

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE



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Although there are two authors listed on the cover of this book, the Champions Universe has developed organically over the course of three decades as the product of dozens of creative minds. So we'd like to dedicate this book to Steve Peterson, George MacDonald, Ray Greer, Bruce Harlick, Scott Bennie, Kevin Dinapoli, Scott Heine, Steve Perrin, Andrew Robinson, Dean Shomshak, Glenn Thain, Allen Thomas, Allen Varney, Mark Williams, the creative team at Cryptic Studios, and everyone else who's contributed to the creation of this rich, fascinating setting.

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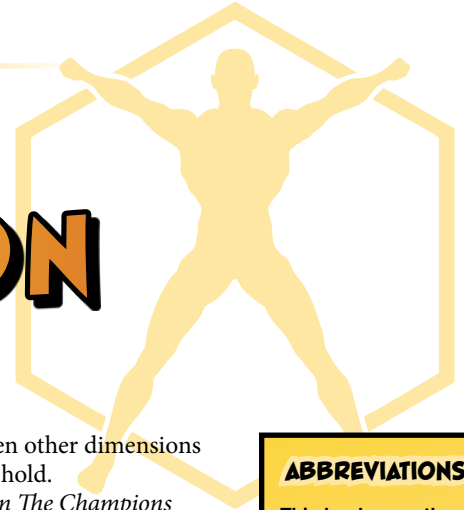


CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

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INTRODUCTION



It's tough to run a Champions campaign sometimes! There are lots of decisions to be made, groundwork to do, villains to prepare character sheets for, setting aspects to describe, and scenarios to plan. Not everyone who wants to GM a Champions game has the time or interest to create an entire campaign.

For GMs who don't want to do a whole lot of planning, or who are looking for bits and pieces from other games they can adapt for their own settings, *Champions Universe* presents an entire, ready-to-run campaign setting for Champions. This is what Hero Games refers to as a *setting book* or *campaign book*. It provides everything you need to run a game in Hero's "official" Champions setting — character creation guidelines, NPCs, scenario seeds, discussions of superhuman demographics, reviews of the major players on the superhuman scene, and much, much more.

Chapter One, *Giants Walk Among Us: A History Of Superhumanity*, starts the book by describing and discussing the history of superhumans from their first appearance in 1938 until the present day (2010, to be precise). It shows you how the presence of superhumans and superpowers has affected the world for the past seventy years and helped shape modern society into its current form.

Chapter Two, *Being Superhuman: Superhumanity In The Twenty-First Century*, delves briefly into the subject of how superpowers manifest in the Champions Universe and what it means to be "superhuman." These issues impact the character creation process and many other factors involved in campaign development.

Chapter Three, *Powers And Superpowers: Superhumans And Society*, discusses the impact and place of superhumans on and in the modern world. It looks at superhumans' effect on technology, government, the media, and various subcultures (such as martial arts, business, and religion).

Chapter Four, *Worlds Upon Worlds: The Champions Multiverse*, describes the geography of the setting. It discusses the role superhumans play in various parts of the globe, and describes several settings (such as Millennium City and Vibora Bay) where superhuman activity is particularly prevalent or noteworthy. But it goes beyond that to look into lost civilizations, secret lands hidden from ordinary humanity, the existence of alien life and

its contact with Earth, and even other dimensions and the potential threats they hold.

Chapter Five, *Who's Who In The Champions Universe*, tells you about the superhumans and organizations that have the most prominent role in the setting. If you want to learn what VIPER is like, what Dr. Destroyer's been up to, who the most powerful villains in the world are, or the secret role of the Trismegistus Council in protecting the world from extradimensional horrors, this is where you should look.

Chapter Six, *Gamemastering The Champions Universe*, describes various campaign standards, ground rules, and campaigning options for the setting. It also includes one of the most important parts of the book: the **GM's Vault**, which contains all the secret, GM's-eyes-only information about the Champions Universe. As much as possible, the first five chapters of the book have been written from a "player's perspective": they describe what players and their characters should know about the setting. They include some "secret" information where it's not convenient to separate it out — for example, even though not every PC should necessarily know about the existence and activities of the Trismegistus Council, enough of them should know that it's better for the campaign to include that information where players can read about it. (The GM can, of course, forbid certain players to read certain parts of the book, though the effectiveness of this tactic varies.)

However, there are other types of information players clearly should *not* know about. That's what the GM's Vault contains — information only the GM should know about. If you only intend to play in a Champions Universe campaign, *don't read the GM's Vault!* You'll learn things you shouldn't, and thus spoil your enjoyment of the game.

ADAPTING THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE FOR YOUR OWN USE

Setting/campaign books are difficult for many gamers to use. They want a pre-packaged campaign (or parts of one, at least), but they find they don't like some aspect or aspects of the one a published product offers. This isn't surprising — gaming is very much a matter of personal tastes, and it's unlikely any company can publish a setting that appeals, completely without changes or adaptation, to thousands of gamers around the world. What one gamer loves, another despises.

ABBREVIATIONS

This book uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

6E1: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

6E2: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

APG: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

HSMA: *HERO System Martial Arts*



MMO INTO RPG, RPG INTO MMO

Champions Universe includes material based on the work done by Cryptic Studios as it creates the massively multiplayer online (MMO) roleplaying game *Champions Online*. While a lot of effort has been devoted to making sure the MMO content is accurately represented in this book in *HERO System* terms, MMOs and RPGs aren't the same type of game, so the same type of content isn't appropriate for each one. For example, a villain's lair in an MMO is deliberately simple, often with one room leading to another to guide game play. That doesn't make much sense for an RPG, where it's possible (and often very useful) to expand things beyond the scope of an MMO. Similarly, a villain or costume that works well on-screen in an MMO might not be as appropriate for a paper-and-pencil RPG (and vice-versa!).

Thus, the MMO-based information in this book, while containing the essence of the *Champions Online* presentation, may add to it, or rework it in minor ways, to make things more "realistic" and appropriate for an RPG. Characters who have one or two simple abilities in *Champions Online* may get fleshed out into more detailed characters with a greater variety of powers in this book, since an RPG character sheet isn't constrained by the same restrictions as an MMO. And of course, there may be some MMO secrets that you should only be able to learn by playing the MMO itself.

So don't be surprised if you see some slight variation between the *Champions Universe* as portrayed in this book and the *Champions Universe* of *Champions Online*. The differences are just the result of the book taking the wonderful elements Cryptic Studios has created and doing even more with them.

If you don't want to use the *Champions Universe* exactly as it's presented here, you have plenty of options. First, you can change it to suit yourself. For example, if you like the setting in general, but you hate the history of superhumans (or the relationship between supers and the government, or the unlimited sources of superpowers, or any other thing), then change it! Most parts of the setting can be changed without causing the whole thing to unravel — like many *Champions* campaigns, it's intended to be a robust and vibrant setting, one readily suited to world-shaking events and extreme changes.

Second, you can "borrow" the parts you like and discard the rest. You may want to do most of the work to create a *Champions* campaign (or maybe you've already done it), but you're willing to save yourself some effort by adopting this book's take on how the United States government interacts with superhumans, or substantial chunks of the CU history, or some specific master villains. Go right ahead and take what you want and leave the rest behind. There's no rule that says you have to use the entire book just as it is — in fact, the *HERO System* specifically tells you to only use what you like and change or get rid of the rest, and that applies to a setting even more than to a rules system. As long as you have fun with *some* part of the CU, that's what matters.



CHAPTER
ONE

**GIANTS WALK
AMONG US**
A HISTORY OF SUPERHUMANITY



A HISTORY OF SUPERHEROES

1

The Champions Universe has had a tradition of costumed adventuring dating back centuries, although the “superhero” in its modern idiom originates in the 1930s. Certainly heroes like Robin Hood and the Scarlet Pimpernel can be seen as precursors to modern superheroes, fighting for justice and the oppressed while disguising their true identities. And if legends and tales are true, men and women with remarkable powers have existed throughout history: sorcerers like Merlin or John Dee; mighty warriors like Heracles or Sigurd; and gods, demi-gods, and divine heroes aplenty. Modern events, such as the revelation of the existence of Atlantis and her water-breathing inhabitants, lead scholars to believe that the old myths and stories may have more than a few grains of truth to them.

THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE AND REAL-WORLD HISTORY

As a fictional version of the real Earth, the Champions Universe is built upon the framework of real-world history. Things may become more colorful and exciting due to the presence of costumed heroes and criminals, and minor events may change entirely, but major events generally occur just like they did in the real world. The Civil War was fought and the South lost; World Wars I and II took place almost exactly the way they’re described in real history books; Ronald Reagan was president during most of the 1980s.

Unless the history presented here (or in some other Hero Games product) indicates otherwise, it’s usually safe for you to assume that any historical event that occurred in the real world also occurred in the Champions Universe. Costumed heroes or villains could easily have been involved — for major events, particularly ones involving danger to large numbers of people, they almost certainly were. But typically those events play out more or less the same way they did in the real world unless the GM prefers otherwise. Just be aware that making changes to major historical events may require you to change other aspects of history or the Champions Universe.

THE EARLY COSTUMED ADVENTURERS

Nevertheless, most historians agree the first “costumed hero” in America, land of superheroes, and thus in the world, was the legendary Black Mask. The first man to wear the mask was John Ward, who fought against the British colonial government in Massachusetts while married to the daughter of his fiercest enemy, Colonel Hensworth. To protect his wife and children from reprisals by the British while he committed acts of sabotage, Ward wore a mask, and when his campaign of harassment became highly successful, the legend of the Black Mask spread throughout the colonies. As the Revolutionary War raged on, Ward became a special agent of General Washington himself, and the Black Mask a symbol of resistance to tyranny.

Ward’s son, Timothy, inherited the Black Mask from his father, and was the first to use it as a symbol of justice against criminals instead of the British. In 1797, he wore the mask while battling a band of thieves who’d been terrorizing Boston. Between then and 1818, Timothy put on the mask several more times, using his wits and the psychological edge the costume gave him to defeat smugglers, pirates, thugs, and swindlers. When his own son, Samuel, took over the role in 1822, and moved to Philadelphia, legends began to spread across the country that there was only one man wearing the mask, who was immortal and undefeatable. The various wearers of the mask have occasionally acted in furtherance of that legend, which is generally not believed except by the most credulous of criminals — especially now that the tenth Black Mask is a woman (see page 175).

THE BLACK MASK IS NOT ALONE

Meanwhile, a few other notable events were occurring. In 1790 Baron Frankenstein successfully created an artificial man whom he named Adam, but who became better known to later generations simply as “Frankenstein’s Monster,” and wound up pursuing him into the Arctic wastes after the creature killed his wife. In the American Southwest of the 1820s, perhaps inspired by the legend of the Black Mask, the costumed vigilante swordsman known as *El Lobo*



(“The Wolf”) battled oppressive Mexican authorities. And in the 1840s, Auguste Dupin developed his reputation as the greatest detective in Europe; some scholars now believe Dupin possessed very minor precognitive powers.

In 1853, Matthew Ward became the fourth Black Mask. At first he too operated out of Boston, but when the Civil War began he joined the Union Army. (The South also had a costumed combatant, the mysterious Grey Ghost, and the two often clashed, though never decisively.) After the war, Matthew moved the legend to Chicago, where he became a policeman. In 1871 James Lee Ward became the fifth Black Mask; seeking new adventures on the frontier he moved to Arizona. The Black Mask legend underwent another transformation as it approached its first centennial — James became a costumed lawman and bounty hunter in the Wild West. He also adopted a boy named Marvin Carr, the son of a friend of his who’d been killed by outlaws, and Carr became the very first teen sidekick. But James would have the shortest career of all the Black Masks: he was killed by the notorious outlaw Sidewinder in 1876. Since James’s own son was only two, Marvin became the new Black Mask, the first outside of the Ward family line.

THE EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Not all the early heroes and men of mystery were to be found in America. Across the Atlantic,

Victorian England was developing its own tradition of men (and sometimes women) with that special blend of bravery and a thirst for justice that makes a true hero.

In London, Sherlock Holmes and his partner John Watson opened the first “Consulting Detective Service” in the 1870s, turning Holmes’ formidable mind (perhaps, like Dupin’s, one with minor precognitive powers) to the purpose of thwarting criminals such as Professor James Moriarty. Holmes continued to battle criminals throughout the 1880s, encountering the vampire Count Dracula in 1887 and Jack the Ripper in 1888. Dracula returned to London in 1890, but was destroyed by the vampire hunter Abraham Van Helsing.

Holmes apparently met his death in 1891 in an encounter with his archenemy Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland, though it would later be revealed that both men survived the encounter. In Moriarty’s absence, his criminal empire was taken over by a network of international criminal masterminds calling itself simply the Cabal. Meanwhile, Holmes’s brother Mycroft ascended to head of the British Secret Service, using only the letter “M” as his code name.

Several British inventors, drawing on the Industrial Revolution’s technological advances, made the first forays into what would today be called “super-technology.” Though their creations were much more limited than modern technology, and prone to failure and breakage, they



nevertheless opened up astounding vistas and inspired future generations of crimefighters and criminals. For example, in 1883, Dr. Henry Jekyll developed a mysterious chemical formula that transformed him into the monstrous criminal Mr. Hyde; in 1902, the brilliant but deranged scientist named Griffin invented a skin-bleaching formula and went on an invisible rampage throughout London and the surrounding countryside. And in 1887 the mysterious island of the brilliant Dr. Moreau was discovered, where he performed vivisection experiments designed to give animals human-like abilities (such as walking upright and talking). For better or worse, his laboratory was accidentally destroyed by his half-human, half-animal creations... though in later years some of his descendants have found ways to carry on his work. Such was all too often the pattern; only a few of the renowned Victorian scientists, such as Professor Holcomb Merriweather, retained their sanity and used their inventions and processes for good rather than evil.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES...

In New York City, ever a hotbed of adventure, the now-storied Empire Club opened in 1879. A private “Gentleman’s Social Club” (though it did have at least two notable female members) for professional adventurers, explorers, and other daredevils, the Empire Club achieved its greatest fame during the Twenties and Thirties, but was by no means inactive before then. The first Toastmaster of the Empire Club was Axel Lidenbrock, who’d discovered dinosaurs in a massive cave beneath the Earth in the mid-1860s. Other early members included Ned Land and George Challenger.

In 1896, Marvin Carr retired as Black Mask VI and passed the mantle to Jason Ward, son of Black Mask V. Jason moved back to Chicago, taking Marvin’s own son Andrew as his sidekick for a brief period.

There were few costumed heroes between the turn of the century and the 1920s. The seventh Black Mask was still active in Chicago, and the mysterious Black Eagle flew top secret missions as a British aviator during World War I. An orphaned girl in the depths of Africa grew up to be Ryanna the Jungle Queen in the late Teens and early Twenties. And in Atlantis, Princess Mara was born.

MYSTERY MEN OF THE PULP ERA

The Twenties and Thirties, known as the “pulp era” due to the popular magazines of the time, saw the first true flowering of the costumed adventurer concept. The number of “mystery men” and adventurers (and their adversaries) increased dramatically, and the concept of costumed crime-fighting firmly entered the public consciousness.

1926 saw the first appearance of the enigmatic Raven. Battling mobsters on the streets of Hudson City with the aid of his assistants, the lovely Velvet Phantom and the Midnight Brigade, the Raven was armed with phenomenal accuracy, fast reflexes, and a mysterious deck of tarot cards

which reputedly allowed him to foresee the future. In 1929, Black Mask VII died, and the mantle passed to his son, Jeffrey Layton Ward, who was also a policeman in Chicago. And in 1932, the brilliant scientist Jimmy Tompion first appeared in London fighting the machinations of the villainous Air King.

It wasn’t until the mid-Thirties that the floodgates really opened, however. For example, in 1936 Bill Jeffries declared his personal war on crime in Philadelphia, developing *two* alternate identities: the street thug Lefty LeGrand, who would learn of some crime about to be committed; and the mysterious dark avenger Black Owl, who would then thwart it. In 1937, King Oceanus of Atlantis was betrayed and killed by Dargon the Usurper, a political rival who opposed Oceanus’s plans for peaceful first contact with the surface world. Turning the army against Oceanus with carefully-constructed lies, Dargon and his ally, the wizard Nereus, seized the throne. Dargon intended to legitimize his claim by marrying the young Princess Mara, by force if necessary, but she fled the castle. Nereus sent a sea-monster after her, but she escaped. Rather than face Dargon’s wrath Nereus lied and claimed she’d died. Mara wound up on the rocky coast of New England, where she first befriended “landers” like the wheelchair-bound orphan Amy Levesque and Navy Lieutenant Barry Colville. Later that year she rescued the crew of a sinking destroyer off the coast of Massachusetts, and the press gave the mysterious figure the nickname *Sea Hawk*.

Other crimefighters and adventurers whose names frequently made the front pages during this period included: the Cobra, who used martial arts abilities learned in the mysterious Orient to battle crime in New York City; the fast-flying, foe-fighting Futurian, with his fantastic Rocket-Pack and fearsome Electro-Pistol; and the Grey Guardian of San Francisco.

THE MODERN AGE OF SUPERHEROES BEGINS

Despite the fact that some of the early adventurers of the 1800s and the pulp era may have possessed minor paranormal abilities, or used unusually advanced technology, the true Age of Superheroes was yet to come.

In the summer of 1938, as Hitler planned the conquest of Europe, his Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels was secretly assembling a team of powerful mystics, the *Reichsamt für die Sicherung völkischer Kulturgüter* (Reich’s Office for the Safety and Security of National Cultural Items, or RSvKg), led by the mysterious Erich Hessler. Seeking a magical weapon to use against Germany’s enemies before her armies commenced their march across Europe, the sorcerers gathered in a mountain redoubt on May 1st and performed several powerful occult rituals. But their spells did not have the outcome they expected. Instead of leading them to artifacts that would satisfy

their masters, the arcane energies they released somehow enhanced, or perhaps unleashed, the latent magic underlying all reality — thus making the creation of true superhumans possible.

There were two immediate effects. First, Hessler's conjurations successfully summoned a powerful demon that merged with his body and transformed him into the horrible, skeletal creature known as *Der Totenkopf*, the Death's-Head. Second, and much more importantly, the heightened mystical energies now active in Earth's dimension created the world's first true superhuman, transforming an ordinary soldier named Walther Flenner into the superpowerful *Sturmvogel* (Stormbird). Scant days later, the cosmic scales were balanced when Don Randall, of Haynesville, Kansas, was endowed with the superpowers that made him Captain Patriot.

Soon superhumans began appearing around the world, though at first mostly in America and Europe. During that summer, for example, Robert MacDonald traveled to Egypt and visited the Great Pyramid. While there, he had a vision in which he encountered the god Osiris and was granted powers of light and darkness. Returning to Harlem, he adopted the identity of Dr. Twilight. Scientist Harrison Chase also traveled, in his case to Yellowstone National Park, where he found a mysterious rock that gave him vast energy-manipulation powers as long as he was in contact with it. He carved the rock into a ring and became the crimefighter MeteorMan. Takashi Osuru was caught in a horrible chemical fire, but instead of dying emerged with the power to psychically create and control fire, and fought for the Japanese military under the code name *Tasho*, or "Flame-thrower." And Albert Stebernow was subjected to a series of strange medical tests by Totenkopf and emerged with massive strength and the ability to grow to over thirty feet tall. When he went to the front he was called *Donner*, or "Thunder."

Of course, even with superhumans emerging, there were still other new heroes who put on costumes and battled evil without powers. Young millionaire playboy Drake Wilson adopted the identity of Optimus as he sought perfection in matters mental, physical, and ethical. "Kid" Brown, a trickshooter with the Funtime Family Circus, also secretly acted as a bounty hunter under the moniker Cowboy. And a San Francisco showgirl named Leticia Henry put on a mask and skimpy outfit, called herself the Nightingale, and soon had criminals lining up to be captured.

THE DEFENDERS OF JUSTICE

America was still neutral in the growing conflicts overseas when a completely different threat manifested. On October 30, several alien spacecraft landed near Grovers Mill, New Jersey, and the passengers swiftly massacred several policemen and a National Guard unit before assembling gigantic tripods armed with heat rays and poisonous gas. All the superheroes in the greater New York area wound up working together

to destroy the tripods and defeat the invaders (later identified as Sirians) before they could do too much damage. The heroes decided to remain together as an organization in case of trouble too big for any one of them to handle. Christened *the Defenders of Justice*, the group included Optimus, Dr. Twilight, Cowboy, and Sea Hawk on its first roster. The press quickly began referring to them as "the DOJ" for short.

In 1939 the DOJ recruited two more members, Captain Patriot and MeteorMan, while continuing to battle menaces such as Liquidator, Sub Zero, The Mink, and a Bundist spy organization called the Black Legion. Captain Patriot also helped form a secret government organization called the "Haynesville Project," a team of scientists working at a hidden base in Cap's old hometown to study the nature of superpowers and how the government could control and artificially create them. At the same time, Der Totenkopf and his counterpart in Japan, the powerful sorcerer Iron Father, cast a series of interlocking spells to protect the Axis nations from Allied superbeings — any enemy superhuman who entered Axis territory would suffer a terrible wasting sickness, first losing his powers and then falling into a lifeless coma.

WORLD WAR II

The DOJ kept battling criminals through 1940 while the war continued in Europe. MeteorMan's wife Abigail found a magical spellbook and became the mystical heroine Lady Mystery, while Sir Peter Tanfield used his phenomenal skill with the bow to battle Nazis as the Scarlet Archer. Several of America's most powerful criminals united under the name of the Society of Evil and went on a crime spree that summer, hard pressing the DOJ before the heroes' eventual victory.

1941 saw increased concern, as Germany pressed its advantage on all sides in Europe, and more *Übermenschen* seemed to appear every day. Arlequin, Loge, Moorbrand, and Nordwind struck fear into the hearts of their enemies, even superhumans like the Russian General Winter and the British Lady Lightning. Dargon pledged assistance to Hitler from Atlantis — not only did his forces plague Allied shipping in the North Atlantic, but the mighty Atlantean warrior Steel Shark joined the *Übermenschen*. On December 7, America finally entered the war after a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces. Few are aware that the third wave of attackers, strange dragon-riding warriors from another dimension summoned by Iron Father, was only barely thwarted by the DOJ. The DOJ attempted a counterattack on the Japanese mainland, only to fall victim to the defensive spells and barely escape with their lives.

