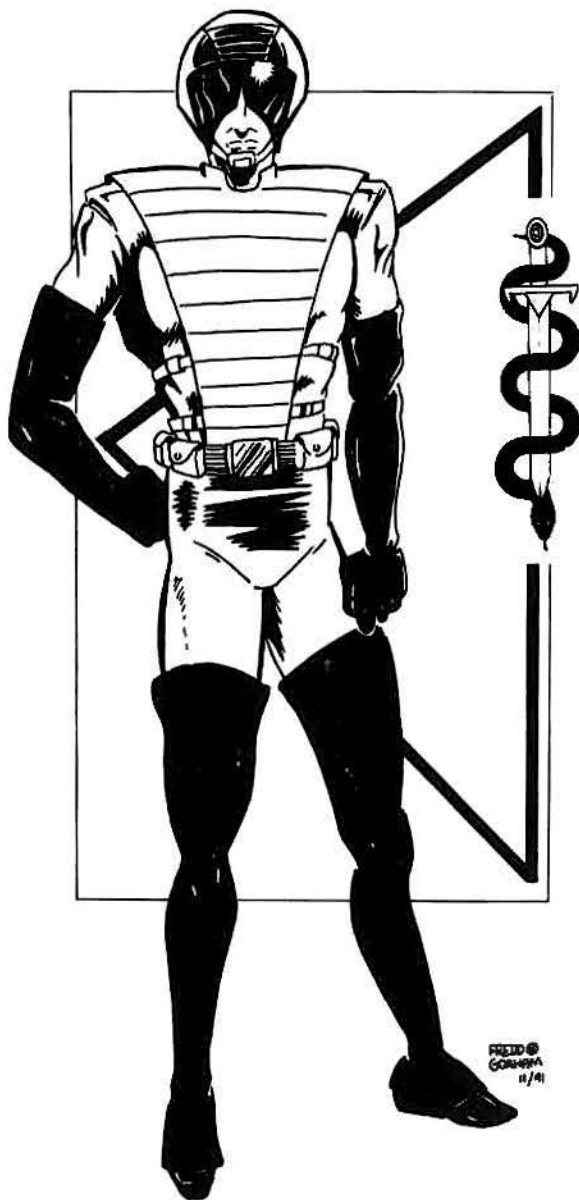
Ex. Heavy Mission: 1 command, 1 support, 4 heavy weapons agents.

Covert Mission: 1 command, 1 support, 2 front line, 2 covert agents.

Guard Duty: 1 command, 1 support, 1 heavy weapons, 3 standard agents.

Note: These are assuming that only one squad is needed. If larger units are to be used, then multiply the number of specific agents by the number of squads needed.

In combat, COIL agents have specific routines that they must adhere to. The command and support agents usually sit away from the combat and observe. Command agents will give advise to the agents in combat, making sure that the whole area is able to be seen in safety. Command will find weaknesses on everyone in the combat, hoping to lower their defenses before hand-to-hand occurs.



This is done while support agents give extra firepower or aid by either 1) deflecting attacks aimed at agents in the fray, or 2) blinding attackers that prove difficult to hit. Support agents also stay close to command agents to help protecting them.

Standard agents are simply grunts that utilize their surroundings. They like to double team an opponent hoping to "drop" them before anyone else can get to them. If command is threatened, then the standard troops are first to respond to the threat after the support and heavy weapons agents. If no obvious flash defense is noticed on a foe, then they will try to blind them so that everyone can attempt to fire at the opponent. Front line agents are usually chosen because of some mutation that enables them to move to the front line fast. These agents are trained with martial arts. They do not carry any foci that could be taken from them, leaving the agent without a weapon. The standard procedure for a front line agent is to take a half move then find weakness on his intended target. If, at the agent's next move, the target is not in hand-to-hand yet then the agent should move another half move and hold for the target to act. The job of the front line agent is to supply diversions for standard and covert agents so they can get into the best possible position to succeed in the mission.

The heavy weapons agents are mainly extra firepower. They stand back and supply cover fire for front line, standard and covert agents. They also are assigned to protect command and support agents. The heavy weapons troops are the last of the agents to leave any combat, supplying cover fire for those fleeing.

The covert agents have a different mission entirely. They are to perform their mission then get out. The covert agents are to always travel together making sure to keep in constant communication with command. If involved in a combat situation, then the covert agents should try and flee in any way possible. The theory being that, in case they have some vital information that needs to get back to COIL head quarters, the support unit with them will cover them until they escape.

Relations: The hand picked members that make up the COIL mercenary agents must have a team spirit so that petty rivalries do not interfere with the mission. If any agent does display such an attitude that could jeopardize the mission, then that agent is taken out for "discipline". COIL agents get along O.K. with most super-mercs but the mercs stay clear of the COIL leadership.