Once America was in the war, the DOJ pledged their services to the War Department and became part of the Haynesville Project. Major Leslie Groves divided the team in two. The superpowered members, including newcomers like the superfast Streak, the high-flying American Eagle, and the World's Mightiest Non-Com, Sergeant





Battle, remained in the Defenders and were assigned to protect the homefront against Axis spies and superhumans. Optimus took command of the other team, a unit of mystery men and super-soldiers called the Freedom Battalion, who lacked true superpowers and thus were unaffected by the Axis protection spells. In addition to the Scarlet Archer and Nightingale, he also recruited crimefighters like Swashbuckler and Bulletproof, who wore a suit recently created by the Chinese scientist Dr. Ping. The Defenders were also aided by the scientific genius of Professor Michael Maven, whose inventiveness provided them with vehicles, weapons, and other devices to battle the Axis.

Over the course of the war, these two teams had countless adventures, and some tragedies. American Eagle disappeared in action in 1943, and Lady Lightning was killed by Sturmvogel in 1944. However, Sea Hawk and Optimus, who'd fallen in love, were able to kill Dargon and retake the throne of Atlantis — their wedding was one of the rare happy moments during the war, though it meant both had to leave the DOJ to rebuild her nation. Cowboy, who'd changed his name to Liberator, led the Battalion for the rest of the war.

In 1945 the Freedom Battalion led Allied forces into Germany in time to witness Hitler's suicide. The final battle between the Übermenschen and the Allied heroes was a bloody and tragic one, with losses on both sides. Liberator and Swashbuckler were killed, as was Sturmvogel. Within a couple of months, America dropped two atomic

bombs on Japan and forced its surrender, and World War II was over.

With the end of the war, several heroes (including Captain Patriot, MeteorMan, and Lady Mystery) retired. The remaining members of the DOJ reformed the team into a unit of crime-fighters, but misfortune plagued the team. Bullet-proof disappeared after a battle with a mysterious alien. Doctor Twilight left the DOJ to concentrate on street-level crime after several debates about the violence of his methods. Streak, Nightingale, and Sgt. Battle tried to keep the team together, but there were few costumed menaces to fight, and eventually the remaining members of the DOJ voted to disband in 1948.

Meanwhile, after several years of marriage, Optimus and Mara were having trouble, and decided to divorce in 1948. Optimus returned to the surface world and went to work with the United Nations, later helping to form UNTIL in the mid-1960s. The early 1950s saw little in the way of superhuman activity, though Scarlet Archer and Black Mask remained active and Captain Patriot regularly appeared in public as an associate of Senator Joseph McCarthy. When Dr. Twilight's true identity and former Communist party connections were revealed, the DOJ and superheroes in general were disgraced publicly. By the time McCarthy himself was finally discredited, the first generation of heroes had largely retired or gone underground.

THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES

But a second wave was soon to arrive. National Park ranger Tom Teller found a meteor fragment similar to Chase's, and began using it quietly to rescue people from disasters. When Chase found out about this, he gave Teller his blessing (and some training), and Teller became the second MeteorMan in 1956. That same year saw the debut of the ninth Black Mask, David Matthew Ward, and also the first appearance of El Espectro, a Mexican wrestler whose enchanted silver mask enabled him to find and destroy the vampires, mummies, and zombies that plagued his country. Still, the superheroes of the early "Silver Age" were cautious, acting behind the scenes and shunning the spotlight.

In 1959, however, all of that changed. Jeffrey Sinclair found an alien artifact that transformed him into the flying powerhouse known as Vanguard. He became New York City's leading hero and revived the Justice Squadron, a super-team whose members had mostly retired after the war. That in turn seemed to signal a revival of superheroes across America, and the world. For example, Alan Betts put on the suit of armor designed by his old friend Potter and became Rocketman, defender of the American South. And five friends from California traveled into space on a homemade ship to protect Earth from a comet that turned out to be the home of a mysterious alien race bent on colonization. Exposure to strange radiation while thwarting that plan turned them into the Fabulous Five (Amazing Man, Siren, Streak II, Diamond, and Kid Chameleon.)

As if in response, costumed criminals returned as well. Each hero seemed to bring with him a "rogues' gallery" of villains, some comically inept or bent only on humiliating their foe, others deadly serious and menaces to all of society. The Gargoyle, Dr. Macabre, Rockslide, Bookworm, Humbug, and Cyrax the Conqueror, among others, all first appeared in the late Fifties. By the early Sixties, the supercrime problem had reached such proportions that the United Nations established a new agency, UNTIL, to address it (see page 125).

THE SENTINELS

In 1961, the computer intelligence Ultivac tried to take over the world by seizing control of the United States's and USSR's nuclear missile launch codes. Its plan was thwarted by an unlikely team-up of heroes who chose to remain together as *The Sentinels*. The original lineup, which stayed together until 1965, included MeteorMan and Rocketman, as well as Microman (a brilliant physicist who developed the Shrinking Ray), Dr. Phantom (the daughter of Professor Maven, and a brilliant scientist in her own right, who invented a dimensional phasing device), and Beowulf (the legendary warrior-king, summoned by a mild-mannered college student). This team seized the popular imagination like none before, and its members became international celebrities.

Unfortunately, the same could not be said for several other heroes debuting in the early Sixties — the teenage hero Hornet always seemed to run into more than his share of mistrust from authorities, as did the monstrous Mountain (transformed into a hideous creature by a demon) and Dr. Scarab (the son of Dr. Twilight, who fought a mystic secret war against his brother Serpentine).

The world needed the efforts of every one of these heroes in the Sixties, as new menaces seemed to pop up every day. The villainous agency VIPER first appeared and became a public menace during this time, and mad villains like Revenger, the Guru, and the original Plague struck terror into the hearts of millions. The Mocker, Jack Flash, and Typhoon, among many others, committed their crimes and battled their respective foes.

The turbulence of the Sixties affected the superhuman community in turn. Several supers manifested during the conflict in Vietnam, and Rocketman was only the most famous of American heroes to volunteer to serve overseas, battling the few indigenous supers and the Soviet military superteams also on hand. Other heroes, like Hornet, Dreamsinger, and "Harlem's protector" Black Power, actively opposed the war and became symbols for the "hippie" movement. (Doctor Scarab was probably the most popular hero of the peace and love crowd, but he was mostly bemused by their affection and did nothing to encourage it.) New heroes continued to emerge in the second half of the decade: a second Scarlet Archer, the illusionist Masquerade, and the aquatic mutant Sea King.



THE CRYPTONAUTS

Not every hero who appeared in the Silver Age had superpowers and wore a colorful costume. One group that caught the public's fancy during the exploration craze of the time was *the Cryptonauts*, a group of scientists and adventurers who used advanced technology developed by their leader, Professor Emmet "Jack" Jackson, to visit the unexplored and hidden parts of Earth, discover the ruins of long-lost civilizations, and even travel to other planets and dimensions!

Garbed in their distinctive blue jumpsuits and equipped with Jackson's groundbreaking devices, the Cryptonauts frequently appeared in the papers and on TV to discuss their latest discovery and offer everyday people a glimpse of a greater, more wondrous world all around them. Besides Jackson himself, the team's main members included:

Randy Moss, a clever inventor in his own right, whose goggles and gadgets often had a distinctively "Victorian" look to them;

Bill Stringer, an actor turned scientist whose skills at persuasion, deception, and gambling got the Cryptonauts out of many a scrape (and into a few as well);

Laird James Preston, a Scottish nobleman with an in-depth knowledge of history and archaeology;

DeeAnna Sherman, an expert on astrophysics, cosmology, topology, and ontology; and

John Lighthouse, the team's big, burly chief pilot, mechanic, and barroom brawler.

Sadly, the Cryptonauts left Earth on a long-planned expedition to a mysterious alternate dimension in 1969 and never returned. Their fate, and whether they might someday re-appear, remains unknown.



THE SEVENTIES

As the Sixties ended, a new generation of heroes came to the fore. The Outcasts, a band of freaks and monsters who stayed together mostly for self-protection, took up residence in Vibora Bay. The Chinese-American martial artist Mantis joined the Sentinels, as did the Iroquois weather-controller Rainmaker, the first two minority members of that august collection of heroes. In 1970 *Amazing Man* and *Siren* retired from their life of adventure and exploration to raise their infant son Peter; the *Fabulous Five* continued on, with the addition of the alien birdwoman Kestrel and the young wind-controlling mutant Scirocco.

THE EARLY SEVENTIES

The late Silver Age was a quiet period. Several heroes from the beginning of the era retired, including *Rocketman* and *Beowulf*. In 1972, the active members of the Sentinels traveled to the other side of the galaxy when they were caught up in an intergalactic war, and were believed dead for several months. When they finally returned, there was a great deal of public celebration and attention, but also a certain tinge of resentment over all of the public ceremony and mourning that had been unnecessary. From this point on, the public frequently refused to believe that any superhero was ever actually dead, and “sightings” of deceased heroes in truckstops and island resorts became commonplace (and topics of humor on late-night TV). This growing public cynicism signalled the

beginning of the end of the Silver Age, though the actual transition to the so-called Bronze Age was a few years away.

In 1974, two separate scandals rocked the public's faith in their government. The first was the Watergate scandal, in which President Nixon was discovered to have participated in the cover-up of a burglary. The second was that an UNTIL agent, Pavel Borovik, had used his access and authority to serve as a highly effective Soviet spy, passing secrets on the US nuclear program that he had acquired when UNTIL had supported the Sentinels in thwarting one of Plague's schemes. This incident only confirmed to many Americans the wisdom of having never signed the UNTIL treaty or allowed UNTIL agents to operate on US soil.

THE LATE SEVENTIES

The relatively peaceful years of the early Seventies gave way, in 1975, to a half-decade of supervillainous mayhem that brought the Silver Age to a calamitous close and left the world reeling. On March 5th of that year, the most feared supervillain in world history — the awesomely powerful and utterly ruthless Dr. Destroyer — made his first appearance. Using powerful gunships equipped with gravitic flight technology and mounted blasters, Destroyer and his minions attempted to conquer California as a prelude to conquering the world. With the US military largely blinded and crippled by Destroyer's initial attacks on its communications and command systems, the superheroes of America responded. The *Fabulous Five*, the *Justice Squadron*, and the *Sentinels*,

aided by several independent heroes, clashed with Destroyer near San Francisco. After a day of fierce fighting, the master villain's forces were routed, and he himself forced to escape via a teleportation device — but victory was not without its price. Kid Chameleon of the Fabulous Five and Ocelot of the Justice Squadron were both killed by Destroyer's powerful energy bolts, and over a dozen other heroes suffered serious injuries.

Destroyer wasn't the only villain to make his debut during this time. Others included Leviathan, the Slug, Buzzsaw, Rictus, Dark Seraph, and the Griffin. An even greater blow was the loss of the superheroine Scirocco, who turned to a life of crime after struggling with depression and mental illness. Some of the most spectacular supercrimes ever committed, including the Griffin's looting of the Antwerp diamond exchange, Leviathan's sinking of the cruise ship *Windward*, and the Slug's almost-successful attempt to transform all the citizens of New York into Elder Worms, took place during this period.

As if to answer the increasing tide of villainy, the United States began the construction of Stronghold, the world's first prison designed solely to house superpowered inmates. Built onto and into an isolated mesa in the New Mexico desert, Stronghold began accepting prisoners in mid-1978 and has since become not only a model for similar prisons in other countries, but one of the world's foremost weapons in the war on supercrime. Although its record has been tarnished by major breakouts in 1990 and 2009, overall it's been remarkably successful at keeping supervillains restrained.

The Pyrrhic victory over Destroyer, and the increasing tide of villainy, seemed to take the wind out of the sails of many heroes. The Fab Five reorganized for the last time, adding two young mutants named Draco and Dart, but the group disbanded in 1979. The second Streak was hired as a morning television personality by ABC, and Diamond (who seems not to age) joined the Sentinels.

THE EIGHTIES

The Eighties brought a new explosion of superheroes — the largest yet — onto the scene, as if in answer to the villainy in the previous decade. The early years of the decade saw the debut of several new solo vigilantes, such as the sword-wielding Crusader in New York City and Brainwave in San Francisco. A new MeteorMan joined the Sentinels. In 1985, Great Britain's official superteam, the New Knights of the Round Table, rescued a super-intelligent gorilla called Dr. Silverback from the clutches of his creator, Dr. Phillippe Moreau, and helped him establish his legal rights in a landmark court case. Silverback has since gone on to become one of the foremost scientists on the planet.

But evil never rests, and as the 1980s wore on several of the most dire super-menaces threatening the world today launched their first schemes. In 1985, Mechanon appeared, nearly taking control of America's nuclear arsenal and using it to destroy all life on Earth before the Sentinels managed to defeat it. A bizarre accident in 1986 led to the creation of the fearsome Grond, who has since caused billions of dollars of property damage around the world. Eurostar, considered by some the most dangerous supervillain team in the world, got its start in 1988. And perhaps worst of all, in 1987, Takofanes the Undying Lord, a terrifyingly powerful undead supermage, first appeared, cutting a swath of destruction across the eastern United States (and killing half a dozen superheroes in the process; see page 15).

THE NINETIES

The decade of the Nineties got off to a rocky start when a flu epidemic and a freak thunderstorm combined to leave Stronghold vulnerable to a major escape effort by the inmates. The "Great Stronghold Breakout," as it was later dubbed, resulted in nearly four dozen hardened supercriminals escaping. Warden Charles Wildman, creator of the prison, was forced to resign in disgrace.

The Superhuman World — and indeed, all of humanity — was rocked by tragedy in 1992, when Dr. Destroyer attempted to conquer the United States from a secret facility in Detroit. With the world's superheroes arrayed against him, and defeat seeming inevitable, Destroyer triggered a suicide device that killed him, several superheroes (see text box, page 85), and tens of thousands of people, and razed the city. Over most of the next decade, America and many prominent corporations and charities, together with numerous superhumans, pitched in to rebuild Detroit as Millennium City, the City of the Future (see page 84). Today Millennium City is a hotbed of superhuman activity, home to the Champions as well as many independent heroes.

Before Millennium City was completely built, the world had to respond to another threat as great as Dr. Destroyer: Istvatha V'han, the so-called "Empress of a Billion Dimensions," who sought to add Earth's reality to her growing empire. Bursting into Earth's dimension near Mars at the head of a vast army, she sought to quell opposition from humanity before sending her forces out into the rest of reality. But Earth's superheroes — and more than a few of its supervillains, who had no desire to live under the Empress's yoke — proved equal to the task of defending their home world from her. After nearly two months of desperate, sometimes bloody, fighting, Earth's heroes drove her back into her own territory with such losses that it would be years before she tried to invade Earth's plane again.



THE JANUS KEY

One of the most dangerous and tenacious villains of the Silver Age was Dr. Macabre, a former museum curator whose powers derived from a mysterious artifact known as the *Janus Key*. The origins of the large, golden key were unknown to Dr. Macabre, and to this day no one's come forward with any solid evidence regarding its provenance or purpose.

But the Key's powers are well-documented. It's a portal of some sort to alternate dimensions, allowing its possessor to range along a group of planes known as "the Cosmic Axis." It also has power over reality itself, allowing a sufficiently powerful or strong-willed user to literally remake the world as he sees fit. Exposure to the Key's extra-dimensional energies often grants the possessor other semi-mystical powers, particularly ones involving mental control, precognition, heightened perception, and the like. But over time they also tend to drive the possessor mad, causing him to become obsessed with whatever most interests him and prone to concocting grandiose schemes of power and domination. Some superheroes have speculated that the Key itself may be intelligent and simply needing a human vessel to pursue its own ends.

Doctor Macabre fought nearly every major Silver Age hero, but not even the Key's powers could stave off his ultimate defeat in 1981 at the hands of his heroic nemesis MeteorMan II (who then retired on a high note). Macabre spent most of the Eighties in prison, finally dying of colon cancer in 1993. His personal effects, including the Janus Key and several other magical implements he'd collected over the years, were kept in secure storage in Stronghold; for the most part not even scholars were allowed to handle or study them, for fear of the Key's unpredictable effects. But when prison officials opened the secure storage locker after Macabre's death, they discovered that the Key and other items had vanished!

The Key re-appeared in March 2006 in the hands of Cirque Sinister, a quirky group of supervillains based in Vibora Bay. They used it to turn the city into a Boschian nightmare, an almost surrealistic place where they created events and beings as if painting on a canvas. A large group of superheroes and mystics ultimately defeated them, and one of the mystics, Prof. Carlota Sylvestri, even tried to steal the Key for herself, but ultimately it fell into San Sebastian Swamp and was lost again.

No one's seen the Janus Key since then, though many people have searched the swamp extensively. Some superheroes believe it's left this plane of reality, having either accomplished its purpose or decided Earth's dimension isn't worth the trouble. Others fear the Key's still out there somewhere, waiting for another possessor to find it and wield its awesome powers....

Around the country, new heroes emerged to take the place of ones slain battling Destroyer, V'han, and their villainous colleagues: Shugoshin in San Francisco, Straight Arrow in Baltimore, and Proteus in Seattle, to name just a few (plus of course Black Mask X, of Vibora Bay).

But other new villains appeared as well: Gravitar, mutant mistress of gravity; the lunatic Foxbat; a powerful gang of villains called the Ultimates; and countless others. Aside from the capricious Gravitar, the most dangerous of the newcomers was the master geneticist Teleios, whose existence was revealed to the world after Eurostar invaded Poland with the help of an army of his cloned soldiers. Although he generally doesn't fight superhumans himself, Teleios's willingness to sell his services to the highest bidder, and his view of the world as a vast laboratory in which to work his twisted biological experiments, makes "the Perfect Man" a force to be reckoned with.

THE MODERN DAY

The twenty-first century began optimistically in the Superhuman World. Millennium City was completed, a bright, glittering, high-tech city that seemed to represent the best of what humanity could offer, and could expect from the future. In 2001 the hero Defender founded the city's first superteam, the Champions, who have since gone on to become one of the most popular and powerful hero teams in the world.

But nothing good lasts forever. On September 30, 2002, the most feared supervillain in the world — Dr. Destroyer — returned, seemingly from the dead. But this was not the Destroyer of old. Garbed in an even more fearsome set of armor whose stylings suggested bone, and possessing powers of shadow and sorcery in place of his former technology, this was a Destroyer who'd seemingly clawed his way back from Hell to continue his crusade to conquer all of humanity. To announce his return to the world, he used some sort of magic to make it possible for every person on Earth to see his ghostly image towering over the planet... and then he destroyed a major American surveillance satellite as a warning for the world not to pry into his affairs. They would learn soon enough, he said, what he had planned for them.

And learn they did, as he once again became one of the greatest threats to world peace and security. Fighting the Champions, the Justice Squadron, and numerous other teams over the decade, he attacked both Indonesia and South India (in both cases presumably in an effort to obtain sources of mystic power or artifacts he desired). In August of 2006 he launched Destruga II, his second artificial island headquarters, in an effort to take control of every mind in the world. Only the combined might of the Champions, the Tiger Squad, UNTIL, the Sentinels, the Justice Squadron, the Superhero Division, and the



American and Australian militaries was enough to stop him... and even then he escaped to plot another day.

Nor was Destroyer the only threat facing the world during the 2000s. For example, Mechanon continued its efforts to rid Earth of all organic life. In October 2006 it attacked Millennium City with a fifty foot-tall version of itself; in July 2008 the Champions barely stopped its plans to convert living beings to machines using nanotechnology. It, too, remains an ever-present threat.

So does the undead sorcerer Takofanes. He appeared once again on Halloween of 2009 in Millennium City, using his powers to bring the fifteen heroes who died in the Battle of Detroit back to life as hideous superpowered zombies! It took the combined efforts of every hero in the city to stop what the papers called "the Blood Moon."

Nor were villains from previous decades the only ones causing problems; new villains appeared in the twenty-first century as well. They included Firewing, an alien super-gladiator who arrived in 2001 to challenge the heroes of Earth; the reality-altering Professor Paradigm, who recruited several other villains as his bizarre Paradigm Pirates; the cyberkinetic Cybermind; the power armored Morticus; the evil sorcerer Reaper; the growing villain Gargantua; and the mercenary Double Dealer.

The decade concluded with three major events in 2009 (one being the Blood Moon incident). The first, in July of that year Stronghold experienced the second major breakout in its history. The powerful supervillain Menton had been held there in "hot sleep" since being captured in 2005 during a failed attempt to conquer the world, but some sort of malfunction shut off his capsule. Within minutes he'd taken control of every mind in the place. To cover his own tracks he released all the inmates and then made good his own escape. The authorities and a few superheroes responded as quickly as they could, but over five dozen inmates got away (including such dangerous felons as Black Paladin, Bloodstone, Galeforce, Geothermal, Interface, Psimon, Stormfront, and Valak the World-Ravager).

Second, just two months later, in early September, the Qularr launched a major invasion of Earth. Their last attempt, in 1965, had ended with their defeat and the "creation" of Monster Island. Someone snuck into Homestead (the Champions' headquarters) to repair and activate some long-defunct Qularr signal beacons. In response a Qularr fleet returned with a vengeance, striking dozens of locations all over the world with their shock troops and their legions of strange, alien creatures. Days of fighting followed around the globe. A desperate attack by the Champions on the mothership hovering over Millennium City seriously blunted the invasion, allowing Earth's heroes to oppose the bug-men... and hopefully this time drive them away for good (though it's believed that pockets of Qularr soldiers got left behind in remote parts of the Earth and are just waiting for an opportunity to strike).

THE HERCULES FORCE

The first Johnny Hercules (real name: Henry "Herc" Johnson), a hero slain during the Battle of Detroit, got his powers of super-strength from an amulet imbued with the *Hercules Force*, a power of mystic goodness. The amulet was given to him by an apparition of Zeus when Johnson's circus troupe was touring Greece.

After Johnny Hercules's death, the amulet, which according to several mystic superheroes now seemed to be totally devoid of power, was buried with him. But apparently the Hercules Force wasn't really a part of the amulet, but simply embodied itself in it for a time. In 2005 a Millennium City University classics student, Henry Grant, somehow "caught the attention" of the Hercules Force, which manifested itself in him. (What the Force had been doing during the intervening thirteen years is unknown.) Although he's sometimes a reluctant hero, the new Johnny Hercules has proven to be a worthy vessel, and often uses his great strength and resilience in the battle against crime and evil.