Reputation: COIL agents are known by the police world wide, but not by the general populace. COIL agents are also known within the mercenary circle.

THE RANDOM MUTATIONS CHARTS

The GM should first determine if his agents are going to have mutations or not. If they have mutations, he should then roll to see if each agent is indeed mutated (1 - 3 on a D6). Third, when he has found the number of mutated agents then roll for the category of each mutation.

Note: If 30 pts are not achieved, buy a 1 - 3 pt. immunity to snake venom.

Note: Not all of COIL's agents are mutated, only half. (1 - 3 on a D6 are mutated)

Roll	Chart
1	Statistics
2	Attacks
3	Defenses
4	Movement
5	Talents and Senses
6	Miscellaneous

The Next Step: The next step should be to roll on the chart below corresponding to the chart name selected in the Random Mutations Chart. Repeat this process for all mutated agents until each has thirty points in mutations. If thirty points are not achieved, then the game master should buy a 1 - 3 point immunity to any snake type venom to make up the loss.

COIL MUTATION CHARTS

Roll	Statistics	Cost
1	+15 STR (No figured)	10
2	+5 DEX (No figured)	10
3	+5 CON, +1 ED, +1 REC, +10 END, +2.5 STUN	10
4	+1 SPD	10
5	+5 REC	10
6	+10 STUN	10

Roll	Attacks	Cost
1	+5 STR with a tail (+1 PD, +1 REC, +2.5 STUN)	10
2	1d6 REC drain (venom bite)	10
3	1d6 NND (bite)	10
4	+3d6 H.A.	9
5	4d6 transparent entangle. Must grab, no range, no defense, 2 uses, costs end, 2 x END, (12 END) (venom)	10
6	1d6 HKA fallible - claws (-)	10

Roll	Defenses	Cost
1	Armor +3/+3	9
2	Damage reduction (1-3 = PD, 4-6 = ED)	10
3	10 pts. power defense	10
4	Lack of weakness (10 pts)	10
5	Life support vs. breathing	10
6	10 pts. mental defense	10

Roll	Movement	Cost
1	7" flight OIF—Wings	9
2	15" gliding OIF—Wings	10
3	+4" running, 0 END, no non-com (-)	10
4	+10" superleap	10
5	+5" swimming x 2 non-com	10
6	2" stretching	10

Roll	Talents and Senses	Cost
1	Danger sense 11-	10
2	Defense Maneuver/ Double jointed/ +1 to sight perception roll	10
3	Simulate death/ fast draw/ ambidexterity/1 pt. immunity to Cobra venom	10
4	Targeting smell act 11-	10
5	Mental awareness/ +4 to offset range penalties with main weapon	9
6	Ultraviolet vision/ +2 to perception rolls	9

Roll	Miscellaneous	Cost
1	Growth 1 level zero END, persistent, always on/ -3" knock-back resistance	10
2	Clinging ?? STR	10
3	Missile deflection arrows and projectiles	10
4	Multi - form (100 pt. snake) DCV, full phase, costs END	10
5	Shrinking 1 level	10
6	Invisibility to normal sight, X 3 END (6 END)	10

COIL WEAPONS AND SKILL PACKAGES

These are lists of weapons most commonly used by COIL agents and their unit types. Other agency's weapons can be substituted for each agent, if desired. This is because COIL agents are scavengers and will use any weapon they can take. These sample weapons are the most commonly used.

Cost	Standard Agents
9	2d6 RKA OAF—laser rifle, act 14-, 6 charges
11	2d6 flash vs. normal vision OAF—flash grenade, explosion, -1 DC per 2", indirect (+), must be thrown (-), 2 uses
2	+1 with laser rifle
5	+1 with find weakness
3	Contortionist 12-
Cost	Command Agents
17	40 STR telekinesis grab only (-1), OAF—stasis pistol, 4 shots lasting 1 turn each
4	Mind link same as base package but 2nd link is to his superior IIF—wire implant, others must have mind link
2	+1 with stasis pistol
3	Concealment 12-
1	K.S. super heroes 8-
3	Tactics 11-
Cost	Covert Agents
18	4d6 NND (not vs. L.S. self contained, force wall, poison immunity), invisible to normal sight, personal immunity, IAF -needler gauntlets, 2 shots
3	+4d6 HA OAF—electro -knuckles, full phase to start -up, 4 charges, no knockback
3	Concealment 12-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 13-
Cost	Front Line Agents
6	+3" Running (10" total)
2	+1" swimming (3" total)
12	+3 DC with all martial arts
10	Find weakness with martial throw 11-(NOTE: the find weakness with main attack is with the strike.)
Cost	Support Agents
20	50 Active Multipower OAF—Shoulder Lasers, Bulky
2u	Missile Deflection Ranged, No Range Penalty
2u	Flash 3d6, No Range Penalty
2u	4d6 EB AVLD Vs. Flash Defense, 16 Uses.
2u	Tunneling 10", Through DEF 10
2	+2 OCV With Missile Deflection OAF—Helmet Sight
Cost	Heavy Weapon Agents
20	11d6 EB OAF—electro -blaster cannon, 6 shots
3	+2 Range levels with the electro -blaster cannon
4	+2 levels with the electro -blaster cannon
3	UV vision OIF—eye scope

BASIC COIL AGENT

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats				
15	STR	5	OCV: 5				
15	DEX	15	DCV: 5				
13	CON	6	ECV: 4				
11	BODY	2	Phases: 4, 8, 12				
13	INT	3					
10	EGO	0	Costs				
20	PRE	10					
8	COM	-1	Char:	45	Base:	100	
3+	PD	0		+		+	
3+	ED	0	Powers:	120	Disad:	65	
3	SPD	5		=		=	
6	REC	0	Totals:	165		165	
26	END	0					
26	STUN	0					
Cost		Power	END				
12	Standard comic book martial arts						
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Damage			
	Throw	+1	+1	STR + V/5, target falls			
	Block	+2	+2	Block, abort			
	Strike	-2	+1	STR + 4d6			
10	Armor (+5/+5) OIF—Armor						
8	Force Field (+8/+8) OIF—belt, 4 clips of 1 continuing charge lasting 1 minute						
4	Mind link with any commander of a COIL squad, IIF -wire radio implant, others must have mind link						
3	I.R. vision OIF—goggles						
3	5 pts. flash defense OIF—goggles						
2	+1" running (7" total)						2
10	Find weakness with main attack 11-						
30	Mutant powers (see chart)						
30	Specialized equipment (see equip. lists)						
4	+2 with main attack						
1	K.S. COIL 8-						
3	K.S. COIL combat tactics 12-						
	If No Mutations Then:						
10	+1 overall level						
10	+2 to the find weakness roll						
3	+2 range levels with main attack						
3	Breakfall 12-						
3	Acrobatics 12-						
1	K.S. COIL tactics 8-						
75+	Disadvantages						
15	Loyalty to COIL and King Cobra (Com/Strong)						
15	Overconfidence (V. Com/Mod)						
10	Psych lim.: subject to orders						
13	Watched by COIL 11-						
15	Secret ID						
20	2 x Stun from Cold attacks						
2	Villain bonus						

SLITHERN

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
65	STR	55	OCV: 6
18	DEX	24	DCV: 6
53	CON	86	ECV: 7
20	BODY	20	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
15	INT	5	
20	EGO	20	
30	PRE	20	
2	COM	-4	
20	PD	7	
20	ED	9	
7	SPD	52	
30	REC	12	
76	END	-15	
80	STUN	0	

Cost	Powers	END
27	Shape shift: any shape, 0 END, persistent, no conscious control (only at night)	
37	Multi-power: (75 active) depending on shapeshift, may not change once set (-1 lim)	
3 m	+10 PD/+10 ED armor	
1 m	extra limbs: variable special effect	
4 m	40" gliding	
4 m	20 pts. of growth: 0 END, persistent (stats will vary)	
4 m	2d6 HKA: (d6 varies with STR)	varies
4 m	+20" running	varies
4 m	20 pts. of shrinking: 0 END, persistent	
4 m	+8" stretching	varies
4 m	+40" superleap	varies
4 m	+40" swimming	varies
4 m	+8" tunneling through defense	8/varies
75	Multi-power: (vibratory powers) (75 active)	
7 u	15" tunneling through defense 15	3
7 u	2 d6 RKA: +2 STUN multiple, STUN only, no range	7
6 u	33 STR telekinesis: area effect 1 hex, grab and drop only	7
6 u	33 STR telekinesis: damage shield, pushes attackers away	7
37	5" stretching: 0 END	
45	+15 PD/+15 ED armor	
40	4 BODY regeneration	
5	Life support: may breath unusual environments	
10	65 strength clinging	
10	10 pts. lack of weakness	
3	Bump of direction	
3	Double jointed	
3	Immunity to COIL-gene formula	
3	Light sleep	
3	Simulate death	
7	Disguise 13-	
3	K.S. COIL 12-	
3	K.S. Genocide 12-	
3	K.S. N.Y. sewer system 12-	
5	Shadowing 13-	
5	Stealth 14-	
3	Streetwise 15-	
7	Tracking 14-	
2	+1 level with punch	
10	+2 levels with DCV	
3	+1 level with move-through/move-by/block	

100+ Disadvantages

30	2 x effect from chemicals
20	Berserk in combat 11-/11-
10	Enraged at King Cobra or any COIL 11-/8-
25	Hunted by COIL 11-
20	Hunted by Genocide 8-
20	Distinctive features: (mutated form) concealable
15	Overconfidence
15	Hatred of King Cobra and COIL
20	Casual killer
435	Villain bonus

Background: Fred Stiles was and always would be a mutant. He was not ashamed of this fact, and actually enjoyed his unusual abilities. But this put him in opposition with the mutant-hating organization Genocide. They believed that the only good mutant was a dead mutant, but you would never get them to admit this publicly. So when Fred openly flaunted his powers he found himself a target.