The original Johnny Hercules claimed that Zeus had set him twelve tasks that, when completed, would make him the mightiest superhero on Earth. If so, no such list of tasks has ever been assigned to the new bearer of the Hercules Force... at least as far as he knows.

Despite this seemingly continuous parade of death, destruction, and mayhem, heroes continue to rise to meet the challenges presented by villains, alien invaders, and Unknowable Menaces from Beyond. Every day, it seems, someone develops superpowers, decides to do the right thing, and dons a costume so he can carry on the Good Fight. The Champions Universe is a dangerous place, but thankfully there are always heroes willing to put their lives on the line for humanity every day.



CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE TIMELINE

1

To help you keep the events of the Champions Universe straight, here's a brief timeline of major incidents involving, or related to, superhumanity. You can make note of additions or changes specific to your own campaign in the sidebars. This timeline does *not* include specific dates from incidents listed in the *GM's Vault* (see Chapter Six), since that would reveal them to players.



Circa 2 million BC: The mysterious alien Progenitors tamper with the genetic code of humanity's ancestors, leading to the rise of humans.

Circa 1 million BC: An unknown alien species builds a base on the Moon. The ruins, when found by Humans in the twentieth century, are named Selenus.

Gloran of Odrugar is born; as an adult he battles crime and evil for centuries and founds the Star*Guard.

Circa 500,000 BC: Further experiments by the Progenitors result in the creation of an immortal superhuman race, the Emphyreans. The Malvans and the Elder Worm battle for control of the Galaxy, pitting the might and power of the Golden Hunters of Malva against the insidious sorceries of the Elder Worm. After tens of thousands of years of warfare both hot and cold, the Elder Worm are defeated circa 200,000 BC and forced to flee into hiding.

Circa 150,000 BC: The Elder Worm come to Earth, where they enslave proto-humanity.

Circa 100,000 BC: The Emphyreans discover the Elder Worm on Earth and go to war with them to free the primordial humans they've enslaved. The Elder Worm, including their leader the Slug, are utterly destroyed... or so the Emphyreans believe.

37,523 BC: The sorcerer-scientist Faltrah Lem founds Lemuria.

37,018 BC: The Lemurians reject their ancient gods, the mysterious Bleak Ones, for new gods given to them by Faltrah Lem.

36,854 BC: A spell designed to grant the Lemurians immortality goes awry, robbing them of their shapechanging powers.

36,742 BC: The Lemurians go to war with the Emphyreans.

36,964 BC: The Lemurians use a potent magical weapon, the *Mandragalore*, against the Emphyreans, but it backfires, causing the continent of Lemuria to sink. Only a few Lemurians and the Mole Men (Lemurian slaves who already lived in caves) survive.

Circa 35,000 BC: Poseidon brings Evenor and Leucippe to the island of Atlantis. Their daughter Cleito eventually has ten sons with the sea-god, the eldest of whom, Vondarien, in time becomes *Atlan*, or "king," of Atlantis.

Circa 32,000 BC: The Dominion of Atlantis becomes one of the predominant political powers on Earth. Lemuria is Atlantis's major rival and enemy.

30,598 BC: War between Vondarien of Atlantis and Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer causes the Cataclysm, sinking Atlantis beneath the waves and reshaping the world. Amlin has the Empyreans move Arcadia to Antarctica. The Lemurians protect themselves from the Cataclysm with a mechanicomagical device called the Clockwork Engine.

17,698 BC: Civil war breaks out in Lemuria, with a cabal of sorcerers defeating the ruling priesthood. The magi create the Bronze King, a sentient magiconstruct, to rule Lemuria.

Circa 10,000 BC: The era of the gods and heroes of Egyptian, Greek, Norse, and other mythologies begins about now and lasts for about ten thousand years.

Unknown alien visitors (possibly the Progenitors) transform a group of early humans into the Birdpeople of Thaar.

Circa 8000 BC: Civil war in Arcadia, with the jealous Ogurn attempting to overthrow Amlin. Amlin is killed and Ogurn disappears; Hazor is chosen as the new leader of the Empyreans over Arvad.

3970 BC: Shaderon, one of the wisest and most influential of the second generation Empyreans, develops his philosophy of Silence (transcendence of the body) and creates the Temple of Silence in Arcadia. Over the next few centuries, dozens of Empyreans join him in rejecting their mortal forms and seeking a higher plane of existence through meditation.

Circa 460 AD: The first Shaolin Temple is founded in China.

490-540: King Arthur rules England from Camelot. Giles de Morphant, the Black Paladin, wreaks great evil, but is eventually slain by Lancelot. Arthur's realm, and his Round Table of knights, eventually falls due to the repercussions of Lancelot's affair with Queen Guinevere.

1090: The Ancient Order of Assassins is founded by Hassan ibn-al Sabah.

1199: Robin Hood is active in English countryside, bedeviling King John Lackland and the Sheriff of Nottingham.

1459: Vlad Tepes, *voivod* of Transylvania, becomes a vampire under uncertain circumstances. One legend suggests he is transformed by an Atlantean "dark mage." Tepes is later known as *Dracula* ("little dragon").

1749: John Ward, the first Black Mask, is born on a farm outside of Philadelphia.

1772: Ward first adopts the identity of the Black Mask, to protect his family while he performs acts of sabotage against the British Army.

1783: Viscomte Gildas de Valenois founds the Circle of the Scarlet Moon.

1788: Ward retires the identity of Black Mask.

1797: John Ward's son, Timothy, a Boston silversmith, becomes the Black Mask and battles a band of criminals.

1800: Arvad attempts to take over Arcadia, and fails. He flees the Empyrean stronghold and attempts to make himself king of Lemuria. He succeeds in 1854 when he uses his mental powers to force the Bronze King to acknowledge his overlordship.

1818: Black Mask II is killed in action. The training of his son, Samuel, is taken over by his grandfather, the first Black Mask.

1822: Black Mask III debuts in Philadelphia. By now the legend has grown across the northeastern United States, and the first rumors of the immortality of the young nation's hero begin to spread.

1850: Sherlock Holmes is born in London. He and his brother Mycroft are raised by roving gypsies after the death of their parents.

1852: John Watson is born in Coventry, England.

1853: Matthew Ward becomes Black Mask IV, at first operating out of Philadelphia.

1861-1865: The American Civil War. Matthew Ward, as Black Mask IV, fights alongside the Northern Army, while the mysterious Grey Ghost aids the Confederates.

1866: Captain Nemo launches the first submarine, called the *Nautilus*. He preys on illegal slave-traders heading across the Atlantic to South America.

Matthew Ward moves to Chicago and continues his adventures as the fourth Black Mask.

1867: Oceanus ascends to the throne of Atlantis after the death of his father.

1868: Sherlock Holmes is tutored in advanced mathematics by Professor James Moriarty, later to become the greatest criminal figure of Victorian England.

Around this time, James Harmon I, ancestor of Defender, explores Africa and begins building the family fortune.

1871: James Lee Ward inherits the Black Mask upon his father's death. He moves to Arizona and transplants the legend, acting as a vigilante lawman.

1872: Marvin Carr begins to act as Black Mask V's sidekick.

1876: Black Mask V is killed by the notorious criminal Sidewinder in a shoot-out in Show Low, Arizona. Since James's son Jason is only two, Marvin Carr becomes the sixth Black Mask and the first not to be part of the direct lineage.

1877: Sherlock Holmes opens his private "consulting" detective agency in London.

1878: Oceanus and Orana marry.

1879: The Empire Club, a private "Gentleman's Social Club" for adventurers, explorers, and other daredevils, is founded in New York City.

1881: Sherlock Holmes and John Watson meet at St. Bartholomew's Hospital during the case known as *A Study In Scarlet*.





- 1883:** Dr. Henry Jekyll first uses the mysterious chemicals he discovered to become the monstrous Mr. Hyde.
- 1887:** Sherlock Holmes encounters Dracula in Transylvania for the first time.
- 1888:** Jack the Ripper terrorizes London. Sherlock Holmes is involved in the famous cases *The Sign of the Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
- 1889:** Adolf Hitler born in Braunau, Austria.
- 1890:** Count Dracula terrorizes London, before he is destroyed by vampire-hunter Abraham Van Helsing and young Jonathan Harker.
- 1891:** Sherlock Holmes pursues his nemesis Moriarty to Switzerland, where they apparently both perish at Reichenbach Falls. In Moriarty's absence, the Cabal rises to supremacy in the European underworld.
- 1892:** Mycroft Holmes becomes the director of the British Secret Service. He is referred to only as "M" (as are his successors).
- 1894:** Oceanus slays the traitor Gangar. Sherlock Holmes returns to London after traveling the world undercover.
- 1896:** Marvin Carr retires as Black Mask VI. The mask is given back to Jason Ward, son of Black Mask V, who moves back to Chicago. For a time, his partner is Andrew Carr, Marvin's own son.
- 1902:** Sherlock Holmes is consulted by the police when a brilliant but deranged scientist named Griffin develops the power to become invisible and goes on a rampage in London.
- 1903:** Sherlock Holmes retires from public life.
- 1908:** A massive explosion occurs near Tunguska in northern Siberia. The exact nature of the explosion remains unknown, though it levels trees for miles around. Scientist later theorize that a comet or meteor struck the Earth.
- 1914:** Gangar rebels against King Oceanus of Atlantis, and is slain, but a secret organization supporting his desire to conquer the surface world survives.
- 1917:** Albert Zerstoiten is born in Bavaria.
- 1918:** Corporal Adolf Hitler, serving on the Western Front in World War I, is temporarily blinded by mustard gas. While undergoing treatment, he has a vision that the Teutonic Gods have selected him for a great purpose, which he translates as restoring the purity of the Aryan people and bestowing on Germany the "Thousand-Year Reich." He gives up his career in art and goes into politics, becoming a leader of the National Socialist Party after the war.
- 1920:** Princess Mara (Sea Hawk) is born in Atlantis.
- 1922:** Famed stage magician Max Pendragon begins using his real mystical powers to fight crime and evil in Vibora Bay and around the world.
- 1924:** Orana dies. Oceanus, grief-stricken, refuses to remarry. Mara begins her formal schooling.
- 1925:** The Satanic cult DEMON is founded. It commits the "Dog Day Murders" in Hell's Kitchen, New York City, as part of a ritual, but is thwarted by two NYPD detectives and the masked mystery man Jack Fool.
- 1926:** The Raven is first seen fighting crime on the streets of Hudson City.
- 1927:** First appearance of the Raven's partner, the Velvet Phantom, and his group of assistants, the Midnight Brigade.
- 1929:** Black Mask VII dies, and the mask passes to his son, Jeffrey Layton Ward. Black Mask VIII operates in Chicago, but moves to Haynesville, Kansas when he joins the Defenders of Justice during World War II. James Harmon II, Defender's grandfather, serves with Eliot Ness in the "Untouchables" in Chicago.
- 1936:** Bill Jefferies declares his personal war on crime. He develops two alternate identities, the costumed avenger known as the Black Owl, and a common street thug called Lefty LeGrand. As LeGrand, he uncovers criminal activity that he then thwarts as the Black Owl.
- 1937:** Oceanus is overthrown and killed by Dargon the Usurper, son of Gangar. Dargon tries to wed Mara, who instead escapes. She later befriends several "landers" and becomes known to the world as the heroine Sea Hawk after she rescues the crew of a sinking destroyer.
- 1938:** On May 1, Arcane experiments conducted by the Nazi RSvKg cause the increase of ambient magical energy on Earth, thus making it possible for superhumans and superpowers to exist. Both Der Sturmvoegel and Captain Patriot gain their powers. Albert Zerstoiten is recruited to design weapons for Nazi Germany; within a few years he begins studying superhumans. Robert MacDonald travels to Egypt. There, he encounters the mysterious ancient god Osiris, who grants him power over light and darkness.
- In Yellowstone National Park, Harrison Chase finds a mysterious rock that gives him fantastic powers when he's in direct contact with it.
- In October, Earth is invaded by aliens (thought to be Martians) who first land at Grover's Mill, New Jersey. A majority of the New York-area crimefighters team together to defeat the alien tripods. Optimus, Cowboy, Dr. Twilight, and Sea Hawk form the Defenders of Justice.
- 1939:** World War II begins. Lemuria secretly allies itself with the Axis. Its efforts have relatively little effect on the war, though it does control the Persian Gulf for its allies until forced to retreat in 1943.



1940: The Japanese sorcerer called Iron Father works with the RSvKg to cast a series of spells protecting the Axis countries. Superpowered enemies of the Axis are unable to enter these nations' borders without succumbing to a "mystical weakness," losing their powers and eventually falling into comas.

1941: The Haynesville Project, the top secret government program to study and employ superhuman powers, begins. The Defenders of Justice officially join the Army, along with several solo heroes, and are divided into two separate teams: the Defenders, who protect the homefront; and the Freedom Battalion, who fight overseas (and are mostly made up of the sneakier mystery men and professional soldiers on the team).

Pearl Harbor is attacked by the Japanese, drawing America into World War II.

1942: The first Russian superhero, General Winter, appears.

The original Justice Squadron is founded by the Drifter to stop an attempted Lemurian invasion of California; it becomes inactive after the war.

1943: James Harmon III, father of Defender, becomes a US Army Ranger, and earns the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valorous conduct during the War. After hostilities cease, he becomes an industrialist and quintuples the family's already considerable fortune.

1944: Albert Zerstoiten betrays his Nazi colleagues to the Allies.

The monstrous Mardoom-Thah emerges from his tomb under the Antarctic ice; the original Justice Squadron battles and eventually re-imprisons him.

1945: Albert Zerstoiten betrays his allies in the French underground to the Wehrmacht. Later that year he's recruited to come to America to design weapons for the United States military.

1948: The Haynesville Project officially closes its doors.

The Defenders of Justice formally disband. Princess Mara and Drake Wilson divorce.

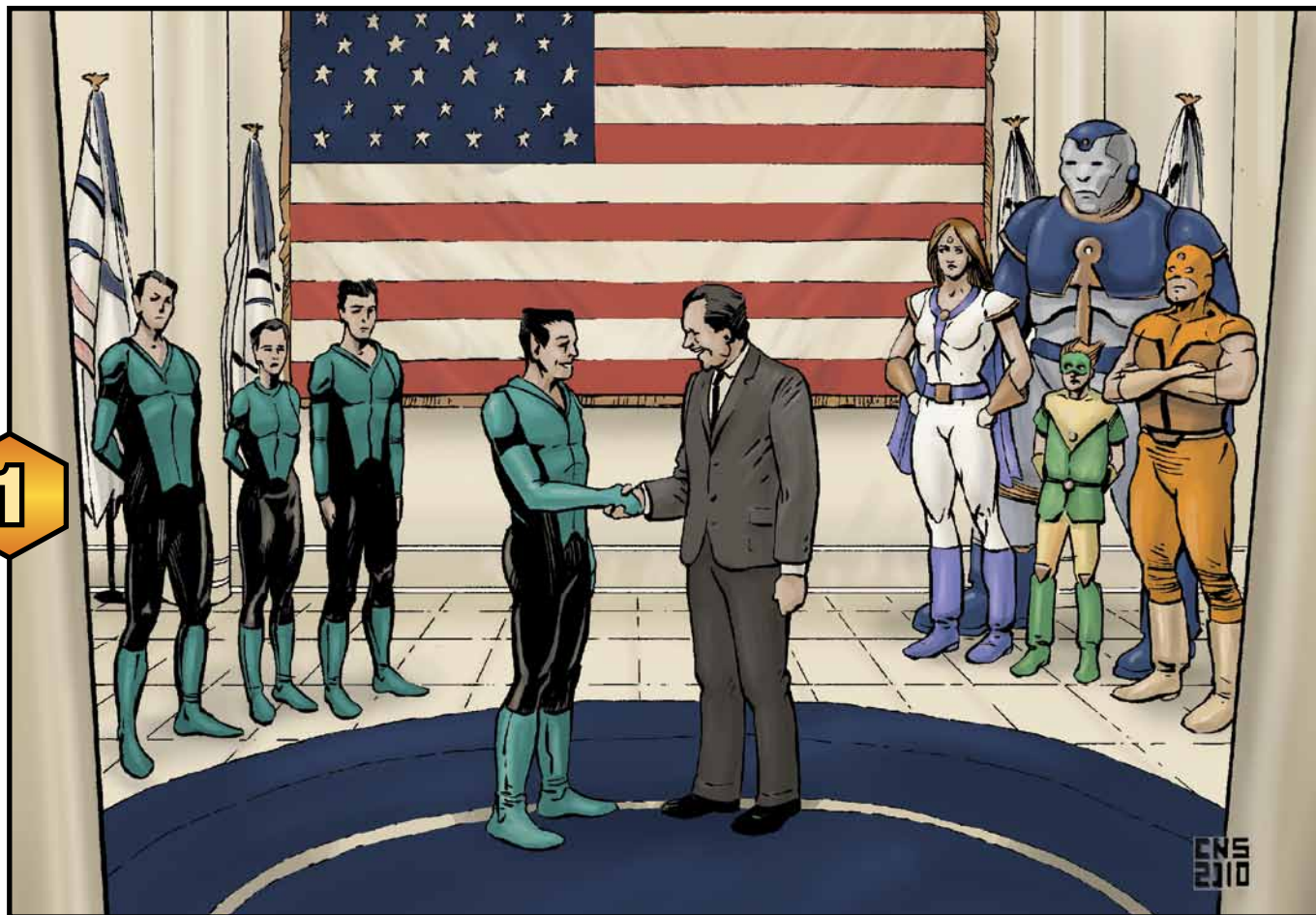
Wilson returns to the surface world and goes to work for the United Nations, later helping sculpt UNTIL into its modern form.

1949: Despising the Communists in China, the powerful sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu moves to San Francisco, adopting the identity of an art dealer and importer while working to restore the China he's known and loved for centuries. He later moves back to China, secluding himself in his castle.

Albert Zerstoiten murders several of his American colleagues and flees to his secret estate in South America.

1953: Black Mask VIII retires.

Shenandoah becomes the first superhero to endorse a product in an advertising campaign.



The British government establishes Bureau S to study the country's superhuman resources (and threats).

1954: Thirty evil men and women come together, swear an oath on the Serpent Lantern never to betray one another, and form VIPER.

Etienne Ste. Germaine begins a comprehensive study of superpowers for the United Nations.

1955: Mexican wrestler El Espectro receives his magical silver mask and begins combating supernatural evil while defending his heavy-weight title.

1956: David Matthew Ward becomes Black Mask IX, while working full time during the day as a Chicago policeman.

MeteorMan II makes his first appearance.

1958: Preston Angel II founds Angelstone Laboratories, a think tank which will become known for its research and consulting work concerning superhumans and the Superhuman World.

1959: Five Americans, entering space in a homemade rocketship to protect Earth from a comet, are exposed to strange radiation and transformed into the Fabulous Five.

An alien artifact transforms Jeffrey Sinclair into Vanguard, who as of 2010 is still considered the most powerful superhero to ever exist.

1960: Princess Mara remarries, this time to Andros, Subchieftain of the Moray barbarian tribe.

1961: The Sentinels form when the malevolent computer Ultivac attempts to take over the world. The original lineup is MeteorMan II, Dr. Phantom, Microman, Beowulf, and Rocketman.

1962: On August 22, "Green Monday," VIPER announces its existence to the world by killing dozens of underworld, political, and industrial figures in carefully-staged attacks. When Bram McFarlan traps the Drifter in another dimension so he (McFarlan) can revive Mardoom-Thah, the Drifter astrally alerts Vanguard to the threat and persuades him to form a new Justice Squadron to stop it.

1963: Teen hero The Hornet begins his star-crossed career.

The Sentinels smash DEMON's Redbrood Demonhome in New York City.

The UN establishes a commission, the Tribunal on International Law, to study superhumans and related issues.

1964: Revenger travels to the Moon and conquers the Selenites.

The dark god Kigatilik breaks free from his icy prison in Canada.

1965: Earth is invaded by the alien Qularr, who attempt to use giant monsters from alien worlds as weapons against it. Tokyo is nearly destroyed for the first time. After several attempts at conquest, the Qularr are finally defeated and driven from Earth's solar system, though several of their monsters remain on

Earth (most confined to the research facility on Monster Island).

The original lineup of the Sentinels breaks up. The Fabulous Five discover Thaar, home of the Birdpeople.

UNTIL is created by UN treaty — a treaty not signed by the United States, which refuses to allow UNTIL agents to operate within its territory.

1966: In Great Britain, Bureau S becomes the Ministry of Superhuman Affairs, a publicly-acknowledged branch of government responsible for protecting British citizens from superhuman threats.

Etienne Ste. Germaine retires, leaving his daughter Yvette as the head of his UNTIL-sponsored research project on superhuman powers.

UNTIL's submarine the *Njord* battles the supervillain Typhoon, forcing him to abort a planned attack on Africa.

The Golden Gladiator defeats the Sentinels in New York City. He steals nothing and is never seen again.

The Fabulous Five attack Arcadia because they think it's a Lemurian stronghold. When they discover their mistake, modern superheroes learn about the Empyreans.

UNTIL and the Sentinels defeat a Lemurian invasion of the surface world.

1967: The People's Republic of China establishes its own government superteam, the Tiger Squad.

The Fabulous Five thwart a second invasion attempt by the "Martians" of 1938, who are revealed to actually be from a planet in the Sirius system.

1968: The Iroquois superhero called Rainmaker makes his public debut.

Steel Shark, an Atlantean rebel and supervillain, temporarily seizes control of the Atlantean army and attacks Florida. He's narrowly defeated by the Sentinels, the Fabulous Five, and Queen Mara.

VIPER attempts to conquer the US in "Operation Coil," but is defeated thanks to some Detroit superheroes.

DEMON steals the Basilisk Orb and becomes regarded by the world as a significant superhuman threat. UNTIL and the Sentinels disrupt a major DEMON ritual in the Caroline Islands.

Brin Rei Tarn, of the planet Dendris, becomes the first Star*Guard assigned to protect Earth's sector of space from galactic threats. He establishes a base on Jupiter's moon Europa, and then comes to Earth regularly, where he becomes an unofficial member of the Sentinels.

The Soviet Union establishes the People's Legion, its official superteam. The Legion disintegrates in the late Eighties as the Soviet Union itself crumbles.

Mega-Terak escapes Monster Island and attacks Tokyo.

1969: Peter Renton, son of Amazing Man and Siren of the Fabulous Five, eventually to become the second Amazing Man, is born.

The United States reveals its first "official" superhuman, the All-American.