In fact, on one occasion Fred was forced to defend himself at the cost of the lives of two of the Genocide agents. When their headquarters learned of this "blasphemy" they dispatched a full task force to "eliminate the problem". This task force cornered Fred in his own home. The fight was fast and furious and Fred finally had to use his powers to tunnel to freedom. This murderous attack made him realize that as a free agent he was at risk, he needed another organization behind him.

Through a cousin who had contacts with the underworld, Fred learned of the COIL organization. This sounded like just what he was looking for. So his cousin made it known that Fred was interested, and within a very short time Fred Stiles was a COIL standard agent.

One year after joining COIL, Fred learned that King Cobra was looking for volunteers in a risky experiment. A memo had been sent around to the different departments calling for people willing to take a chance and possibly gain power and prestige within the organization. Fred saw this as the perfect chance to advance himself in COIL. So he reported to the laboratory.

When it was discovered that he already possessed mutant powers, the doctors were skeptical about using him as a test subject. King Cobra himself was called in to make the final decision. After talking for several hours it was finally decided that the tests would go ahead as planned.

Fred was injected with a COIL-gene formula that contained the genetic material of an anaconda. When he regained consciousness he found that he was now part snake but had retained his mutant abilities. This greatly pleased King Cobra and Fred, and the King dubbed his new snake-man Slither and made him one of his body guards.

Things seemed fine for a few weeks, until one day Slither noticed that his clothing was getting tight. When he reported this to the doctors and they ran tests, it was discovered that he was growing. In fact, he had grown over two feet since the initial experiment. And when they tested his powers they discovered that they had increased too; he had developed some new ones.

What Slithern did not know was that King Cobra was becoming concerned about the changes in his body guard. He secretly informed the six members of his Serpentine Circle that if Slithern ever got out of line they were to "eliminate him." But the King was not careful and Slithern soon learned of this conspiracy. If he wasn't considering destroying King Cobra before, he was now.

The day that Slithern finally made his move, King Cobra had his guard down. He was enjoying a pleasant, private swim in the pool when Slithern jumped in and grabbed him. The King was unable to defend himself and had the life nearly squeezed out of him before his other body guards, Boa and Alligator, came back to check on him. The two were barely able to pry Slithern's arms off of the limp body of King Cobra, all the time shouting for help. When the rest of the Circle arrived a terrible battle ensued which left them battered and sore. But Slithern got away. King Cobra was hospitalized for some time and when he recovered he demanded an all out search for his renegade agent. He ordered that the COIL Citadel complex, sewers and all, be searched. When this turned up nothing he had them search the sewer systems of the whole city of New York. Still nothing.

In the meantime, Slithern found himself suddenly sick and exhausted, aimlessly wandering the sewers. At one point he couldn't go on and crawled into a drainage pipe to sleep. He didn't know how long he slept, but when he awoke he was surrounded by a group of hopeless who were rummaging through his pockets as if he were dead. Without thinking he attacked and in seconds they were all dead or running. It was then that he realized that he had grown again. He had become huge and his clothing no longer fit. So he fashioned himself an outfit from the tattered rags on the dead bodies.

Two days later he made his way back to the Citadel, with the thought of finishing the job he had started, only to find it completely empty. Well, not completely empty, there was a note pinned on his bedroom door that read, "You disappoint me Slithern. You think that I would be here after you tried in vain to kill me? You are sorely mistaken! King Cobra." In a blind rage after reading this, Slithern totally destroyed what remained of the Citadel.

But Slithern has never moved far from the Citadel, making his headquarters near the ruins in hope that someday COIL would return. He has also collected his own group of supporters in the local area that work for him to this end.

Quote: "Once you have entered my domain, you are no longer s-s-safe. Try and leave. You will not s-s-succeed!"

Personality: Slithern is a cold blooded killer. He would much rather kill you than talk to you. He prefers to be completely alone, especially when he works, and will do anything to insure his privacy. He will hire outside help when needed, but only on his terms.

Slithern is mad at the whole world, and cannot see his part in his own problems. He blames everyone else for what has happened to him, and will not listen to reason of any kind. He intends to someday make King Cobra and then the world pay for the "cruelty" they have shown him.

Powers/Tactics: Slithern was born with the mutant power to increase the speed of his molecules and create a vibratory effect. This power can be used to tunnel through solid matter, stun an opponent, make a small area unstable to stand on, and propel others away from him. The COIL-gene formula has increased this ability and given him the added abilities to stretch. He also has enhanced speed, strength, durability, and recovery. His senses have also been enhanced and he is now able to survive in unusual climates.

Tactically, Slithern relies on his brute strength and speed. His favorite tactic is to surprise his opponent, and he usually targets the weakest persons first.

Appearance: Slithern is variable in height and weight. Although his skin is always green in color and his eyes are always yellow, the rest of him is constantly changing. He wraps his head and limbs in bandages to cover his obvious mutations, and he always wears a oversized trench coat.



SNAKE SKIN

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
35	STR	25	OCV: 8
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8
28	CON	36	ECV: 5
20	BODY	20	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
13	INT	3	
14	EGO	8	Costs
25	PRE	15	
10	COM	0	Char: 187 Base: 100
10	PD	3	+
10	ED	4	Powers: 268 Disad: 355
6	SPD	27	=
15	REC	4	Totals: 455 455
56	END	0	
55	STUN	3	

Cost	Powers	END
20	Standard comic book martial arts	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Damage	
	Kick -2 +1 11d6	
	Punch +0 +2 9d6	
	Throw +0 +1 7d6 + v/5	
	Block +2 +2 Block	
	Dodge 0 +5 Dodge	
40	4d6 RKA: AP, +1 Stun multiplier, OAF—rail gun, bulky (x DCV), full phase to load, 16 charges	
7	1d6 HKA: (2d6 w/STR) OAF—dagger +1	
45	+15 PD/+15 ED armor: hardened, IIF—prototype "skin" armor	
5	5 pts. lack of weakness	
10	+5" knockback resistance	
6	+3" running (9" total)	2
5	+5" superleap (12" total)	2
35	Spatial awareness: (passive sonar) 360 degree	
10	1 Body regeneration	
10	Immunity to most snake venom	
3	Combat sense 12-	
3	Acrobatics 14-	
3	Breakfall 14-	
3	Climbing 14-	
3	Security systems 12-	
3	Electronics 11-	
3	Stealth 14-	
7	Streetwise 16-	
3	Tracking 12-	
5	W.F.: Small arms, common melee, rail-gun	
3	K.S. COIL 12-	
3	K.S. VIPER 12-	
5	K.S. armorer 13-	
5	K.S. the rail-gun 13-	
1	A.K. Sidney, Australia 8-	
3	Mechanics 11-	
6	+2 w/ rail-gun	
3	+1 w/ standard comic book martial arts	
10	+1 over-all level	

100+ Disadvantages

10	Enraged: in sight of VIPER 11-/8-
10	Enraged: in sight of COIL 11-/8-
10	Enraged: at any "serpent" type character 8-/11-
20	Hunted by VIPER 8-
20	Hunted by COIL 8-
10	Hunted by S.T.O.P. 8-
15	Overconfidence
15	Hatred of serpents
5	Thinks that he is doing good deeds
10	Vengeful
230	Experience

Background: Growing up in Sidney, Australia can toughen the softest of men, but Walter Harrigan started out tough and became a block of granite. He had a heart of stone and a body to match, and at every opportunity he tested his strength on the local boys. A day never went by that Walter wasn't in one fight or another, and he almost always started them himself. He had no tact, or common sense, and over the years his hard heart became even colder and more cynical.

Walter's toughness started with the death of both of his parents in a bush plane crash when he was only ten. There were no living relatives and the little boy ended up getting lost in the red tape of the juvenile system. In just months after their death, little Walter ran away and lived by his wits on the streets. But, while a little boy can grow up physically on the street, emotionally his growth will be stunted. So Walter developed a cold-blooded personality to protect the little boy lost inside of him. Because the young Walter showed so much street-savvy and toughness, he was adopted by one of the local street gangs as their mascot. They weren't gentle with the boy, playing cruel and sometimes physically harmful jokes on him. This fed his cold-blooded personality and as the boy grew he developed a total disregard for the rights of others.

When Walter was fourteen he became involved in a street fight with members of a rival gang. Several of his fellow gang members rushed to his aid, but not before the teen killed one of the other gang members. The boy stood there with blood pouring down his knife onto his hand and just stared at the body at his feet. While his gang watched the boy began to laugh maniacally and carve his initials into the body's chest. His fellow gang members were revolted by this action and now had second thoughts about keeping this crazy boy in their midst.

It was shortly after this incident that Walter began formulating the idea of taking over the gang himself. On the day that he finally made his move, the current leader had called a meeting to discuss what they were going to do about the frequent raids by the other gangs. During the meeting Walter stood up and challenged the leader's right to hold the position. Everyone in the room held their breath as the two stared each other down. Then, from what seemed like midair, Walter produced a Saturday night special and shot the leader. The sound echoed through the building for several seconds before someone in the room began to softly chant, "Snake...Snake...Snake..." which was Walter's gang name. He was unanimously chosen as the new leader.