The Cryptonauts leave on an expedition to an alternate dimension and never return.

1970: The Fabulous Five free the Selenites on the Moon, defeating Revenger who dies in a cave-in. Amazing Man and Siren retire from the team, and are replaced by Kestrel and Scirocco.

The Outcasts, a team of misfit superheroes, forms in Vibora Bay.

1971: The Ministry of Superhuman Affairs sponsors the creation of the New Knights of the Round Table, Britain's official superteam.

The Lemurians attack Derbent on the Caspian Sea in an effort to capture an ancient Lemurian weapon, the Lunal-Kinesis Projector. The Soviet Army and the People's Legion eventually drive them away, but they disassemble the weapon and take it back to Lemuria.

Sea King teams up with UNTIL's *Njord* submarine and her crew to defeat Electric Eel and his pirates.

1972: Jennifer Anne Ward (Black Mask X) is born. The Sentinels spend several months involved in an intergalactic war, and are believed dead by the general public.

Dr. Yvette Ste. Germaine leaves UNTIL and founds L'Institut Thoth, a think tank and research laboratory devoted to the study of all aspects of "paraphysics."

The United States Department of Defense issues its first Superhuman Survey.

The Speed Demon, a demonically-possessed trucker, begins fighting crime in and around Vibora Bay.

David Farquar begins the newsletter that will eventually become *SuperWorld Magazine*.

1973: The Mandaarians, an enigmatic alien species, first visit Earth as peaceful explorers. Later visits occur in 1979, 1984, 1991, and 1999.

The Peacekeepers superhero team is founded in Chicago.

1974: James Harmon IV (Defender) is born. Brendan Grant (Kinetik) is born.

Bethany (Witchcraft) and Pamela (Talisman) Duquesne are born.

The Advanced Research Group is founded as a corporation.

The GRU assassinates the American superhero Ricochet in Paris while he's on an assignment for the CIA.

1975: Dr. Destroyer first appears. His attempt to conquer California and the world is narrowly defeated by a large group of superhumans; Kid Chameleon and Ocelot are killed.

David Ward's wife, Sharon, dies. David never remarries, and since he has no son, assumes the Mask will either pass to another family or the legend will end with him.





The Mighty Canadians sacrifice all of themselves (except Celestar) to seal the dark god Kigatilik in the Frost Tomb, an ice dimension.

Mark Whitaker (Nighthawk) is born in Detroit.

Kenji Hayashida (Shugoshin) born in Japan.

1976: Queen Mara's twins, Prince Marus and Princess Thalassa of Atlantis, are born.

Dr. Charles Wildman proposes the creation of Stronghold to Congress.

1977: The Gadroon attempt to conquer Earth and are driven off by a force of Earth's superhumans that includes many supervillains (Dr. Destroyer among them).

The Department of Defense's Project Yeoman succeeds, transforming six Navy SEALs into superhumans who are then formed into the team Ameriforce One.

UNTIL's submarine the *Njord* is destroyed in battle against Dr. Destroyer as it prevents him from building an undersea base in the Pacific off the coast of the Soviet Union.

1978: The United States completes the construction of Stronghold, the world's first prison designed solely to contain superhuman criminals.

A mishap with the test of the Delta Bomb transforms the White Sands, New Mexico region into the irradiated area now known as Burning Sands.

Canada establishes an official superteam, the Northern Guard.

Great Britain passes a law concerning the registration of superhumans.

Scirocco succumbs to mental illness and becomes a supervillainess.

Dark Seraph first appears.

1979: General Lorenzo João Garrastazu e Silva takes power in Chiquador.

VIPER teams with Dr. Destroyer to mind-control the world's leaders in "Operation Oroboros"; when Destroyer betrays the snakes and the Serpent Lantern is lost in the ensuing fight, VIPER swears eternal enmity against him.

Archimago casts the Zodiac Working, but his scheme is disrupted by the Fabulous Five.

The Slug appears, and nearly succeeds in transforming everyone in New York City into Elder Worms.

The Fabulous Five disbands; Diamond becomes a member of the Sentinels.

1980: The Advanced Research Group changes its name to the Advanced Research Group Enterprises (ARGENT) as a marketing ploy.

Following an attempt by Dr. Destroyer to conquer the United States using several supervillains (including his minions Menton and Mentalla) as pawns, Congress passes the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act.

UNTIL builds the Guardhouse, its equivalent of Stronghold, on a small island in the North Atlantic.

1981: The gorilla who will be known as Dr. Silverback is captured by mercenary animal traders in Rwanda and sold to Dr. Phillippe Moreau. MeteorMan II defeats Dr. Macabre and retires; Macabre's Janus Key is put in secure storage in Stronghold but in 1993 is discovered to have disappeared.

Corazon Valenzuela (Sapphire) is born in Los Angeles.

DEMON lures four superheroes and several UNTIL officers into an ambush in Lagos, Nigeria, slaughtering them all as a sacrifice to dark underworld gods.

The first Northern Guard team splits up.

Scandal rocks the New Knights of the Round Table, significantly diminishing the group's reputation.

1982: Don "Captain Patriot" Randall dies of a heart attack.

Annette Berkelheimer founds the Institute for Human Advancement (IHA) to champion the cause of "true humans" over mutants and superhumans.

1983: ARGENT is exposed as a criminal organization; its leaders flee the United States.

All members of Ameriforce One, the United States's superhuman SEAL team, are killed when a Soviet sub they are trying to recover explodes.

Gyrfalcon, a villainous Birdman of Thaair, is killed in battle with UNTIL agents.

Danar Nicole quits the European Parliament in disgust, undergoes the treatments that transform him into the villainous Fiacho, and begins forming Eurostar.

1984: Dr. Phillippe Moreau's experiments in "genetic advancement" have their first, accidental success when he grants superhuman intelligence to the gorilla who will become Dr. Silverback.

From March 30 to June 24, Dr. Destroyer rules Earth thanks to his mind-control satellite weapons. But when he goes too far and orders Vanguard to destroy the Statue of Liberty, Vanguard snaps and singlehandedly defeats him in battle in the skies above Washington, D.C.

Doctor Sebastian Poe founds the Parapsychological Studies Institute (PSI) to study superhuman phenomena.

The second Gadroon invasion is easily defeated.

A rogue Selenite uses Revenger's leftover technology to threaten the Earth with nuclear devastation, but is defeated by MeteorMan.

Canada forms a second Northern Guard.

UNTIL launches its second mega-submarine, the *Aegir*.

1985: Mechanon first appears, attempts to destroy humanity with America's nuclear arsenal, and is defeated by the Sentinels.

Doctor Silverback is rescued from Professor Moreau's labs by the New Knights of the Round Table. He is taken in by Dr. Dina Morrison and other employees of Cambridge Biochemical Labs.



Canada passes the Superhuman Sponsorship Act, requiring Canadian superheroes to register with the government.

Mega-Terak escapes Monster Island and attacks Osaka.

The Secret Crisis, a war across space and time involving almost all of the heroes that had ever existed, or ever would exist, occurs.

1986: The United States government founds PRIMUS, an anti-supercrime law enforcement agency roughly equivalent to UNTIL. Stronghold incorporates “hot sleep” technology to restrain its most dangerous inmates. Mechanon attacks, and destroys, Sentinel Island. A terrible accident creates the monstrous Grond. In Boston, VIPER helps the Justice Squadron defeat DEMON in the “Demonflame Incident,” creating a state of war between the two organizations that exists to this day.

The French government passes a law requiring the registration of superhumans.

Thomas Cassidy founds SNN, the Super News Network.

The United States creates the Department of Superhuman and Paranormal Affairs (DOSPA).

1987: In a landmark ruling for nonhuman intelligences on Earth, Dr. Silverback wins his independence and legal status as a citizen of the British government.

Takofanes the Undying Lord arises in Oklahoma and begins marching toward the East Coast. After he kills several superheroes who try to stop him at the Mississippi River, a larger group of superheroes bands together to defeat him in eastern Kentucky.

Kigatilik summons the demon Tilingkoot, who teams with the villain Roi D’Hiver to create a “Black Winter” in Quebec. The two are ultimately defeated by Hivernant and Le Fort. After her father Prince Andros of Atlantis dies in an accident, Princess Thalassa of Atlantis slays the court advisor Ikthos and becomes the supervillainess Stingray.

1988: David Ward (Black Mask IX) retires from adventuring and becomes Police Commissioner of Chicago.

The Chaos-Beast and his horde of reality-warping demonic beings attempt to invade the Earth and are defeated by the Justice Squadron.

Doctor Destroyer threatens to eliminate 90% of humanity with death-ray satellites, but is eventually found and defeated by several superhero teams working together.

UNTIL founds its own official superteam, UNITY.

Eurostar first appears, releasing its *Eurostar Manifesto* as a statement of intent.

The New Knights of the Round Table stop an attack by Samhain, thereby restoring themselves to the public’s good graces.

The light-manipulating Canadian master villain Borealis first appears.

1989: Kristina Pelvanen, formerly the superheroine Rowan, founds the Ravenswood Academy, nominally an ordinary (if highly exclusive) private school, but secretly intended primarily to train young superhumans in the proper use of their abilities.

Mechanon clashes with the Liberty League in Philadelphia, killing the superheroine Lightspeed.

Binder encounters Blackstar when they both try to rob the same jewelry store; they team up and found the Ultimates.

The Monster first appears, slaying the St. Louis superheroine Briquette.

Miami's superteam the Watch forms.

The second Northern Guard team splits up.

1990: Star*Guard Brin Rei Tarn is slain by the renegade Star*Guard Mordace. His replacement is the first human Star*Guard, Andre Almena.

Doctor Destroyer and Mechanon begin a war sparked by Mechanon's demand that Destroyer free his artificially intelligent computers. Battles occur all over the world, with a final, inconclusive, confrontation in Ankara, Turkey that wreaks havoc on the city.

Juan Martinez retires as Secretary-Marshal of UNTIL and is replaced by Wilhelm Carl Eckhardt.

The Great Stronghold Breakout occurs due to a series of unfortunate mishaps.

The Cottonmouth Incident: Authorities capture the VIPER supervillain Cottonmouth, who reveals much of the inner workings of the organization before being assassinated by his former employers.

1991: Doctor Destroyer launches his artificial island, Destruga, in an attempt to gain statehood. When that scheme fails, he turns toward Hawaii, but is defeated by the combined might of the United States military and American superheroes.

The California Patrol, an informal team of West Coast heroes, is founded.

The German government passes a law requiring the registration of superhumans.

VIPER creates the Dragon Branch, its own "team" of supervillains.

1992: July 23 — The "Battle of Detroit": Dr. Destroyer is killed battling Earth's superheroes, but activates a device that destroys most of Detroit. Later that year, the American government, several major corporations, and numerous charitable foundations form the Millennium Project to rebuild the city.

1993: As a response to public outcry over the destruction of Detroit, the United States signs the Tribunal Treaty, allowing UNTIL agents to operate freely in American territory.

Eurostar launches an invasion of Poland with an army of cloned soldiers created by Teleios, the Perfect Man. Teleios's existence is revealed to the world in the aftermath of the thwarted attack.



Borealis attacks a NATO installation but is defeated by the Vancouver superhero team SUNDER and imprisoned.

UNTIL founds its undersea base in the Atlantic, *Nautilus*.

Doctor Macabre dies in prison; the Janus Key and his other mystical artifacts are discovered to have vanished from secure storage.

Black Paladin first appears.

Foxbat first appears and attempts to steal the Empire State Building.

Three former UNTIL agents found Executive Control Solutions, a security firm that eventually comes to specialize in anti-supervillain security.

1994: Dr. Silverback moves to Millennium City to work at the American headquarters of Cambridge Biochem.

Takofanes the Archlich attacks Vibora Bay, but is driven away by Dr. Scarab, who sacrifices his life to defeat the undead sorcerer. Doctor Ka moves to the Queen City to take up Dr. Scarab's role as a mystic crimefighter there.

The Justice Squadron thwarts an ARGENT-sponsored coup in Guamanga.

The Warlord first appears, and attempts to conquer Vietnam.

VIPER threatens the world with bioweapons in "Operation Fever Dream," but is defeated by superheroes.

The third Gadroon invasion attempt lands in Canada, but is defeated by several heroes who team up to form the third Northern Guard.

The Monster-Master takes control of Monster Island's giant monsters and teleports them to New York City, but is eventually defeated by several teams of superheroes.

Kristine Griswold gains solar energy powers and becomes the superheroine Victory, working for the United States Air Force.

Project Sunburst takes place.

Annette Berkelheimer dies and is replaced as the leader of the IHA by Archer Samuels.

PSI is revealed to be a criminal organization employing supervillains with psionic powers.

1995: Li Chun the Destroyer appears in China. After defeating the Tiger Squad in a two-day running battle, he mysteriously disappears.

The United States Army initiates "Project Green-skin" in an attempt to take control of the supervillain Grond; the project fails, leading to a destructive rampage by Grond and the deaths of most of the scientists involved.

The supervillain Ankylosaur first appears after stealing his now-infamous suit of powered armor from UNTIL.

Joseph Otanga seizes power and declares himself President-for-Life of Lugendu.

The FBI completes the Stalwart powered armor suit, thus giving it an official superhero to supplement its Hostage Rescue Teams.

Anderson Powell, who formerly fought crime in New York City as the growing hero Titan, founds Bastion Alpha Security, which beginning in 2001 provides clients with security personnel who possess low-level superhuman abilities.

1996: Jennifer Anne Ward, now a private investigator in Vibora Bay, adopts the identity of Black Mask X, against her father's wishes (at least at first).

UNTIL completes the construction of its GATEWAY space station, mankind's first large, permanently-manned facility in space. The "VIPER-Eurostar War" begins in Europe, and lasts until 1998.

The first known kelvarite meteorite crashes to Earth, in western Kentucky.

1997: *Los Defensores de Méjico* (the Mexican Defenders), a Mexican superhero team, disintegrates when several members are implicated in a corruption scandal.

Nightwind begins fighting crime in the still-under-construction Millennium City.

Taipan makes his first appearance, murdering three superheroes and two civilians in Melbourne.

Following the death of his daughter in a New York City superbattle, Senator Phillip Glassman becomes an ardent campaigner against superhumans and a supporter of the IHA.

Black Rose and Amazing Man II re-organize the Sentinels; MeteorMan III chooses to retire from the team.

Daniel James Johnson becomes the Golden Avenger of PRIMUS, succeeding Robert Kaufman.

1998: Canada's latest attempt to establish the Northern Guard, a team of official heroes, fails as the team votes to dissolve itself. The RCMP forms the "Steelhead Branch" to deal with superhuman threats.

Istvatha V'han first attempts, and fails, to conquer Earth's dimension.

Scorpia and Feuermacher murder Professor Muerte, loot and destroy his facilities, and defect from Terror, Inc. to join Eurostar.

The United States Department of Defense reveals Janissary, a superhuman soldier it has succeeded in creating. A program is begun to test the feasibility of creating more superhuman soldiers.

Thomas Cassidy launches the SNN Sidekick television network.

1999: Late this year, the rebuilding of Detroit is substantially completed, and the new metropolis is christened Millennium City.

Mechanon kidnaps the Mechanic, leader of the Liberty League, but is found and defeated by the League before it (Mechanon) can dissect him.

Defender becomes a part-time superhero in New York City.

Sapphire's mutant powers manifest.





Mark Whitaker (Nighthawk) is injured in a VIPER attack on Millennium City University; inspired by the event, he becomes a crimefighter.

A lab accident gives Brendan Grant superpowers, and he becomes Kinetik.

Baron Nihil is somehow released from his extradimensional prison.

Shugoshin receives his Spirit Swords and begins his crimefighting career in San Francisco.

The San Francisco-based Freedom Patrol suffers a major defeat at the hands of ARGENT.

Canada builds Stronghold North to hold its captured supercriminals. Borealis becomes its first resident in 2001.

Grand Cienelago Island, a secret resort for superheroes, opens.

2000: Dark Seraph and the Crowns of Krim steal a valuable book from a Paris museum, in the process killing 43 UNTIL agents and the French superhero Skydragon.

Taipian attempts to assassinate the Peacekeepers, is defeated, and is placed in “hot sleep” in an Australian super-prison designed solely to hold him (and known as “House Taipan”).

A number of genetic monstrosities found wandering in the Canadian wilderness are linked to Teleios.

Russkiye Zashchitniki (“The Russian Defenders”), an informal superhero team, forms in Moscow.

Eclipsar first appears, blotting out the sun over all of South and Central America and killing thousands before being stopped by several hero teams and UNTIL and incarcerated in the Guardhouse.

Mechanon’s first clash with the supervillainess Gravitator.

UNTIL establishes Moonbase Serenity.

2001: Defender moves to Millennium City and founds the Champions. Sapphire and Nighthawk join soon thereafter; Ironclad arrives on Earth and joins the group as well. Witchcraft joins the group late in the year after the four heroes have a nigh-disastrous encounter with Takofanes on Halloween.

The Binary Corporation presents Binary Man, its official corporate superhero and representative, to the world. Binary Man begins fighting crime and performing heroic deeds.

Firewing comes to Earth to challenge its superhumans to combat.

A disgruntled guard releases Grond from hot sleep in Stronghold, but the monster smashes his way out without causing a general breakout.

An attack by a Teleios-bred monster in upper New York state causes the Justice Squadron to cross into Canada without permission, sparking a battle with the Canadian hero team StarForce.

2002: Doctor Destroyer returns to the world, wielding new powers of shadow and magic.

Firewing battles Hyperion in London; the fight ends inconclusively, but results in significant property destruction.

Mechanon tests his newest robotic body by fighting the Champions and several independent heroes in Millennium City.

One of the victims of Project Sunburst awakens and becomes the master villain Sunburst.

The French superhero Incendie moves to Quebec to avoid complying with his homeland’s strict superhero registration law.

Captain Chronos first appears to the modern era. Doctor Destroyer attacks the island of Java for reasons unknown.

2003: The shrunken monster Cazulon returns to normal size and attacks Millennium City, wreaking havoc before the hero Microman re-shrinks him.

Doctor Destroyer attacks southern India for two months, then mysteriously vanishes from the battlefield along with most of his mystical devices and followers.

Black Paladin attempts to resurrect his lover, the witch Chantal, but the Champions disrupt his plan, defeat him, and send him to Stronghold.

Khusor the Crooked and his followers rebel against King Arvad of Lemuria, in the process regaining their reptilian forms and shapechanging powers.

The Slug attacks London, succeeding in transforming tens of thousands of people into Elder Worm before the New Knights of the Round Table barely manage to thwart his plan and undo the transformation ritual.

An extradimensional “energy blob” attacks Millennium City until lured home by a beacon created by the Champions and Dr. Silverback.

Mechanon’s second clash with Gravitator takes place in Millennium City.

A South American villain team, *Los Aplastantes* (“the Crushers”) attacks Washington DC and nearly destroys the Lincoln Memorial, but is stopped by the Sentinels.

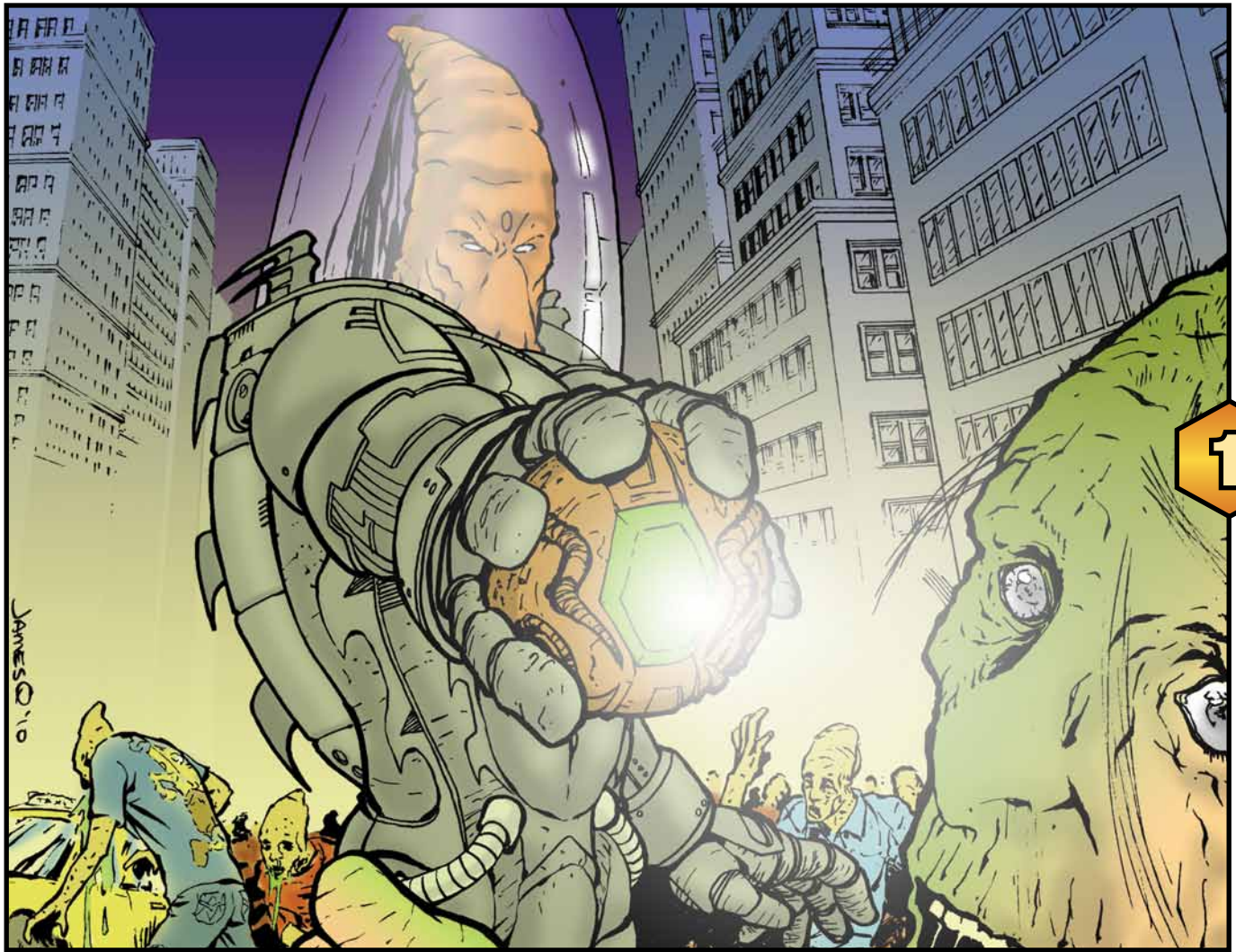
La Bruma forms the Hero Corps in Houston.

Walkabout, Brigade, Harrier, and the Wanambi Man team up to defeat the extradimensional fiend Marmoo’s attack on Sydney.

Interface first appears, launching several planned attacks to gather data on superheroes so he can analyze their weaknesses and defeat him, but is himself defeated and sent to Stronghold.

UNTIL prevents the Widdershins Man, a DEMON Morbane, from summoning a powerful fire-demon in Bavaria.

Software billionaire Horatio Goodman founds the Goodman Institute, a privately-funded organization that provides scientific assistance to superheroes.



2004: Renegade scientist Dr. Timothy Blank breaks away from VIPER, transforms himself into the master villain King Cobra, founds COIL, and attacks Millennium City with his Ophidian Plague. Only some fast and clever crimefighting by the Champions saves the city.

The Champions join the heroes of another dimension to fight villains from both planes in the “Reality Storm.” A new team, the Millennium City 8, forms to protect the City of the Future in the Champions’ absence.

The Peacekeepers smash a major Chicago VIPER’s Nest and capture two members of Dragon Branch, Verity and Whipsnake.

Kinematik first appears; he attacks the Guard-house, freeing four mutant supervillains.

The shapeshifting Russian hero Taiga is killed during a battle between his team (Russkiye Zashchitniki, the Russian Defenders) and Eurostar.

Utility lures the Champions into a deathtrap-filled warehouse and nearly defeats them, but his overconfidence gets the better of him and they’re able to defeat him.

The United States invades Costa Azúl and overthrows dictator Enrique Pineda.

Obelisque attempts to break out of the Guard-house, causing a temporary power outage that allows several other inmates, including Eclipsar, to escape.

2005: Menton is captured after he attempts to get himself elected President of Guamanga as a stepping-stone to world conquest.

Borealis escapes from Stronghold North.

Defender agrees to go on a date with Gravitator to prevent her from destroying Seattle.

Henry Grant “receives” the Hercules Force and becomes the second Johnny Hercules.

Well-liked supervillainess Lady Blue ends her two-year romantic relationship with rock star Jimmy Caxton.

Dr. Ka and the Champions prevent the supervillain Anubis from summoning the evil Egyptian god Set to Vibora Bay.

PSI splits apart, with factions of the organization fighting one another while the Champions try to control the crisis. Several members of the organization die; the rest flee to find other underworld opportunities.

UNTIL captures Zephyr, but she later escapes when the power-draining technology in her prisoner transport malfunctions.



Witchcraft battles Talisman at Millennium City University and tricks her evil twin sister into lifting the Curse of Frigid Despair she'd placed on Witchcraft years before.

While visiting Berlin, Ironclad ends up drinking in the same bar as Durak. The two get into a barfight that destroys three city blocks; in the end, Ironclad trounces Durak, but the supervillain escapes.

DEMON murders Major Violette Boudreau, head of UNTIL's Project Hermes.

Los Angeles de la Guarda ("the Guardian Angels") deal VIPER a major defeat in Mexico.

The Bay Guardians clash with and defeat the Devil's Advocates in San Francisco.

While on a mission in Iraq with several other heroes, the Janissary is killed by the Iraqi villain Turs al-Sh'ab.

2006: Nighthawk leaves the Champions, to be replaced by Kinetik.

The Cirque Sinister terrorizes Vibora Bay by using the Janus Key to remake reality in the city; in the wake of the villain team's defeat the Key is once again lost.

The Slug attacks Millennium City in an attempt to transform its residents into Elder Worms, but is defeated by the Champions.

Valak the World-Ravager attacks Earth, is defeated by Star*Guard and the Sentinels, and imprisoned in Stronghold in hot sleep.

Doctor Destroyer launches Destruga II and tries to mind control the world, but is eventually defeated by an enormous combined force of superheroes and the American and Australian militaries.

Dweomer, Witchcraft, and several other mystics team up to defeat DEMON's "Satan Furnace" plot to taint Earth's arcane energies.

Foxbatpalooza takes place at a Millennium City stadium when Foxbat makes his rock 'n' roll debut onstage.

Mechanon attacks Millennium City with a fifty foot-tall version of itself.

Takofanes, the Crowns of Krim, and several superheroes fight a three-way battle in Salem, Massachusetts on Halloween.

Gravitar attacks Washington, DC by lifting the Capitol 500 feet into the air and holding the United States for ransom, but is defeated by the Justice Squadron and Capital Patrol with no loss of life.

A large chunk of kelvarite falls to Earth in Africa and is recovered by UNTIL.

The Slug attacks the southern India city of Nandyal and a nearby archaeological dig.

The Warlord battles Tetsuronin to a standstill in Tokyo.

The United States launches the United States Space Station, a large, permanently-inhabited scientific and monitoring station orbiting Earth above Florida.

2007: The Champions fight Dr. Destroyer and some of his Shadow Colossi in Canada.

The Warlord and Firewing fight a duel that ends in a draw.

Baron Nihil murders Red Ensign III.

Doctor Destroyer attempts to kidnap Chicago occult expert Ken Haight, but is thwarted by the Peacekeepers.

Tezcatlipoca attacks Texas, but is eventually defeated when several superteams and PRIMUS distract him long enough for mystics to sever the binding-spell that kept him on Earth.

Kinematik attacks Washington, DC because he considers the US government anti-mutant; several monuments are damaged before the Capital Patrol and the All-American drive him away.

Professor Paradigm and the Paradigm Pirates first appear, attempting to "uncover reality" in San Francisco and nearly driving the entire city mad before being stopped by a motley assortment of superheroes.

Turs al-Sh'ab is badly injured in a fight with several American heroes and soldiers.

Istvatha V'han again attempts to conquer Earth's dimension, and is again repulsed by Earth's superhumans.

2008: Mechanon attempts to convert all organic life on Earth to machinery with a nanotechnology weapon, but the Champions thwart its scheme.

Radium leaves the Ultimates to join Sunburst's team; Binder replaces him with the supervillain Orion.

VIPER helps Dr. Philippe Moreau relocate his laboratory and equipment to Monster Island.

The Gadroon attempt to invade Earth for a fourth time and manage to create a beach-head in the Canadian wilderness.

2009: The second Great Stronghold Breakout erupts when Menton somehow is released from hot sleep and takes control of the prison, resulting in the release of over five dozen inmates.

Mechanon attempts to take over Silicon Valley but is defeated by the Champions and the Freedom Patrol.

Professor Paradigm and the Paradigm Pirates cause the artwork in several New York City museums to come to life and attack people, but are driven off by the Sentinels.

Psimon re-forms PSI.

The Qularr invade Earth again, but are driven back by humanity's superheroes.

Takofanes unleashes the "Blood Moon" on Millennium City, animating the heroes who died during the Battle of Detroit as fearsome superpowered zombies.

The renegade Star*Guard Mordace attacks Odrugar, home of the Star*Guard, and damages the Guard's super-computer CONTROL, seriously weakening the organization.



CHAPTER
TWO

**BEING
SUPERHUMAN**
SUPERHUMANITY IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



DEFINING "SUPERHUMAN"

2 Since superhumans first emerged in 1938, countless scientists have spent thousands, if not millions, of man-hours analyzing issues pertaining to superpowers. How do superpowers manifest, and can their manifestation be controlled or induced? How many superhumans are there in the world? Where's the dividing line between "human" and "superhuman," and what does it imply for ordinary humanity?

In game terms, these issues have an impact on how you run the Champions Universe as a campaign setting (see Chapter Four of *Champions* for general discussion). Here's how things like realism and character power level work in the Champions Universe.

CAMPAIGN REALISM

The Champions Universe strives for a middle-of-the-road level of "realism," one that makes possible the fabulous and fantastic events of the typical comic book while not totally relegating normal humans to the back burner. The vast majority of people aren't superhuman, but the most dedicated among them can come close to that pinnacle through training and other enhancements. People, historical and current events, geopolitics, and technology are usually identical to what you'd find in the "real world," though the influence of superhumans and super-technology may be apparent (see page 57).

CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES

Beginning characters in the Champions Universe are built as Standard Superheroic characters, with 400 Total Points (including 75 Matching Complications points). Other guidelines for Standard Superheroic characters generally apply. Chapter Six has more information about campaign ground rules and the like, but don't read that section without GM's permission.

Generally speaking, superpowers and Characteristics don't have to be tightly related in the Champions Universe — superpowers often interact with human bodies and brains in very unpredictable ways. For most characters they tend to be tightly related; for example, a "brick" has high STR, CON, PD, ED, BODY, and STUN, while a "speedster" has a high DEX and SPD. But it's by no means uncommon for a hero with *any* type of superpowers to have a higher than normal STR, DEX, SPD, or other Characteristics. Some scientists theorize that superpowers in general "energize" the human body, making it function more effectively overall. The *Striking Appearance* Talent also occurs much more often among the superhuman population than the overall population.

See 6E1 48-49 for Characteristics comparison information that applies to the Champions Universe. But of course, a Champions Universe character doesn't have to have Superhuman-range Characteristics to be considered a "superhuman." The Superhuman label is simply a convenient one for defining a specific threshold. Being a superhuman depends primarily on having superhuman abilities of some sort, or an appropriately superhuman origin for one's Characteristics, not on crossing the "Superhuman" threshold. For example, look at Victory in the Appendix. None of her main Characteristics fall into the 31+ range for "Superhuman" in the Champions Universe, but she's clearly superhuman — she can fly, fire energy bolts, and so forth.

SPECIES

Most characters in the Champions Universe are human. However, that's not the only option available for player characters; there are a number of lost races, alien species, and the like in the setting as well. See Chapter Four for details.

THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF SUPERPOWERS

As with any Champions campaign, it's important for a GM running a game set in the Champions Universe to understand how superpowers can exist, and what sources they come from, and just how many superhumans there are running around out there.

SOURCES OF SUPERPOWERS

The Champions Universe is what *Champions* describes, on page 122, as an “unlimited source” campaign. All of the major sources of superpowers that book describes — Alien Species, Extradimensional Energies, Genetic Manipulation, Magic and Mysticism, Mutation, Psionic Powers, Super-Science, Supernatural Forces, and Training — exist in the Champions Universe and can give rise to superpowers. And they're not necessarily the only sources, just the major ones; some superhumans have powers whose nature and source don't fit neatly into one (or even several) of these categories.

Here are some examples of Champions Universe characters with each of the main sources of superpowers (see the Appendix, *Champions*, or *Champions Villains* for their character sheets).

Alien Species: Firewing, Ironclad, Herculan, Nebula, Vibron

Extradimensional Energies: Tesseract, many energy projectors

Genetic Manipulation: Dr. Silverback, Teleios

Magic and Mysticism: Dark Seraph, DEMON Morbanes, Takofanes, Talisman, Witchcraft

Mutation: Binary Man, Brainchild, Cateran, Gravitar, Hummingbird, Sapphire

Psionic Powers: Brainchild, Mentalla, Menton, Psimon

Super-Science: Ankylosaur, Binder, Defender, the Warlord

Supernatural Forces: Morningstar, Samhain

Training: Black Mask, Green Dragon, Nightwind, Shugoshin

Similarly, *Champions* describes on pages 73-74 the most common “origins” for superhuman characters. All of those types of origins, and others, exist in the Champions Universe. Here are some examples of characters with each of the typical origins (most of these characters are described in other books):

Alien: Firewing, Ironclad, Herculan, Nebula, Vibron

Build Gadgetry: Binder, Defender, Steel Commando, Utility, the Warlord

Godly Ancestry/Bestowal: Anubis, Dark Seraph and the Crowns of Krim, DEMON Morbanes

Mental Training: Just about any superhuman with a lot of Skills

Mutant: Binary Man, Brainchild, Cateran, Gravitar, Hummingbird, Sapphire

Mystic Family/Race: the Sylvestris, the Vandaleurs

Mystical/Magical Training: Stingray, DEMON Morbanes, Takofanes, Talisman, Witchcraft

Physical Training: Black Mask, Mechassassin, Nightwind, Shugoshin, Utility

Radiation Accident: Kinetik, Tachyon, Thunderbolt I (and II), Victory

Subject Of Experimentation: Dr. Silverback, Oculon, Pulsar, Ripper

However, this raises the question of how superpowers can exist at all. Ordinarily efforts to build powered armor fail, and people zapped by lightning while standing in a laboratory full of strange chemicals die instead of manifesting superpowers. Yet, in the Champions Universe, some characters can build super-tech devices, and some gain superpowers from things like radiation accidents.

In the Hero Universe (the “meta-setting” of which the Champions Universe is just one part), superpowers can exist because magic exists. The Hero Universe is suffused with magic. Sometimes, as in the distant past, the level of ambient magic rises to the point where virtually anyone can cast spells or control mystic forces, and the gods themselves walk the Earth. At other times, like the far future, the level of magic ebbs to such a low point that almost no one can practice it or use it,

superpowers cannot exist, and anything associated with either concept is generally regarded as superstitious claptrap, a misunderstanding, the result of miscommunication and ignorance, or the like (in short, people come up with rational explanations for mystic phenomena and superpowers).

The level of ambient magic in the Hero Universe, and thus the Champions Universe, had remained quite low for several centuries prior to 1900. It began to rise again in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1938, it had risen to the point where RSvKg, a group of mystics working for the Nazis, were able to perform rituals that “forced” the level of ambient magic even higher in certain “directions.” Their intent was to magically propel Germany to world dominance. What actually resulted was a situation in which superpowers became possible.

Because of the ambient magic in the Champions Universe, accidents that would normally kill or maim people sometimes — very rarely, but sometimes — cause the victims to manifest

superpowers instead. It also makes genetic mutations that create superpowers possible, and allows some extremely gifted inventors to create technology the general public can’t necessarily understand, use, or reproduce. However, this has *no effect* on the special effects of any given character’s superpowers. The special effects of Defender’s powers are “super-technology,” even though it’s the ambient magic that allows him to manufacture his suit of powered armor and make it work. The special effects of Sapphire’s powers are “mutation,” even though it’s magic that made so beneficial a mutation of her genes possible. Neither character registers as in any way magical — because they’re not.

SUPERHUMAN DEMOGRAPHICS

True superhumans first appear in the Hero Universe — in other words, the “Champions Universe” part of that meta-setting truly begins — in 1938. (Some low-powered superhumans may have existed before then, but those incidents were isolated and short-lived, the mere precursors of the flood to come). Initially, the number of superhumans was relatively low — about one in ten million, at most, and much lower than that in the less advanced regions of the world.

Over time, the number of superhumans steadily increased. By the late 1960s, it had reached one in five million in the most super-populous regions of the world, and by about 1980 it was at around one in three million. As of 2010 there’s approximately one superhuman for every one million people on Earth — or about 6,000 altogether, give or take a few hundred. However, that’s not the whole story of superhuman demographics. There are several other factors to consider.

SUPERHUMAN DISTRIBUTION

First, there’s the distribution issue. Superhumans aren’t spread evenly across the globe — you cannot, simply by consulting the population data for a country or continent, accurately gauge how many superhumans exist there. For reasons no one can satisfactorily explain, superhumans are more likely to arise in certain areas — primarily those areas that are more advanced technologically, politically, and culturally. In short, superhumans exist in much greater frequencies in the First World (the United States, mainly, but also places like Europe and Japan) than in Third World regions. This even holds true for mystically-powered superhumans, despite the fact that mysticism is more prevalent in the Third World than the First. In the United States, the number of superhumans in some areas is as high as one per 100,000, whereas in Africa and most of Asia, the numbers drop as low as one per ten million or even fifty million. (See accompanying text box.)

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KELVARITE

In 1996, a strange meteorite of unknown origin crashed to Earth in western Kentucky. An unusually large specimen, the meteorite seemed to contain common minerals and metals, but emitted an unusual glow that caused the people who found it to alert the authorities, who in turn contacted experts at various universities. The meteorite proved to be mostly made of a glowing, greenish mineral heretofore unknown to Earth science. Dubbed, for reasons none of the scientists can now recall, “kelvarite,” the mineral defied most standard methods of analysis.

More importantly from the perspective of the Superhuman World, kelvarite proved oddly unstable and prone to explosions — disasters which sometimes imbued ordinary humans with superpowers when their bodies were bombarded with fragments of kelvarite, or absorbed intense radiation given off by the blasts. The supervillains Tachyon and Thunderbolt II both gained their powers in this fashion; many others may have as well.

Superhumans who gain their powers from kelvarite often exhibit powers involving high STR, fast or unusual forms of movement, and greater than normal resilience — in short, super-augmentations of their ordinary human capabilities — but not always. They also tend to have various Complications in common, such as Susceptibilities (either to kelvarite itself, or to earth-related powers that effect the mineral fragments in their bodies). The bizarre kelvarite radiations also tend to make them more vulnerable to various attacks and effects, including Drains and electricity.

The exact amount of kelvarite on the planet remains unknown. All that was recovered from the Kentucky meteorite is kept carefully secure by the United States government or various research universities — but other meteorites may have fallen to Earth undetected, or been brought to this world by aliens.



PREVALENCE OF SUPERHUMANS

The following chart indicates the approximate prevalence of superhumans in various regions of the world as of 2010.

Region **One Superhuman Per...**

North America

The United States	One million to 100,000
Canada	One million to 200,000
Mexico	Twenty to five million

Central America	Twenty to six million
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South America	Twenty to three million
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Europe

British Isles	One million to 750,000
Western Europe	One million
Eastern Europe	Two million
Russia	Four to three million

Africa

Saharan Africa	Seven million
Subsaharan Africa	Fifty to ten million

Asia

The Middle East	Eight million
Central Asia	Fifty to ten million
India	Twenty to ten million
Southeast Asia	Fifty to ten million
China	Five million
Japan	One million

Oceania	Fifty to ten million
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Australia	Five million
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Theories abound as to why this state of affairs exists. Some experts claim, and not without justification, that the “radiation accidents” which create many superhumans are more likely to occur in the high-tech environments of the First World. This does not, however, wholly explain why mystic-powered superhumans abound just as much in the First World.

Other students of the subject advance more esoteric theories. For example, one school of thought claims democracy and mass media attract more of the “forces” that create superhumans by building a more open, free-thinking society. In essence, theorists adopting this view believe superhumans result somehow from the unconscious thoughts and feelings of people, which are better or more frequently expressed in free societies. Some even claim that the existence of comic books chronicling the adventures of superheroes — a media phenomenon mostly non-existent outside the First World — acts as a “lightning rod” to attract “superhuman energies,” thus making superhumans more common in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan. But proponents of these theories cannot explain why free-thinkers in democratic societies should be any more likely to create superhumans than oppressed or impoverished Third Worlders yearning for a better life.

Even more radical are conspiracy-oriented theories that the movers and shakers of the First World arrange for the creation of superhumans as a way of keeping the Third World relegated to

second-class status on Earth. No solid evidence in support of this idea has ever been made public, but that hasn't stopped a lot of people from agreeing with it.

SUPERHUMAN MIGRATION

Complicating this issue is the fact that it's not always possible to tell where a superhuman manifested, but only to determine where he's currently engaging in superpowered activity. It's widely believed that a percentage of the superhumans active in the First World were actually born in Third World countries, but used their superpowers to emigrate to the United States or Europe — which are not only “where the action is,” but better places to live generally. Some estimates claim as many as one-third of the superhumans in the First World are actually from the Third World, but given the difficulty in researching the subject, it's unlikely scientists will ever have solid data on the question.

A WORLD APART

Even in the regions where they're most common — such as the United States — costumed superhumans rarely mingle with normal humans to any significant extent. The average citizen of the United States has never knowingly met a superhuman, and never will. Like movie stars and famous professional athletes, they're something people read about and see pictures of, but rarely (if ever) experience.

SUPERHUMAN POWER LEVEL

The study of superhuman demographics must also consider the question of how powerful the average superhuman is. In other words, of the roughly 6,000 superhumans existing on Earth today, how many are powerful enough to participate in the “Superhuman World” as costumed criminals or crimefighters?

The best data currently available suggests that for every superhuman of notable power (*i.e.*, who, in game terms, qualifies as at least a Low-Powered Superheroic character), there are one to four superhuman individuals whose powers aren't nearly so extensive or effective. In most cases, these persons probably don't even consider themselves “superhuman.” They may simply have noticeably faster reflexes than their friends, experience unusual flashes of intuition, be remarkably smart, or be highly resistant to injury or disease. Others recognize that they possess superhuman abilities, but also realize they're not powerful enough to act as crimefighters (or criminals), and simply conceal their powers or use them to accomplish everyday tasks. The highly-publicized, but essentially trivial, healing powers of the renowned physician Dr. Jeremiah Mugembe, which have done more to diminish the threat of AIDS in Africa than all the pharmaceutical companies in the world combined, are one prominent example of this phenomenon; another is Jeff Baker, who's used his matter transmutation powers to make his company Trans-City Construction successful.

And of course, the mere fact that someone has sufficient power to be a costumed superhuman doesn't mean he *will* be. Being a costumed hero or criminal requires more than just superpowers — it takes a certain attitude (be it heroic or villainous). Some psychologists have argued that *all* costumed superhumans suffer from significant mental problems, and while that may or may not be true, the fact remains that some people with superhuman powers don't want to parade around in gaudy costumes and undertake adventures or commit crimes. They keep their powers hidden, or secretly use them for civilian jobs, and don't get involved in the so-called Superhuman World. For example, Habitat For Humanity workers in Atlanta have frequently received mysterious help from an unknown superhuman who somehow constructs entire houses overnight. Whoever this person is, he prefers to keep his identity (and powers) secret and simply go on about his life like a normal person — but he also apparently enjoys helping out with charitable projects from time to time.

Taking all of this into account, most experts estimate that only about 40% of the world's 6,000 superhumans are powerful enough to become costumed heroes (or villains) *and* actually do so, yielding a world population of no more than about 2,400 costumed superhumans. This roughly tallies with the best efforts to date to obtain a “head count” of “capes” (as researchers sometimes call them).

TRAINING, GADGETEERING, AND ALIENS

The figure of approximately 6,000 superhumans in the world includes only those persons with innate superpowers, such as the ability to fly or fire beams of energy from the eyes. It doesn't include three groups of persons who may also participate in the Superhuman World: people with advanced training; people able to build super-technology devices; and aliens.