Walter renamed the gang the Street Snakes, started calling himself Snake Skin, and began wearing clothing and boots made of snake skin. In a very short time the gang became the most feared group in Sidney, and even some of the outlying areas. This caught the attention of the Australian VIPER nest leader. He invited Snake Skin to a meeting and showed the fifteen year old gang leader the benefits of linking up to a larger organization. The teen may have been emotionally immature but he knew a good thing when he heard one. He quickly agreed to joining forces, but only if he still ran things his way. The nest leader willingly consented. As the years went by this partnership proved beneficial to both groups. Snake Skin proved a better leader than anyone expected, even though he was without any mercy for even his own people. And he proved just the type of agent VIPER was looking for. He not only stopped the raids by other gangs, he soon absorbed many of those rival gangs. And every mission that he led for VIPER was a complete success. Unfortunately this made him enemies within VIPER and, when Snake Skin was twenty, one of these rivals decided to do something about the "young upstart".

On that fateful day, the rival set up a meeting with Snake Skin on the pretext that someone else was spreading rumors about him. This rival had been working for Snake Skin long enough to know that he was very sensitive about his image. So when the young man heard that someone was "talking bad" about him he wanted to know who and what. The rival set up the meeting in a private area of the VIPER nest and, when Snake Skin walked in the room, he jumped him. The fight that occurred was brutal and bloody, but in the end Snake Skin was the one left standing. The noise attracted attention and the nest leader and several others arrived to see the young man cutting into the body of his dead rival. This act so horrified the leader that he

immediately demanded Snake Skin leave and never return. Snake Skin immediately began plotting his revenge on the nest leader. He was going to make the man pay for humiliating him. But before he could make his move the nest leader sent two five-man teams after him. The battle was fierce and Snake Skin's home was completely destroyed in the process. But VIPER took the greatest loss, the death of six agents, and Snake Skin escaped with only the loss of his left eye.

What the nest leader did not know was that Snake Skin had stolen several prototype battlearmor suits from the VIPER arsenal and wore one all the time. These suits were ultra-light and could be worn under conventional clothing. When the leader discovered this he had hell to pay, because something like this could not be hidden for long from the Supreme Serpent. Sure enough, when the Supreme Serpent learned of this "mistake" he quickly replaced the leader.

In the meantime, Snake Skin began hiring himself out to mercenary groups and villain organizations. He soon was approached by COIL, who had heard of him when he was a VIPER agent. They offered him his own command, and promised him they would kill him if he said no. How could he refuse such a "sweet" offer.

By the time Snake Skin was twenty-two, he was one of the top agents in COIL and he was offered the leadership of his own group in London. COIL paid for his airfare and set him up in a special "house" in the seedier part of the city. It was at this time that Snake Skin noticed that something was wrong with himself. He couldn't put his finger on it at first, but after a while he discovered COIL's secret—they were putting the COIL-gene formula into all the food and water in the "house". Once he discovered their secret COIL let him in on the whole picture. London was the headquarters of their mutation laboratories. And this was where most of the experiments



using the COIL-gene were carried out. Walter was interested and agreed to undergo experimentation. King Cobra had been watching the young man's progress and decided to supervise the experiment himself. Snake Skin secretly hoped this would guarantee him a position on the Serpentine Circle.

Unfortunately the experiment was a failure, nothing happened to him. King Cobra was openly disappointed and ordered Snake Skin back to his unit. Snake Skin took this as a slight and started planning his revenge for the offense.

One night, while on a mission to transport some top secret gear to a storage vault in the city—a very demeaning job—the convoy that Snake Skin led was attacked. While they waited at a red light, several other vehicles pulled up alongside them. No one paid any attention to the cars at first. Then the windows of the cars rolled down and automatic weapons began riddling the convoy. The vehicles were full of VIPER agents out to stop Snake Skin and capture the contents of the trucks. What Snake Skin did not know was that his own people had standing orders to "remove" him at the first opportunity. So while the VIPER agents were spraying him with bullets, Snake Skin's own backup began to shoot at him too. He quickly jumped into the back of his truck and opened one of the boxes. He wasn't sure what he was looking for, but what he found was really big. In the box was the prototype of a rail-gun rifle. So, with his battle armor under his clothing and the rail-gun in his hands, Snake Skin jumped from the truck and began firing at both groups. In no time at all he was the only one left standing, and he could hear the S.T.O.P. sirens, as well as the police, getting close. What he didn't know was that before they died, both VIPER and COIL commanders had radioed to their respective headquarters that it was Snake Skin they were fighting. Snake Skin went into hiding under London and did a lot of thinking. But because of his immature emotional development his conclusions were faulty. He decided that none of this was his fault, that the whole world was out to get him. He was really a nice guy and everyone else was crazy. He also discovered that the COIL-gene experiment had succeeded. His outward appearance had not changed, but his strength and agility were above those of normal men. His skin had also become extremely tough and bullet-proof.