Some otherwise normal humans, through discipline and intensive training, can develop athletic prowess, martial arts, various skills, and related abilities to such a degree that they can compete with superhumans, despite having no true superpowers themselves. The superhero Nighthawk and the supervillain Utility both fit into this category. Although some scientists argue that these individuals — referred to by some researchers as “TSHs,” or “trained superhumans” — possess “latent superpowers,” or superpowers at so low a level they cannot be detected, most people believe these “super”humans aren't super-powered at all.

Many TSHs use weapons or high technology, such as Utility's Omni-Pistol, and that leads to another category of non-superhuman “superhumans”: builders of super-technology (known to both superhumans and researchers generically as “gadgeteers”). While some of these people are definitely superhuman (such as the supervillain Cybermind, with his innate ability to control, understand, and use machines despite no formal training as an engineer or technician), most simply seem to be scientists or tinkerers with a



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certain spark of genius that lets them achieve breakthroughs which elude more normal persons. The superhero Defender and the supervillain Binder both belong to this group of individuals. Again, some researchers advance the “latent superpowers” theory, but most people believe gadgeteers aren’t superhuman as that term is generally understood — yet they frequently participate in the Superhuman World. Indeed, one of the superhumans widely regarded as the most dangerous on the planet — Mechanon — derives its abilities solely from technology; prior to his resurrection Dr. Destroyer did as well.

Lastly, any analysis of the superhuman population has to consider the issue of aliens living on Earth. While most aliens known to be living on Earth — like Ironclad, Nebula, and Vibron — have definite superpowers of their own, it’s possible that other aliens live on this planet, lacking true superpowers but possessing abilities derived from their alien physiology that essentially qualify as “superpowers.” If so, those aliens keep their existence secret from the world at large, making it impossible for anyone to derive an accurate estimate of their numbers.

According to the best data available, the number of TSHs and gadgeteers ranges from 0% to as high as 35% of the number of costumed true superhumans in a given region. That leads to an estimated world population of about 500-600 such persons, which again roughly agrees with the existing statistics.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

One last question concerns scholars studying superhuman demographics: of the active costumed superhumans (and related characters) in the Champions Universe, what percentage are “heroes” and what are “villains”? As researchers use these terms, a “villain” is a costumed superhuman who primarily uses his superpowers for selfish ends including criminal gain, the acquisition of power, the infliction of pain on others, flouting the law generally, and the like; whereas a “hero” is a superhuman who uses his powers to oppose supervillains, fight crime, assist others, prevent disasters, and generally “do good.”

Studies have shown that over the course of the “Superhuman Era,” the ratio of heroes to villains has averaged 40% to 60%. In other words, there are about half again as many villains as heroes. Sometimes the ratio tips a little one way or another, but in most cases it remains close to this figure. As of 2010, the ratio holds.

Reasons for this unequal division of superhuman resources aren’t difficult to discern. Being a “hero” is difficult. It requires discipline, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to risk one’s life for little or no gain. Villainy, on the other hand, suffers from few of those drawbacks, and in the best cases can lead to significant material gain. It may also lead to punishment by the justice system, but many villains clearly don’t worry about that possibility too much — experience has shown they can usually avoid capture, or find a way to escape

SUPERHUMANS AND DARK CHAMPIONS

The superhuman, trained superhuman, and gadgeteer statistics discussed in this section do not include the vigilantes and other characters found in Dark Champion settings such as Hudson City. Despite the fact that they share the same world, the two groups do not intermingle (at least not in official Hero Games publications), and Dark Champions characters aren’t considered a part of the Superhuman World.

if necessary. It's only human nature that so many superhumans would turn to crime (even if it's just petty crime made easier by the use of superpowers). What's surprising — but gratifying — is that so great a percentage of superhumans would choose to become heroes.

THE SUPERHUMAN WORLD

Superhumans, researchers, and the general public alike refer to the “society” of heroes, villains, and associated people as “the Superhuman World.” Broadly put, the Superhuman World is the culture that's arisen among superhumans as a result of their interaction and shared interests. In much the same way that politicians or movie stars tend to move in their own circles and mingle primarily with others of the same profession, superhumans often interact with each other a lot — more than their relatively limited numbers would seem to allow for, statistically. Somehow, psychologically and socially if not physically, their superhumanity sets them apart from normal humanity. They inevitably encounter one another (sometimes with violent repercussions), become involved romantically with one another, socialize together, and simply get drawn together due to common pursuits, beliefs, goals, and opinions. Over the years many heroes (and villains) have discovered that it's often easier to relate to “their own kind” than to ordinary humans. Few non-powered people can understand the burdens a hero (particularly one with powers that may be dangerous to others) has to bear, but another superhuman can relate.

Similarly, many superhumans have developed romantic relationships with ordinary humans over the years, but those couples almost inevitably have trouble because of the demands placed upon the superhuman by his chosen “profession” (and it's even worse if the superhuman tries to keep his costumed identity secret from his significant other). More and more superhumans are tending to date and marry only among the Superhuman World, since it's much, much easier to be in a relationship with another superhuman.

Like the Entertainment World and the Sports World, the Superhuman World is a subject of intense fascination for many ordinary humans (not to mention the superhumans themselves!). Media outlets like *SuperWorld Magazine*, SNN (the Superhero News Network), and the SuperTalk.Com website (see Chapter Three), among many others, cater to this interest. Gossip about who recently fought who, who could beat who in a fight, what would happen if Hero A and Hero B teamed up to take on Villain C, and which hero's dating which heroine is a common subject of conversation in some circles.

The Knowledge Skill *The Superhuman World* represents knowledge of this subculture and the people in it. Many (though by no means all) superhumans have it (at least on an 8- roll), representing their experiences with others of their kind. Hard-core superhero (or villain) fans often have it as well in the form KS: *Layman's Superhuman World* due to their intense interest in their hobby. A Champions Universe character can make a KS: The Superhuman World roll to know basic information about another superhuman's powers, activities, predilections, *modus operandi*, and perhaps even weaknesses. (See page 100 of *Champions* for more information on this Skill.)

SUPERHERO SOCIALIZING

Naturally, the members of the Superhuman World don't want to mingle just on the field of battle, they want to socialize “outside of work” as well. For villains this is difficult, and usually involves hidden clubs or entertainment spots whose existence is a well-kept secret and which often move to avoid official attention. For heroes, at least ones on good terms with the law, it's much easier. The main problem they have is keeping a curious... and vulnerable... public away from their favorite watering holes.

The two primary socializing spots for superheroes take very different approaches to resolving that problem. The first is *Club Caprice*, located in one of the buildings in the City Center complex of Millennium City. Parts of Caprice are open to the public in general (and are very popular, especially with “hero groupies” hoping to catch a glimpse of their favorite “cape”). But other parts are off-limits to anyone who doesn't have superpowers. Built by Trans-City Construction to be extra-durable, equipped with security devices designed by Dr. Silverback, and staffed by extremely competent personnel (several of whom have low-level superpowers themselves), Club Caprice is the perfect place for a hero to unwind. It's jumping nearly every night of the week, though things don't really “get started” until after most heroes have finished patrolling their cities and decided to stop by for a drink. A few socially acceptable villains, such as Lady Blue, have even been allowed in from time to time.

The second is *Grand Cienelago Island*, the brainchild of Victor Putnam, who adventured in the Sixties as the powered armor superhero Silver Shield. With the help of the immensely skilled (and wealthy) Japanese hero Tetsuronin and the earth-manipulating Brazilian hero Montanha, in 1999 he created a secret Caribbean resort for superheroes only. It's kept hidden from the world by highly sophisticated super-tech devices and the discretion of its “members,” who realize they'll lose their vacation spot if word about it ever gets out. Not even all superheroes know about it — they're only let in on the secret after they've proven themselves worthy, and being “made a member” is regarded as a sign of having truly joined the superhero community.



CHAPTER THREE

POWERS AND SUPERPOWERS

SUPERHUMANS AND SOCIETY



SUPERHUMANS AND GOVERNMENT

Governments, being inclined to monitor, regulate, and exploit things which are potentially dangerous or powerful, have taken a major interest in superhumans since they first arose. Sometimes they outlaw or regulate them, sometimes they oppress them, sometimes they recruit or hire them.

THE UNITED STATES

As the site of the majority of superhuman activity on Earth, and the home of most of the world's superhumans, the United States has paid more attention to superhuman-related issues, and spent more money on superhuman matters, than any other government. Its involvement with superhumans began in World War II, when it started working with newly-emerged superheroes and costumed crimefighters to combat the Nazi super-menace in all its many forms.

America's approach to its superhumans was a relatively relaxed one until the social turmoil of the late Sixties, when certain elements in the government became concerned about the possible threat that superhumans posed to national (and even world) security. It was during this time that the FBI first began monitoring domestic superhumans, and the Department of Defense issued its first Superhuman Survey in 1972. In 1969, the government fielded its first "official" costumed agent, the All-American, who was the product of an only partly-successful superhuman-soldier experiment called Project Perseus. America also used several superpowered espionage agents during the Cold War geopolitical maneuvering of the period, most notably the shapeshifting Reflection (who scored numerous intelligence coups against the Russians) and the speedster Ricochet (who was killed in Paris by Bulgarian assassins acting on orders from the GRU in 1974).

SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION

In 1980, following an almost successful attempt by Dr. Destroyer to conquer the United States using several American villains as his pawns, Congress responded to widespread public outcries by passing the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act. ASPRA required all innately-powered superhumans to register with the federal government (specifically, with

the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms), providing information on their true identities, the nature and extent of their powers, and so forth. Costumed crimefighters using super-technology were also required to register with the BATF under different provisions of the Act, and to reveal the capabilities (but not precise technical details) of their devices. Although public support for ASPRA was extensive, it was coldly received in the superhuman community. Relatively few superheroes, and no villains, came forward to register, forcing the government to declare them outlaws.

The truth of the matter, though, was that the law was toothless; the government couldn't pursue superheroes directly due not only to the negative publicity involved in targeting popular heroes, but the simple fact that without superheroes, America would be helpless before any number of superhuman threats (not to mention the likes of VIPER). Recognizing this, the government adopted a strategy of attrition. As supervillains were captured, they were identified as extensively as possible, and the information entered in the ASPRA databases; when superheroes needed government assistance or law enforcement sanction (as they often did), the price for cooperation was registration. Neither side was very happy with the result, but in the end it (mostly) got the job done, and allowed the United States government to build the world's second-largest database on superhuman powers (after the one maintained by UNTIL).

ASPRA, or the "Registration Act" as most superhumans refer to it, has been updated and revised several times since then, but never abolished. Responsibility for registration and record-keeping was turned over to PRIMUS when it was founded in 1986. Many states and local governments have patterned their own registration laws after it. Today, superhumans are far more used to, and forgiving, of the Act's requirements, and compliance with its mandates is more common than ever. The government can proudly point to the fact that the ASPRA databanks have *never* been penetrated by outsiders, nor has any information obtained through the Act ever improperly been used against a registered superhero (on the other hand, ASPRA information about villains is freely distributed to law enforcement agencies that need it).

THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERHUMAN AND PARANORMAL AFFAIRS

In 1986, following Mechanon's initial appearance and near-destruction of the United States, President Reagan authorized the creation of two new agencies specifically to cope with superhuman issues. The first, PRIMUS, was a law enforcement arm of the Department of Justice (see page 45). The second, and more important, was the new Department of Superhuman and Paranormal Affairs (DOSPA), a Cabinet-level agency. DOSPA's mandate then, and today, is this: to coordinate the United States's reaction and response to superhuman-related issues; to manage the activities of all of America's superhuman assets (regardless of what specific part of the government they might work for); and to research and investigate issues pertaining to superhumanity, superpowers, super-technology, and the like.

Given the extent of the superhuman threats to the United States, DOSPA's power has grown rapidly over the years, making it one of the most publicly-visible parts of the federal government. Ultimately all superhumans associated with the American government answer to it, even if they work directly with some other agency, and it has jurisdiction over any superhuman- or paranormal-related matter. This wide-ranging authority causes some friction with other branches of the government (particularly the military), but has proven so successful in practice that no significant support exists for changing it.

DOSPA is organized into eight primary divisions, whose responsibilities are evident from their names: Alien Affairs; Diplomatic Affairs; Military Affairs; Mystic Affairs; National Security Affairs; Research & Development; Supertechnology Affairs; and World Security Affairs. An Undersecretary heads each division and reports to the Secretary, who in turn reports to the President as requested or required by law.

SECRETARY ANDREW ROCHESTER

As of 2010, the head of DOSPA is Andrew Rochester. Only the fourth person ever to head the agency, Rochester is a veteran of the United States Army who fought in Desert Storm and achieved the rank of Major before leaving the military to join the Department of Defense. His stellar work there on the annual Superhuman Survey drew the attention of the White House, and in 2001 President George W. Bush appointed him Secretary of DOSPA, with President Obama re-appointing him to the position in 2008.

Rochester has a keen fascination for issues pertaining to superhumanity, and holds superheroes such as the All-American, the Champions, and the Justice Squadron in high regard. Under his administration the government has been much more cooperative and friendly toward non-sanctioned superheroes than it was under some previous Secretaries. The result has been increased

ANGELSTONE LABORATORIES

Founded in 1958 by Preston Angel II, Angelstone Laboratories is one of the United States's most prominent think tanks on issues pertaining to superhumans and the Superhuman World. The company made its name with innovative, groundbreaking research on weapons development and military issues. But after VIPER infiltrated it and used the information it gained in an attempt to subvert the US government in 1976, it broadened its focus by creating a Superhuman Studies Division. The "SSD" soon began offering its services to police departments, government officials, and similar organizations, often for significantly reduced rates. Angelstone also created subsections of its other divisions to study super-technology and related matters.

In the nearly four decades since then, Angelstone Labs has become a leading source of information on supervillains, super-technology, and similar subjects. It researches subjects pertaining to superhuman affairs, gives presentations and reports to its clients (most prominently, the US government) on these topics, and on occasion even helps superheroes directly. Its data resources about superhumanity are extensive, and very well-protected.

Unlike one of its main competitors, the Goodman Institute (page 44), Angelstone is very much a private, for-profit corporation. While it does sometimes reduce its fees as a courtesy to deserving superhuman clients, ultimately it is a business and needs to make money to keep operating. This has led to some accusations of conflict of interest or "superhuman scare profiteering," but Angelstone — not to mention its devoted clients — scoffs at this.

cooperation with costumed crimefighters and a more efficient response to superpowered menaces; many heroes, even ones who generally dislike the government, hold Rochester in respect. (Unfortunately, not everyone who works for DOSPA shares Rochester's attitudes. Some of his underlings, including at least one of the people in line to replace him should he have to leave the job, have decidedly harsher and/or less trusting attitudes toward superhumans.)

Rochester is in his early 50s. He lives in suburban Virginia with his wife and two daughters.



THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The Department of Defense has been involved with superhumans since World War II, when its predecessor worked closely with them to coordinate efforts to oppose Nazi superhumans and related military threats. Following the end of the war, most of those heroes retired, and the Department made no serious efforts to replace them. It wasn't until the Sixties, during the height of the Cold War and the fighting in Vietnam, that the DoD first tried to both actively recruit superhumans for the military, and create "superhuman soldiers" of its own (see below).

As of 2010, the Department of Defense employs numerous superhumans. The best-known of these is the All-American, "America's official superhero," who's been in action since the late Sixties (see page 172). Five of them are organized into a team called *Ameriforce One*: Stonewall, a brick (team leader); Proteus, a shapeshifter; Mercuria, a speedster; the Visionary, a mentalist; and Gryffon, a mystic energy projector. *Ameriforce One* is available to any branch of the military that needs it, but several branches have their own heroes: Victory (page 184) is a member of the Air Force; Fusillade (a powered armor wearer) and Bulwark (a brick) are soldiers in the Army; Swordfish (an aquatic brick-speedster) works for the Navy. (The Defense Intelligence Agency is also rumored to have its own "super-agent," but no details are publicly known.)

SUPERHUMAN SOLDIER PROJECTS

The Department of Defense, like many similar organizations around the world, has from time to time attempted to create its own superhumans for military purposes. Its results have been decidedly mixed. (Note that "superhuman soldier projects" differ from "super-soldier projects," which are attempts to create enhanced human soldiers that aren't truly superhuman. The All-American is, technically, a super-soldier, since his abilities don't qualify him as a true superhuman and the Perseus Project failed in its goal to create superhuman soldiers.)

America's initial efforts to create its own superhuman soldiers were haphazard affairs by the Department of War during World War II, when the existence of superpowers was still so new that no systematic knowledge of them was available. Several scientists, either employees of the War Department or independent researchers, approached the government with various theories and processes that would supposedly create superhumans. Virtually all of these experiments failed of their own accord, though a few were sabotaged by the enemy. Only two, Project Achilles (created by Dr. Malcolm Merriweather) and Project Ascension (created by a group of War Department scientists) succeeded. Their end results — the superheroes Achilles and the Comet — both died in action during the war. Later analysis strongly suggests that Project Ascension succeeded only because its test subject was a mutant, and that the

Ascension process itself does not work; the data from Project Achilles remains highly classified.

Also of note during World War II was the *Haynesville Project*, which began in the Kansas farming town of the same name after Captain Patriot was revealed to the world. Initially devoted to studying the nature and strength of various superpowers, the Project quickly shifted toward trying to find ways to create superhumans. Without the Haynesville Project's data and assistance, neither Achilles nor Ascension would have succeeded. The Project was declassified and shut down following the war.

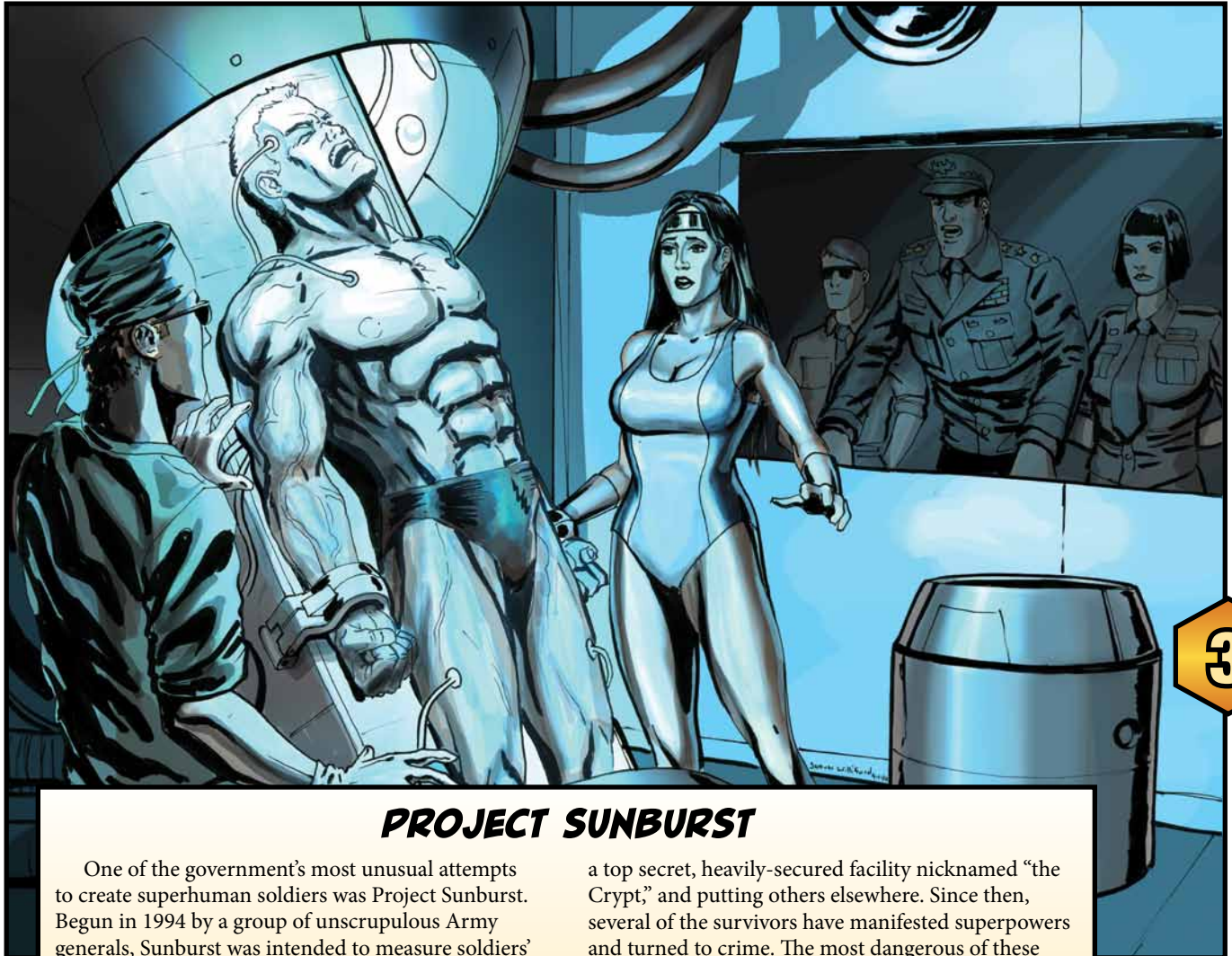
PROJECT YEOMAN AND AMERIFORCE ONE

The Department of Defense renewed its efforts to create superhuman soldiers in the late Sixties with Project Perseus, which yielded only the All-American. However, the information obtained through Perseus was carried over into a variety of projects during the Seventies... and one of them, Project Yeoman, succeeded in 1977. Six Navy SEALs who underwent the Yeoman process emerged with low-level superpowers (mainly superhuman strength and toughness), and were formed into a powerful elite forces unit christened "Ameriforce One." Ameriforce One performed many valuable secret missions for the United States until 1983, when its members were killed when a stranded Soviet sub they were trying to recover exploded. (The current Ameriforce One described above, made up entirely of superhumans who got their powers in "traditional" ways, is a "revitalization" of this team concept.)

PROJECT ONSLAUGHT

The DoD's researches progressed through the Eighties as DARPA began to explore the possibility of cybernetic or biological augmentation instead of efforts to induce "normal" superpowers. It achieved a few temporary successes, but nothing of lasting value. It redoubled these efforts after 1992, when public outcry over the Detroit disaster led to increased funding of superhuman soldier projects by Congress.