So Snake Skin has become a crusader with a mission to wipe all "serpents—especially VIPER and COIL—off the face of the earth. With his light-weight battle armor and his rail-gun rifle he believes that no one can stop him.

Quote: "Crawl on your belly, serpent. For that will be your last act. If you want to be known as a snake than you can die like one!!"

Personality: Snake Skin's emotional development was stifled by his years on the streets, so he is very selfish and self-centered. He is extremely paranoid and trusts no one. When he is crossed or prevented from doing what he wants he can become extremely cruel and sadistic. Snake Skin could easily be classified as a psychopath.

On the other side of the coin though, he tries very hard to make friends. Deep inside is a lonely, little boy who is searching in vain for love and acceptance. He will go so far as to try and buy friendships when he sees someone he thinks would make a good associate. Once he feels comfortable with someone he will talk their ears off, regaling them with stories of his years on the streets. Otherwise, he keeps very much to himself.

Snake Skin believes that only he can rid the world of the scourge of VIPER and COIL. He now wages an all-out war against the two groups and will do anything to cause them grief. In his warped sense of self he truly believes that he can destroy both of them completely.

(Note: If advantageous, Snake Skin can be made into a vigilante/pseudo-hero. He believes that he is righting all of the wrongs that he has perpetrated in his life. However, he will still "blow away" anyone who gets between him and a serpent.)

Powers/Tactics: Snake Skin has enhanced reflexes and strength due to the COIL-gene. He has also discovered that he is faster and recovers from any injury to the point of regeneration. His natural defenses are so enhanced that he is almost bullet proof. He is totally aware of everything around him because he can sense the natural vibrations from things and people near by.

Snake Skin wears an ultra-light prototype VIPER battle armor under his clothing. This armor is made from a revolutionary plastic and conforms to his body like cloth. It is black in color and powerful enough to withstand an anti-tank gun blast without killing the wearer. He carries a prototype COIL rail-gun rifle that fires a steel coated slug. This weapon has enough power to penetrate a semi trailer truck's engine block and still hit the driver.

In combat, Snake Skin moves through the battle field as quickly and silently as a snake. He targets the leaders and commanders of the group, believing that without a leader no group can continue fighting. If he encounters a "snake" person or someone with a "snake" name he asks no questions, he just blows them away. He has no mercy or sense of guilt and will kill dozens of innocent bystanders just to take out one "snake".

Appearance: Snake Skin is 6' 2" tall and weighs 260 lbs. He has shoulder length blond hair with a dark beard and mustache. He is muscular and cuts a very commanding figure. His left eye was lost in battle and he wears a patch over it like a medal. He has a scar that extends from his forehead, down his right cheek to the corner of his mouth that pulls it into a permanent sneer.

Snake Skin wears only black. He has a black suede coat trimmed in snake skin, black snake skin boots, black biker's fingerless gloves, and a snake skin band on his black Australian bushman's hat. He wears a boot knife and a knife in a belt sheath on his back under his coat. He carries his rail-gun rifle whenever possible.

SCENARIOS

THE SEWER SLAUGHTER

This is a game of cat and mouse. There is a noticeable rise in the number of deaths among the homeless. The time frame can be from one to several days, and the police are searching for the cause. In their search, the police will find a hidden room in the sewer system. This room is littered with the remains of several bodies, which will later be identified as some of the missing homeless and one sewer worker. The bodies have all been ripped apart by something extremely strong. If the heroes get involved, they will start their hunt from this point. But the sewer system is a maze which will make finding the perpetrator(s) very difficult. (Note: the person responsible is Slither. He is wandering the sewer tunnels looking for any underground COIL bases. The homeless people that he killed discovered him and he had to eliminate them.)

YE 'OLE FAIR

There is a renaissance fair coming to town again this year and it is very popular with the tourists. This time they have a new attraction; a soothsayer who is reported to have real powers to tell the future. The heroes can be drawn to the fair just for fun, like everyone else, or they could be curious about this new attraction. They could even be asked to check things out as a favor to an NPC or DNPC, or even the local police. (Note: the soothsayer is really Marilyn, set up in the fair by King Cobra. She uses her mental abilities to gain control of the tourists and make them give her all their money. She will even cause them to return to their homes and bring back their most valuable possessions to give to her. If the heroes enter her tent she will attempt to control them also.)

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS

COIL is out to frame VIPER for a series of crimes and murders. COIL agents disguised as VIPER operatives are pulling off these jobs and trying to attract the attention of the heroes. At the same time, COIL agents are killing VIPER agents and leaving notes implicating the heroes. When the heroes and VIPER finally confront each other, COIL will be waiting to watch the fireworks. (Note: the trick is for the heroes to discover that the real culprits are COIL agents.)

A CONFEDERATE COIL IN KING COBRA'S COURT

The heroes are approached by a Serpentine Circle member who tells them that he/she has had a change of heart and wishes to make amends for all of their crimes. They are willing to prove themselves to the heroes and will insist on a test. The former Circle member will give the heroes a list of several hidden COIL bases and information about any traps

in them. When the heroes check out these bases, whatever the former Circle member has said will be true. Then the former Circle member will tell the heroes about the location of one of the larger bases. What they will discover there is King Cobra and the other Serpentine Circle members, backed by COIL agents, waiting for them. (Note: the former Circle member was willingly leading the heroes to the trap. The member's mind has been shielded by Naga's mental abilities so that another mentalist could not detect their real motives. Once the former member is in the final base, Marilyn will give a signal that will eliminate the block. If the former member is placed into custody or not with heroes, then COIL will attempt to rescue them after the battle.)

THE CANDIDATE

There is a new candidate who has entered the local elections with the strong platform that superheroes should be monitored. This candidate sights one incident after another where innocents were injured and property damaged because of superheroes, yet these supposed saviors of society have never paid restitution to the victims. The candidate is proposing a superhero register and eventual "tagging"; that all superheroes will wear monitoring devices so that the police will know where they are at all times. (Note: the candidate is really an agent from COIL who is being backed by King Cobra. The King hopes to gain control of all superheroes to prevent their interference in his master plan.)

THE END OF COIL?

This scenario requires the heroes to have knowledge of COIL and to have encountered them at least once. The police, PRIMUS, or any other law enforcement agency, will call in the heroes to assist in solving a bizarre killing. From what information the authorities have given the heroes, it appears that a vigilante known as Snake Skin discovered the location of the COIL Citadel and murdered all the members of the Serpentine Circle. (Note: the Circle and King Cobra are not dead, the bodies found in the fake Citadel were look-alikes. King Cobra has staged their murders to frame Snake Skin and give his organization room to work.)

THE NEW MEMBER

The hero group has received an application from an unknown who calls himself Snake Skin. If the group decides to give him a chance, he will perform admirably on several missions. But if, and when, the heroes encounter COIL agents, Snake Skin will suddenly pull out his rail gun and begin shooting indiscriminately, targeting the COIL agents. He will have no regard for the innocents in the area or even the heroes who may stumble in the way. The heroes have to deal with this new development in the best way possible.

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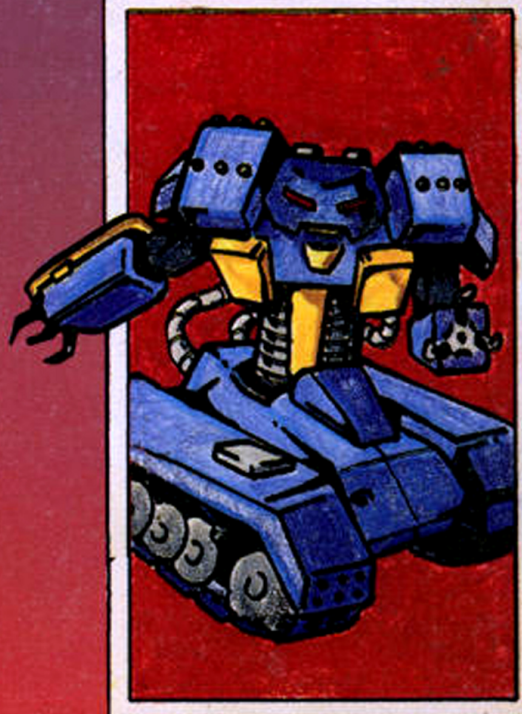
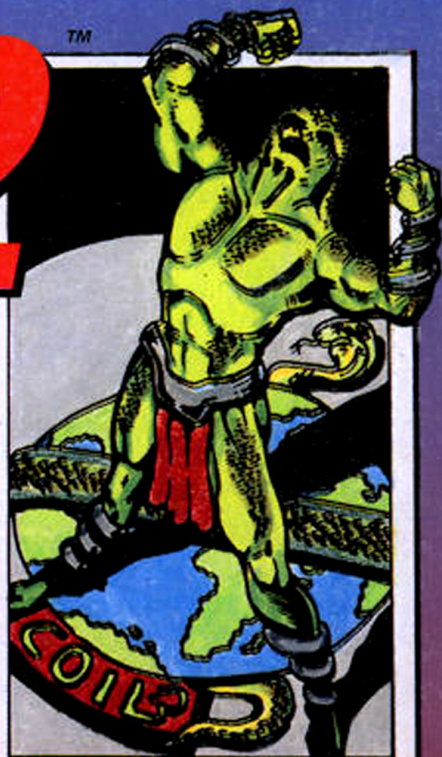
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