In 1998, scientists working on what was dubbed Project Onslaught revealed a new superhuman soldier, code-named Janissary, to top Pentagon officials. Created largely by splicing genetic material from animals into his DNA, Janissary performed superbly in all tests set for him by the military, though some doubts were raised about his mental fitness for duty; the treatments seem to have left him prone to violent outbursts and rebellious behavior. Despite some misgivings, the DoD put Janissary into the field. He performed admirably on several missions, but in 2005, while on a mission in Iraq with the All-American, Bulwark, and Gryffon, the Janissary foolishly tried to capture the Iraqi villain Turs al-Shab ("Shield of the People") singlehandedly and was killed by him. A similar failure led to the creation of the supervillain Onslaught. Since then the DoD has been debating whether to continue Onslaught and try to create another Janissary in light of the potential mental problems caused by the Onslaught treatments and the program's enormous expense.



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PROJECT SUNBURST

One of the government's most unusual attempts to create superhuman soldiers was Project Sunburst. Begun in 1994 by a group of unscrupulous Army generals, Sunburst was intended to measure soldiers' resistance to the effects of nuclear war, and eventually to create superhuman soldiers with the ability to survive a nuclear war and keep fighting.

Using the promise of extra pay as a recruiting tool, the generals and their scientists gathered a group of over 200 soldiers, who were told they were participating in a "wargame" involving a nuclear weapon scenario. They equipped these hapless guinea pigs with special protective suits they wanted to test, which also included instruments designed to measure the effects of the experiment. Then they put the volunteers into the field and detonated a special low-yield nuclear weapon several hundred yards away from them.

Most of the volunteers died instantly from the blast, or over the next several weeks from the agonizing effects of intense radiation poisoning as doctors monitored their vital signs but did little to ease their pain — the "protective suits" were useless as a defense, though they gathered some data the generals considered valuable. But a handful of volunteers did *not* die; instead, they were mutated in various ways. One, Randall Gordon, showed only minor physiological changes; others were somehow imbued with the energies of the blast. Most of the survivors fell into deep comas.

In an effort to keep Project Sunburst secret, the generals hid the survivors, placing most of them in

a top secret, heavily-secured facility nicknamed "the Crypt," and putting others elsewhere. Since then, several of the survivors have manifested superpowers and turned to crime. The most dangerous of these awakened in 2002 with immense energy powers and became the villain Sunburst. His followers include four other Project victims: one who lost his voice and was turned into the "walking radiation bomb" known as Radium; one who developed powers similar to (but weaker than) Sunburst's and took the name Helios; one who gained the ability to control and project radiation as Nuke; and one who gained powers of density control and dubbed himself Phaze. Project Sunburst (as Sunburst calls his organization) has become a major thorn in the side of the US government in general, and the military personnel who were involved with the Project in particular.

Beyond the Project Sunburst villains, the Project yielded at least two other villains. Randall Gordon gained the ability to control an experimental suit of armor and became the Armadillo; and another who was liberated from the Crypt by none other than Dr. Destroyer to become Gigaton, the Doctor's chief of security (and the most powerful Project Sunburst survivor other than Sunburst himself).

The generals behind Project Sunburst continue to keep things secret and maintain the Crypt. They live in fear that other survivors will develop superpowers, and that one will eventually expose them. Only time will tell if they are right to fear.

THE GOODMAN INSTITUTE

The Goodman Institute is a privately-funded corporation that provides scientific assistance to superheroes in the form of technical consultants, skilled manpower, equipment, and laboratory space in exchange for the rights to study and possibly exploit new discoveries for the benefit of mankind (and, of course, a reasonable profit). Founded by billionaire software mogul Horatio Goodman in 2003, the Goodman Institute has hired some of the world's most famous superheroes and scientists and set up several facilities in the United States (and later, around the world). Among other things, the Institute provided crucial assistance to Millennium City superheroes during the Ophidian Plague attack of 2004.

The Institute does most of its field work through *Encounter Teams* — groups of typically no more than a dozen Institute scientists and experts hand-picked to deal with whatever situation the Institute's sending them into. For example, an Encounter Team sent to help cope with a super-plague would primarily consist of biologists and doctors, while one sent to investigate a crashed UFO would include engineers, linguists, astrophysicists, and the like. Peter (Amazing-Man II) Renton (formerly of the Sentinels) and Marcy (Electron) Gibson-Renton (formerly of the Justice Squadron) lead the Encounter Teams.

Unlike its competitor Angelstone Laboratories (page 41), the Goodman Institute isn't exactly a for-profit venture. Horatio Goodman expects it to at least pay for itself, but he's far more interested in what the world can learn from the encounters with the unusual that superhumans regularly face. The primary way the Institute makes money is by signing deals with formally-organized superhero teams or individuals to assist them in scientific matters (the definition of "scientific" in these contracts is extremely broad — Goodman's also very interested in extradimensional realms and other fields that most people classify as "mystical"). These contracts, which involve no exchange of cash, allow the superhero to call on the Institute at any time, 24 hours a day, to provide him with material assistance in any matter. In exchange the Institute gets the legal right to exploit any new technologies that may result from that assistance. In other words, if a superhero finds a crashed UFO, the Institute might provide linguists to help communicate with any passengers, metallurgists to figure out what the hull is made of, engineers to study the engines, and astrophysicists to help figure out where it might have come from — but if there's any money to be earned from the discovery, it's the Institute that makes it. So far, the Institute has barely managed to break even despite some promising leads on manufacturing (from its extensive look at Herculan's armor) and some possible medical discoveries (mainly from the chemicals it derived from the Ophidian Plague samples). Goodman's confident that serious profits are soon to come.

THE SUPERHUMAN SURVEY

The DoD's best-known involvement with the Superhuman World in the modern day is its preparation of the annual Superhuman Survey for the United States government. Begun in 1972, the Superhuman Survey (more formally referred to as the "Survey of Superhuman and Paranormal Threats to National and World Security") assesses the current dangers posed by superhumanity not only to the safety of the United States and its citizens, but the world; it also analyzes the past year's activity in the Superhuman World and discusses any important implications.

The Survey ranks supervillains and supervillain teams in four "classes": Omega, Delta, Beta, and Alpha. An Omega-class supervillain has the power to threaten the security, safety, and/or existence of the entire world; a Delta-class supervillain poses a credible threat to the national security of the United States. Most villains fall into the much less dangerous Beta and Alpha categories.

The Superhuman Survey is widely distributed throughout the government, and versions with classified or sensitive information redacted are sold to the public. (Among the information redacted is the government's confidential opinion regarding the reliability, trustworthiness, and threat level of known superheroes.) More than one supervillain has been known to brag about his position in "the rankings."

The Survey includes a short appendix assessing threats to other countries and regions of the world. Many nations prepare their own version of the Survey to evaluate threats to themselves, and UNTIL likewise reports on threats to world safety.

THE SUPERHUMAN SURVEY 2010

The 2010 edition of the Superhuman Survey contains relatively few surprises, though it's much larger than normal due to its analysis of the 2009 Stronghold breakout and Takofanes's "Blood Moon" attack on Millennium City. Doctor Destroyer remains firmly atop the list of Omega-class supervillains (a position he's held virtually every year since 1975, aside from the decade he was thought dead). Other villains on the Omega-class list include Gravitar, Istvatha V'han, Mech-anon, Menton, the Slug, Takofanes the Undying Lord, Valak the World-Ravager, and the Warlord and his organization.

VIPER's the most prominent name on the Delta-class list; as usual, it fails to make the Omega list only because its size makes it relatively easy for the government to track its general movements and activities. Other Delta-class threats include ARGENT, Borealis, Dark Seraph and the Crowns of Krim, DEMON, Eurostar, Holocaust, King Cobra, Masquerade, Project Sunburst, Teleios, the Ultimates, and Dr. Yin Wu. Note that not all of these villains are necessarily violent; Masquerade makes the list primarily because of his/her ability to effortlessly infiltrate government installations.

The Beta-class list includes some surprisingly powerful villains, such as Firewing and Grond.

Ordinarily villains of such power could easily ascend at least into the Delta-class rankings, but their motivations or *modus operandi* keep them from posing a greater threat to the United States. Both can be extremely destructive, but neither has any sustained interest in conquest or similar activities. Other “Betas” include Anubis, Black Paladin, Cybermind, Gargantua, and the Monster.

Any villain not on one of the other three lists ends up as an Alpha. As the DoD itself always notes in the preface to the Survey, a villain’s ranking depends solely on his general ability to threaten the world, America, or substantial numbers of people. Even an Alpha-class villain, such as Ankylosaur or Lodestone, poses an extreme risk to any individual or business.

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Because of superheroes’ prominent role as crimefighters, the Department of Justice is more closely associated with superhumans in the public mind than most governmental agencies. The DoJ not only employs more superhumans than any other division of the federal government, it’s responsible for granting official law enforcement sanction to independent heroes.

SANCTIONING

Superheroes not directly employed by the federal government may apply to the Department of Justice for *sanction*, which grants law enforcement powers roughly equivalent to those possessed by agents of the FBI. A grant of sanction may be temporary or permanent; permanent sanction is subject to periodic review at the government’s discretion.

The United States is glad to work with responsible, upstanding superheroes, but it won’t grant sanction to just anyone. It reviews each candidate thoroughly to ensure he won’t abuse the privilege and is suitable for it. Only candidates who comply with the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act are considered, and the candidate must submit himself for psychological testing as well. Superteams requesting sanction must have

SANCTION TEMPLATE

This Template represents the Skills and abilities Champions Universe superheroes with long-term United States government sanction should have. Substitute other “Police Powers” Fringe Benefits as appropriate for states, cities, and the like. Various Complications (including the Social Complication *Subject To Orders*) might also be appropriate for sanctioned heroes.

Cost Skills and Perks

- 2 KS: Federal Criminal Law 11-
- 2 KS: Federal Criminal Procedure 11-
- 6 One or more Contacts in the federal justice system, of the player’s choice
- 3 Fringe Benefit: National Police Powers

Total cost: 13 points

a charter and other indications of stability. The applicant’s record of conduct — his ability to work well with the authorities, his respect for the government, the nature and extent of his crime-fighting activities, and his past successes as an adventurer — all factor into the decision.

Superheroes granted sanction buy the *National Police Powers Perk* (if the sanction is only temporary, characters don’t have to pay points for it). The government often exacts concessions from heroes in exchange for a grant of sanction. The agreement of superteams to include a government liaison among their employees, the sharing of technological secrets, or a solemn oath to turn over captured devices or data to the government are all among the concessions often obtained.

PRIMUS

In 1986, following Mechanon’s almost-successful attempt to take over the United States, Congress authorized the DoJ to create a new federal law enforcement organization solely to pursue supercriminals. This was also an effort to deflect critics of the government’s policy, at that time, of barring UNTIL from United States territory. The DoJ responded by creating the Paranormal Research and Investigation Mission of the United States — or PRIMUS, for short.

PRIMUS was initially conceived of as an agency like UNTIL, in that it would employ normal human operatives equipped with advanced technology designed for combatting superhuman and paranormal menaces. But Dr. Lucius Alexander, one of the scientists assigned to work with the agency, alerted its leaders to a discovery he’d recently made — a super-serum he called *Cyberline*. When given to certain subjects on a regular (daily) basis, Cyberline granted them superhuman or near-superhuman strength and reflexes. Aside from some “mildly addictive” properties, Cyberline seemed to have no negative side effects.

Top Justice officials quickly restructured PRIMUS to make use of the Cyberline concept. The leader of the organization would now be the subject most responsive to Cyberline, code-named the *Golden Avenger*. His primary field operatives would be other Cyberline-compatible agents, called *Silver Avengers* (many of whom would lead regional offices). The remainder of the organization’s employees — the vast majority of its agents — would be ordinary humans equipped with the latest technology.

Since then, PRIMUS has proven to be an invaluable asset of the U.S. government. Even after UNTIL was allowed to operate in American territory in 1993, PRIMUS retained the primary responsibility for combatting superhuman crime in the United States. The organization has regional offices in several cities (including Boston, New York City, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Miami, Vibora Bay, New Orleans, Chicago, Millennium City, Seattle, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles), and smaller offices in others. It maintains a force of approximately 12,000 field agents, and has been instrumental in ending numerous



superhuman threats to the people and security of the United States.

As of 2010, the Golden Avenger is Daniel James Johnson (known to his friends as “DJ”), a former F-14 pilot who succeeded Robert Kaufman in the position in 1997. He’s well-known in Washington for his no-nonsense attitude, take-charge personality, and encyclopedic knowledge of superhumans.

PRIMUS agents often work with superheroes, though their reactions to costumed crimefighters are mixed. On the one hand, many agents owe their lives to superheroes and have a healthy respect for their abilities, bravery, and heroism. This attitude is pronounced in field offices where the Silver Avenger(s) favor heroes, such as Millennium City, New York, and San Francisco. On the other hand, many agents regard superheroes, at least in part, as “renegades” and “unprofessional” — people who hinder PRIMUS’s mission as much as help it in many cases. Several Silver Avengers, particularly those heading the Miami and Seattle offices, share this opinion.

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PRIMUS TECHNOLOGY

Here are a few examples of the equipment routinely employed by PRIMUS agents:

PRIMUS Plasma Rifle: This silver-grey weapon uses plasma technology to project a powerful beam of energy. Many squads of PRIMUS agents train to focus multiple beams on a single target in the hope of taking him out of a fight quickly.

Blast 8d6, 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½). **Total cost: 24 points.**

PRIMUS Flashbang Grenade: This weapon is designed to incapacitate and weaken an opponent without causing him (or any innocent bystanders) significant injury. PRIMUS agents use code-words to alert their squadmates that they’re about to use one.

Sight and Hearing Group Flash Attack 8d6 (45 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾). **Total cost: 15 points.**

PRIMUS Wiregun: Known as a “Haywire” to field agents, this rifle shoots a coil of memory-metal wire that wraps around a target and incapacitates him.

Entangle 5d6, 7 PD/7 ED (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), Limited Range (20m; -¼), 6 Charges (-¾). **Total cost: 17 points.**

PRIMUS Uniform: The standard PRIMUS field uniform, in navy blue with gold highlights, is woven of high-tech fibers that protect the wearer from harm, but are so light they do not hinder movement.

Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED) (24 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-¼). **Total cost: 14 points.**

PRIMUS Helmet: The PRIMUS uniform includes a helmet that comes equipped with communications gear.

Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½). **Total cost: 7 points.**

THE FBI

The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s broad jurisdiction over 200 different federal crimes throughout United States territory often brings it into contact with superheroes (and conflict with supervillains). Though it sometimes squabbles with PRIMUS over these matters (the Bureau still hasn’t gotten over having primary responsibility for supercrime taken away from it in 1986), it usually makes positive contributions to efforts to stop supervillains. Its forensics labs, the best in the world, frequently analyze evidence from super-crime sites.

The FBI’s current director, Kenneth Parsons, has led the Bureau since 2005, when he succeeded Hamilton Parks. Unlike Parks (a friend of Andrew Rochester’s and a supporter of superheroes generally), Parsons maintains a neutral attitude toward heroes. He doesn’t dislike them, and in fact often values their contributions, but he thinks they often cause difficulties that wouldn’t result if they were professionally trained and monitored. As if to prove his point, he’s kept the expanded roster of official FBI heroes that Parks created: Tarantula (an animal-themed martial artist) and Firebrand (a fire projector), stationed in New York City; Kodiak (a brick) and Teknique (a cyberkinetic), stationed in Millennium City; Stalwart (a powered armor wearer), who works with the Hostage Rescue Teams; and three — Bellatrix (a weaponmaster), Insight (a mentalist), and Proton (an energy projector) — who shuttle around the country as needed. Insight frequently performs telepathic scans of applicants for sanction or certain types of suspects.

THE SECRET SERVICE AND SUPERHUMANS

Of the various federal agencies associated with law enforcement and related duties, the Secret Service has traditionally been, and remains, the most inimical to superhumans of any sort. It almost always refuses to hire, or work with, *any* superhumans, and arrests those who try to help without permission as threats to the safety of the President.

Secret Service agents wear clothes tailored from the same high-tech fibers used in PRIMUS agents’ uniforms, and carry advanced firearms equipped with ammunition able to affect most superhumans (RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing). Every Secret Service agent receives special psychological training and psionic blocks that gives him 20 points’ worth of Mental Defense, as a precaution against psionic supervillains. Their trademark dark sunglasses provide Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points) and contain sophisticated communications technology (High-Range Radio Perception).

THE DEA

The Drug Enforcement Administration tends to make less use of superheroes than the FBI. Given its emphasis on undercover work and elaborate intelligence-gathering missions, it has fewer jobs appropriate to flashy, larger-than-life crime-fighters. However, its Miami office sometimes works with the aquatic superheroine Jetstream (and her team, the Watch; see page 72) to interdict drug trafficking from the Caribbean, and in cooperation with the Border Patrol employs the flying speedster Cloudcutter to help patrol the United States-Mexico border.

STRONGHOLD

By the mid-1970s, the federal and state governments realized their numerous attempts to find ways to restrain superhuman criminals had largely failed. Supervillains escaped jails and prisons with some regularity, making a mockery of the justice system. Amid a public outcry for action, the Justice Department announced Project Stronghold.

Stronghold was envisioned as an enormous maximum security prison designed specifically to hold only superhuman criminals. The brainchild of the brilliant but eccentric Dr. Charles Wildman, Stronghold would incorporate the latest technology and ensure that a captured supervillain stayed captured. After contentious Congressional hearings, funding for Stronghold was approved. Construction was completed in 1978, and the “super-prison” has remained a vital part of the national strategy to combat supercrime to this day. Although it has suffered a few breakouts and other problems (primarily the major escapes of 1990 and 2009), it normally does exactly what it was intended to — keeps supervillains incarcerated for the duration of their sentences.

STRONGHOLD CELL CONFIGURATIONS

Here are just a few of the possible configurations of Stronghold cells. For game purposes many of them are defined using the *Suppress* Power (and draw their END from the prison's generators), but they may not literally stop various other Powers from working. Instead they can simply make such powers useless for purposes of escaping from the cell. For example, the Anti-Alteration Cell doesn't make it impossible for the cell's occupant to use Shrinking — it just surrounds the entire cell with an interior force-field that a Shrunk character can't find any holes in to walk through.

Anti-Alteration Cell (uses a force-field to counteract such powers as Stretching, Shrinking, and assuming gaseous form): Suppress Body Alteration Powers 10d6, all Body Alteration Powers simultaneously

Anti-Clinging Cell (a.k.a. “Teflon cell”): Suppress Clinging 8d6

Anti-Energy Cell: Some cells are designed to be particularly resistant to a specific form of energy, such as Fire/Heat, Electricity, or Ice/Cold. This is bought as +10 ED with an appropriate Limitation.

Anti-Intangibility Cell: Affects Desolidified (+½) for PD 20/ED 20

Anti-Invisibility Cell: Suppress Invisibility 10d6

Anti-Psionic Cell: Mental Defense (30 points)

Anti-Teleport Cell: Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation (x2; +½) for PD 20/ED 20

Clairsentience-Blocking Cell: Suppress Clairsentience 10d6

Dimensionally-Anchored Cell: Suppress Dimensional Manipulation Powers 12d6, all Dimensional Manipulation powers simultaneously

Reinforced Cell: +10 PD/+10 ED

Warded Cell: Suppress Magic 12d6, all Magic powers/spells simultaneously



THE EXOPLANETARY SOCIETY

Not everyone in American is content to let NASA do all the work concerning aliens itself. The Exoplanetary Society, which grew out of a UFO interest group that began meeting in a Boston bookstore in 1974, studies aliens, monitors alien activity as best it can, and most importantly informs the public and politicians about issues pertaining to non-terrestrial life... and the dangers it poses.

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Headquartered in Boston, and with offices in various major cities (and its main think tank and school, the Exoplanetary Institute, in Chicago), the Exoplanetary Society is composed of a disparate group of alien aficionados, citizens who are sincerely concerned about the potential dangers posed by aliens and their technology, people who outright hate aliens, and a few members who claim to have actually been abducted and experimented on by aliens. At times it has difficulty being perceived as more than a fringe group full of whackos, but in truth it has a large database of information about aliens and provides a valuable educational service at times.

The federal Bureau of Prisons manages Stronghold. By special arrangement with the states, Stronghold takes superhuman prisoners accused or convicted solely of state crimes as well. The Bureau, with the assistance of PRIMUS, even provides a retrieval service to pick up villains for transport to Stronghold.

Built on (and into) the Devil's Head mesa in Lincoln County, New Mexico, Stronghold is completely isolated and self-sufficient. There are no towns for dozens of miles (though it is disturbingly close to the infamous Burning Sands area; see page 100), and no water between them and the prison. The prison has its own power generation facility and hospital; food is brought to the prison on a monthly basis.

Every part of Stronghold is heavily secured, and the sensitive areas (control center, communications center, and so on) particularly so. Most areas are covered by a sophisticated super-tech "power negation system" that prevents the use of any superpowers. The cells are built not only for durability, but to incorporate power negation devices (see accompanying sidebar). *Hot sleep* chambers, which place the occupant in a sort of "induced coma," are available for superhumans like Firewing and Dark Seraph who are so powerful that not even a standard Stronghold cell can hold them. As a result of this attention to detail, escapes from Stronghold are a rare (though by no means unknown) event.

As of 2010, the warden of Stronghold is Dr. Arthur Wildman, son of the man who originally conceived of the project. A firm but fair man, Dr. Wildman keeps a careful eye on his "charges" and ensures not only that they don't escape, but that they aren't abused. He does his best to rehabilitate them, though it's usually a losing battle.

NASA

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has many responsibilities that relate to superhumans and paranormal phenomena. In conjunction with UNTIL's space station, GATEWAY, it monitors near and far space for signs of alien visitors or invaders. It also maintains what may be the world's most extensive database on what humanity knows about sentient life on other planets. (As part of this database, it constantly gathers information about known aliens on Earth, including Firewing, Herculan, Ironclad, Nebula, and Vibron.) It often solicits the help of superhumans with its various research projects, or to get vehicles and other equipment into space quickly and safely. In the event America ever establishes formal contact with alien species, NASA and the State Department would jointly coordinate diplomatic relations with the non-humans.

In 2006 the United States joined UNTIL in space with the United States Space Station, a large, permanently-inhabited scientific and monitoring station orbiting Earth above Florida. Technology developed by several American superheroes, and their assistance with the actual building of the station, was instrumental in its launch. The super-heroine Victory (page 184) lives there.

OTHER GOVERNMENTS

The United States is not the only government to develop policies and procedures regarding superhumans. (See pages 74-83 for information on specific superhumans and superteams in these regions.)

AUSTRALIA

Thanks to the relatively low level of superhuman activity Down Under, the Australian government has never established an official superteam or initiated a superhuman registration policy. It works closely with several independent heroes, including the powerful mystic Walkabout, who keeps a careful eye on the mysterious dimension known as the Dreamtime and the many dangerous things that dwell therein.

CANADA

Canada's policies and practices regarding superhumans closely mirror those of the United States, since it experiences a lot of "spillover" supercrime from its neighbor to the south. In 1978, it established an official superteam known as the Northern Guard, but the team's record has been spotty. It's broken up on several occasions, only to re-form later with some (or all) new members. The last Northern Guard existed from 1993-98; Canada has been without an official superteam since then. Canadian superhumans are required to register under a law almost identical to ASPRA.

CHINA

The Chinese government has a harsh policy toward superhumans. Beijing has declared that all Chinese superhumans are either servants of the state, or outlaws. When reports reach the authorities about a new superhuman, they track him down and take him to a special training compound in central China whose exact location is a carefully-guarded state secret. Many Chinese supers spend their entire childhoods there.

Once properly trained (and indoctrinated), a Chinese superhuman becomes a member of the Tiger Squad, the PRC's official superteam. With over 50 members, it's by far the largest superteam in the world, though a significant percentage of its members have primarily martial arts-oriented powers. The government splits the Squad up into "field teams" of four to seven supers and assigns them to a particular city or region of the country.

Superhumans who somehow evade the government, or who escape from it later, are automatically branded criminals, and may be executed if captured. China's problem with "renegade

superhumans” has increased since Hong Kong was returned to it in 1997. Very few of Hong Kong’s defiantly independent superhumans have gone to work for the government, preferring outlawry to servitude.

Most of China’s renegade superhumans, and more than a few members of the Tiger Squad, sympathize with the nation’s pro-democracy movements. Some actively fight against the oppressive government, smashing military facilities and harassing government officials. It remains uncertain whether they’re doing more to help, or hurt, the cause.

FRANCE

Since 1986, the French government has required the registration of superhumans under somewhat harsher restrictions than the United States, and thus has succeeded in driving many of its superhumans underground or to other countries in Western Europe. It has an official superteam with five members: Tricolor, who can duplicate into three persons embodying the French national motto; Volt, who has electrical powers; the Musketeer, a swashbuckling costumed acrobat; *Valere Noyer*, a super-soldier; and *Siffleur* (“Whistler”), a speedster. The team’s official designation is “the Sixteenth Bureau,” but its members prefer to call themselves “the Vanguard.”

GERMANY

Germany’s exploitation of superhumans in World War II led to a general distaste for the subject that remained through the early Eighties. The German media rarely said more about superhuman activity than it absolutely had to, and the government’s official policy about superhumans was to ignore them as much as it could. This began to change as old memories faded and the people began to see the benefits of having superheroes around. Since 1991 the government has required the registration of superhumans under a policy similar to that of Great Britain, and has often granted temporary (but never permanent) sanction to superheroes in appropriate situations.

GREAT BRITAIN

Great Britain’s history of superheroics, like that of the United States, dates back to World War II, when several British heroes made enormous contributions to the Allied war effort (the most notable of these being the Skymaster’s assistance with the D-Day invasion). In 1953, the government established a secret department known as Bureau S, whose job was to study Britain’s superhuman resources (and threats), and make use of them for government purposes when it was considered safe and appropriate to do so. By the Sixties, Britain had several “unofficially official” superhumans working for it, and in 1966 Bureau S became the Ministry of Superhuman Affairs, a publicly-acknowledged branch of government responsible for protecting British citizens from superhuman threats.

In 1971, the MSA sponsored the formation of the New Knights of the Round Table, an official

superteam for Great Britain. The Knights, as the group’s widely known, has fluctuated wildly in membership in the past thirty years, sometimes having as few as three members, and twice having eight. A terrible scandal in 1982 involving three of the members cast a shadow over the entire group, but it redeemed itself in the public eye in 1988 by staving off an attack by the fear-spirit Samhain to terrorize the entire island. Since then the New Knights have remained popular, and often work with UNTIL or other superteams to save not only Her Majesty’s kingdom, but the world itself, from danger.

Great Britain has had a superhero registration law since 1978, but its terms differ significantly from those of the American law. Registration is strongly encouraged, but voluntary, and doesn’t involve the revelation of the super’s true identity if some other means of making positive identification is provided (such as a fingerprint or retina scan). However, a vocal minority of British citizens favor stricter registration laws more carefully enforced.

INDIA

Located between two hostile neighbors, one possessing the largest force of superhumans on Earth and the other having nuclear weapons capable of reaching New Delhi, India has worked hard to build up a superhuman force of its own, called the Superhero Division (officially a part of the Indian Army’s Central Command, headquartered in Lucknow). As of 2010, the Division has 18 members, including two — the six-armed sorcerer Rashindar, and Ushas, who claims to be an avatar of the Hindu goddess of the same name — who are among the most powerful in the world. The Division’s members also have to answer to the Ministry of Superhuman Affairs, which sometimes makes it difficult for them to know which master they must serve.

As of 2010 the Division has 18 members. They include *Teja Vayu* (“Swift Wind,” a speedster), *Chakram* (a weaponmaster armed with gimmicked Indian throwing rings), *Suryabala* (“Sunchild,” an energy projector), *Daktara Upaya* (“Dr. Gadget,” a gadgeteer), and *Lohe Sainika* (“Iron Warrior,” a powered armor wearer). Following a disastrous encounter with the forces of Dr. Destroyer in early 2003, the Division recruited several new members, including the duplicator Saba Devatao and the super-strong Anvil.

ISRAEL

Surrounded by enemies who outnumber it, Israel has a history of relying on advanced, powerful weaponry as a safety net. This includes superhumans, of whom Israel has approximately a dozen (eight of them so-called “trained superhumans”) working for it (see page 81). These twelve do not form an official “team,” but simply go where assigned by their military commanders. All are quite popular among the Israeli people, and equally despised by the Palestinians; Israeli supers

MEMBERS OF THE TIGER SQUAD

Here’s a partial list of members of the Tiger Squad (the names given are English translations). Ones with an asterisk by their name are pro-democracy, though they generally prefer to work within the system to effect positive change.

Boxer* (martial artist)
Daughter of the Moon
(mentalist, energy projector)
Dragonfly (winged martial artist)
Earthquake Fist (vibratory powers)
Eight-Ways Lightning* (martial artist, energy projector)
Gossamer Storm
(mystic)
GraniteMan (brick)
Heart of the People
(martial artist, patriot)
Immensely Strong One
(brick)
Immortal Philosopher* (martial artist, mystic)
Iron Horse (powered armor)
Lady of a Thousand Fires* (energy projector)
Leafmaster* (plant manipulator)
Mighty Hammer (brick, weaponmaster)
Peach Blossom Spirit* (mystic)
Phantom Soldier
(weaponmaster)
Phoenix (martial artist)
Quicksilver (chemical powers)
Red Bullet (speedster)
Revolutionary III (martial artist)
Shaolin Five (duplicating metamorph)
Shining Dawn* (energy projector)
Soothing Touch* (disease controller, healer)
Steel-Shattering Fist
(martial artist)
Summer Cloud* (air powers)
Swarmlord (insect controller)
Technocrat* (gadgeteer)
Winter Dragon (ice/cold projector)

have clashed with their Palestinian counterparts (who are fewer in number) on several occasions.

Israeli law requires the registration of all superhumans, and is stringently enforced.

JAPAN

Japan has no official superteam (though it frequently considers creating one) and no registration law. It often works closely with the many Japanese superheroes who've proven themselves trustworthy, readily granting them sanction for long periods. The Japanese, generally speaking, are enraptured by superheroes (not just their own, but other nations' as well), and the Japanese government's attitude reflects this high degree of popular support.

RUSSIA

During the Sixties and Seventies, the Soviet Union maintained a large, powerful, and highly-publicized superteam called the People's Legion (and a smaller, secret, military team called Red Winter). The Legion clashed with American superheroes on several occasions, but also worked with them to prevent disasters and save lives. In the Eighties and Nineties, as the Union fell apart, the People's Legion lost funding and slowly crumbled away as well. Despite harsh Russian laws outlawing superhuman activity not sanctioned by the state, and requiring all superhumans to register with the authorities and report all their activities, several former Legionnaires, along with a new generation of younger, more rebellious supers, began fighting crime on their own.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and rise of the Commonwealth of Independent States, these supers — including the famed armored hero *Stalnoy Volk* (Steel Wolf) and the young, popular mystic *Gyeroy Vedun* (roughly, "Hero Wizard") — have struggled on, attempting to fight crime in a land that's become a kleptocracy.

Several efforts have been made to re-form the Legion (perhaps under a different name), but none has yet succeeded. Even the mighty heroes of Russia, it seems, are not what they once were.

SUPERHUMANS AND THE LAW

Registration laws aren't the only laws created because of, or influenced by, the existence of superhumans. Since 1938, United States law has adapted to reflect the realities of a world with superheroes (and villains); many other countries with a significant superhuman presence have passed similar laws. Some of the more prominent superhuman-oriented laws (and ones GMs could make use of in scenarios) include:

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

The most important constitutional law issue for most superhumans is the Eighth Amendment's guarantee against "cruel and unusual" punishment. What constitutes "cruel and unusual" in a situation where a superhuman's powers make it impossible for the state to hold him using ordinary means of incarceration? The Supreme Court ruled, in *James "Smasher" Aronson v. United States*, 390 U.S. 1420 (1968), that "certain methods of incarceration which would be unconstitutional if used on normal human criminals will be constitutional if used to restrain superhuman criminals. The methods which may be used on a particular superhuman criminal must be as narrowly tailored as possible to restrain that individual, so that his rights will not be infringed." For example, the Court held in *Grond v. Atkins*, 109 S.Ct. 3386 (1989), that "hot sleep" was a constitutional form of restraint if it's reasonably likely there's no other way to keep the prisoner incarcerated for the duration of his sentence. On the other hand, various state court rulings have held that "trained superhuman" criminals, like Utility and

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Green Dragon, have to be treated more or less like normal maximum-security prisoners unless there's "clear and convincing" evidence such methods are insufficient to hold them.

Several superhuman criminals have claimed, under the Constitution's general right of privacy, a "right to maintain a secret identity." The Supreme Court specifically ruled that no such right exists in *Jessica "Blackmane" Howard v. New Jersey*, 395 U.S. 1603 (1969).

A number of Supreme Court rulings have stated that the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantees of due process and equal protection do not apply to sentient aliens, extradimensional entities, artificial intelligences, and the undead, because they are not "persons" under the law. On the other hand, they *do* apply to mutants, mutates, clones, and genetic constructs based on human stock. Congress has, however, passed laws granting at least limited rights to all "independent, free-willed, sentient entities" in American territory.

CRIMINAL LAW

Most crimes committed by superhumans are covered by ordinary criminal laws — robbery and murder are still robbery and murder, no matter who commits them or how. But many jurisdictions have passed criminal laws specifically targeting various types or uses of superpowers (and the courts have, generally, upheld these laws as non-discriminatory).

For example, in most states, the use of a superpower against another person automatically qualifies as aggravated assault, regardless of whether the power itself cannot cause physical injury or lasting harm (e.g., Mental Blast). These laws, roughly speaking, equate superpowers with weapons for legal purposes. Similarly, the use (or threatened use) of superpowers often constitutes "reckless endangerment" under various state laws.

A sanctioned superhero who uses his powers to capture and restrain a criminal may find himself exposed to charges of "excessive force." The test for whether force is excessive is one of objective reasonableness: a particular degree of force is allowable if it would be used by a reasonable police officer on the scene in light of the need for split-second decisionmaking in a potentially lethal situation. This is a lenient test which disregards the officer's (superhero's) underlying intent or motivation. *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989). (Of course, a non-sanctioned superhero will likely find himself sued for assault and battery instead.)

All states have laws to prevent people concealing their identity in public. Officials often ignore or overlook these laws for superheroes (sanctioned or unsanctioned), but can bring them to bear if needed, and often add them to the counts against a captured supervillain.

Some jurisdictions (primarily cities) have enacted laws or ordinances outlawing specific superpowers — either in general, or in specific circumstances. Examples include Mental Powers

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

Diplomatic immunity, which is extended to some representatives of foreign governments, makes them totally immune to prosecution for crimes they commit in the United States (or any other host state). Under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations:

- the premises and buildings of a diplomatic mission are inviolate, and may not be entered or searched;
- the papers and correspondence of the mission are immune from search;
- the diplomatic bag (a clearly marked pouch used to carry diplomatic documents) and diplomatic couriers may not be detained or searched; and
- diplomats (ambassadors, ministers, counselors, and so forth) and all members of their families have full criminal immunity — they may not be convicted of any crime. The same applies to administrative and technical staff (such as clerks and typists) and their families. Service staff (such as drivers) have criminal immunity only for official acts.

If a foreign government appointed a superhuman as its representative to the United States or the United Nations, that superhuman would have diplomatic immunity. For example, Dr. Yin Wu might petition the United Nations for membership for a "new country" he just "established" called True China. If his petition were granted (*highly unlikely, but possible*), he could appoint his son Copper Spear as his ambassador to the UN; Copper Spear would have full criminal immunity for crimes he committed while in the United States as ambassador.

in general, Density Increase when in a building above the ground floor, Desolidification, and Damage Shields. Superhumans with these powers must either refrain from using them or risk arrest for doing so.

DEFENSES TO CRIMES

In their efforts to stay out of jail, supervillains often raise creative defenses to the crimes they're charged with. Chief among these is the insanity defense, which usually means one or more of the following: the defendant didn't know the wrongfulness of his actions; the defendant was unable to understand the nature and quality of his actions; or the defendant lacked the capacity to conform his conduct to the law, even though he knew his actions were wrong. Many cases have dealt with this defense as it applies to supercrime, and the following precedents are generally recognized as binding in most jurisdictions:

- wearing a silly-looking costume and committing bizarre crimes does not, *per se*, prove the defendant is insane
- a sincere belief in the occult or magic does not, *per se*, prove the defendant is insane
- sincere delusions (such as Foxbat's belief that he's living in a comic book) can constitute a valid insanity defense

A warrant must also give a “particular description of the place to be searched” and provide a “particular description of the item to be seized” — states cannot issue “general warrants” allowing broad, unfettered searches. However, search warrants are *not* required for searches incident to a lawful arrest, items in “plain view” of the officer/hero, some searches of vehicles, when the subject consents, in “stop-and-frisk” situations, and when the police/heroes are in “hot pursuit” of a suspect. In these situations, exigent circumstances and diminished expectations of privacy override standard Fourth Amendment protections.

The law allows some searches with normal sense-enhancing devices, like binoculars or aerial photography. It does not allow searches with exceptional Enhanced Senses, like Penetrative Perception for Sight or Ultraviolet Perception, unless those senses are innate to the superhero using them. Similarly, searches using Mind Scan or Telepathy aren’t allowed without a warrant.

MIRANDA WARNINGS

Under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, police officers and sanctioned superheroes have to provide “*Miranda* warnings” to suspects who are in police custody and under interrogation — that they have the right to remain silent, and anything they say can and will be used against them; and that they have a right to an attorney (provided by the state if necessary). The definitions of “police custody” and “interrogation” depend on circumstances, and often require much less than the stereotypical handcuffed-to-a-chair-and-had-a-confession-beaten-out-of-him situation.

THE EXCLUSIONARY RULE

Evidence obtained in violation of a suspect’s Fourth or Fifth Amendment rights, and other evidence derived from it, cannot be used against him in court, pursuant to the *exclusionary rule* established by *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643 (1961). This may lead to a supervillain getting a case dismissed “on a technicality.” However, there are some exceptions to the rule, including the good faith of the officer/hero, and having an independent, untainted, source for the evidence.

EVIDENCE

The United States has allowed superheroes to testify in court while concealing their identities since the 1961 case of *Maxwell v. Michigan*, 367 U.S. 992 (1961). The hero must either be sanctioned, or in some other fashion satisfy the court as to his identity — courts won’t allow just anyone to show up in a mask and offer testimony. On the other hand, supervillains can, if they wish, invoke this rule to testify while concealing their identities.

Courts have, with some reluctance, allowed superhumans to introduce evidence gained through telepathy. However, the hero *must* be sanctioned and acting pursuant to a search warrant, and must establish (through certified testing procedures) that he genuinely has telepathic powers.

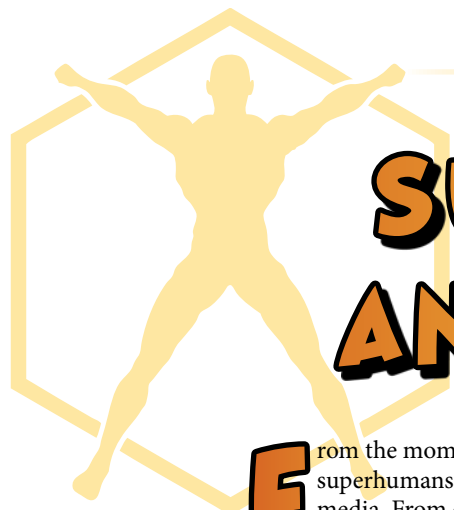
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

In the Champions Universe, it’s possible for superhumans to sue or be sued in their costumed identities. To file a lawsuit, a superhuman must be sanctioned, have a Public Identity, or otherwise be “verifiable.” Suing a superhuman is another matter; it’s often difficult or impossible to track a super down, serve process on him, force him to come into court to answer the claims against him, and so forth... but it has been done successfully in the past.

Similarly, superhumans may establish bank accounts, sign contracts, and conduct business in their costumed identities if they wish — and if the other parties they’re dealing with consent. This raises some difficult legal issues, and has caused some major deals to fall apart in the past, but generally works well based on the good faith of all parties involved.

All major insurance companies in the Champions Universe offer “superhuman insurance” that protects policyholders against damage or injury from any superhuman or paranormal cause. Businesses in major urban areas frequented by superhumans (such as Millennium City or New York City) practically consider “super-insurance” mandatory; it’s just too risky to try to get by without it.





SUPERHUMANS AND THE MEDIA

From the moment they first appeared, superhumans have been the darlings of the media. From drunken hacks well past their prime to the most serious and educated commentators, journalists have followed heroes' exploits, filmed them for an eager public, and reported on every aspect of their lives. Sometimes this excessive coverage has affected superhuman conduct; superhumans are still human, and some of them (particularly melodramatic supervillains) love that kind of attention. But superhumans have done just as much to influence the media as the media has influenced them, if not more; some analysts trace the twenty-first century public's short viewing attention spans, eagerness for action new stories, and desire for up-to-the-second news coverage directly or indirectly to the presence of superhumanity.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Superhumans have had an extreme influence on radio and especially television. Although superhumans appeared in the world before the advent of modern mass television broadcasting, they helped encourage and promote that form of news/entertainment in many ways. Not only do the activities of superhumans — colorfully garbed, dramatically posed, nobly- or villainously-acting — lead to fantastic television, but the technological breakthroughs enabled by some superhumans made television widely available sooner than it would have been in a world without them.

Coverage of superhuman events (mainly superhero-supervillain battles, the bigger and more destructive the better) was restricted to ordinary network and cable news until 1986, when media mogul Thomas Cassidy founded SNN, the Super News Network. SNN's stated aim was to provide news, information, and programming about superhumans and nothing but superhumans 24 hours a day. No matter how dangerous the superbattle, or how distant the battlefield, SNN promised to cover it for breathless audiences back home! Most media analysts scoffed at this pledge and predicted the network would fold within two years, but as usual, Cassidy surprised the pundits and made SNN a major success. Local cable companies signed on in droves, and SNN had no difficulty finding subjects to cover. In addition to

footage of breaking news, by 1991 it had branched out into filming and producing its own documentaries and shows on superhuman-related subjects. Its series include *Behind The Mask* (in-depth reports on and interviews with superhumans who have publicly-known identities) and *Super-History* (a scholarly examination of superhumans' influence on world history and events since 1938). Another show, *Gadgets*, is a favorite of techno-geeks everywhere.

So successful has SNN become that in 1998 Cassidy created a second network, SNN Sidekick, to provide even more coverage of superhuman-related issues. Sidekick fills at least half of its programming time with older documentaries and programs ("classics," in the network's parlance), but has also established some new shows to try to attract new viewers. Its superhuman talk show, *HeroTalk*, hosted by journalist Carol Rydell and comedian Michael McClarren, has become a major hit and usually has at least one or two superheroes as guests each week.

PRINT MEDIA

Newspapers and magazines have counted on superheroes and villains to increase circulation and attract readers for seventy years, and that shows no signs of changing anytime soon. The papers regularly provide front-page coverage for superhuman-related events, and the number of glossy magazines devoted to superheroes (and even villains, sometimes!) has grown beyond count. More than a few superheroes (or super-teams) have professionally-produced fan magazines devoted solely to them and their activities. Sapphire, for example, is the subject of at least three exclusive magazines (one produced by her own marketing department).

Of all the magazines devoted to supers, by far the most successful, and best-known, is *Super-World Magazine*. Begun as a newsletter in 1972 by a teenage superhero fan named David Farquar, its witty writing and superb photographs quickly attracted enough circulation for Farquar to turn it into a professional magazine. These days the typical issue is 128 pages long, loaded with full-color pictures (many obtained by SuperWorld's daredevil photographers and available nowhere else), and containing a variety of in-depth and

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MIRANDA CHEN

8 STR 10 DEX
8 CON 12 INT
10 EGO 15 PRE
2 OCV 2 DCV
2 OECV 2 DECV
2 SPD
2 PD 2 ED
4 REC 20 END
8 BODY 20 STUN

Abilities: CK: Millennium City 11-, KS: The Superhuman World 11-, PS: Broadcast Reporter 13-, PS: Writing 11-, 20 points' worth of Contacts in the media

Complications: Psychological Complication: Greedy And Opportunistic

Notes: Miranda Chen is a reporter who works for WRJK in Millennium City, covering the "super-human beat." She's mainly in it for the money and the opportunities for advancement; she hates having to risk her life getting too close to super-battles. If she had the chance to make a "big break" for herself by revealing a hero's Secret Identity or the like, she'd probably take it.

“fluff” pieces about superhumans. Its *Headquarters Interview*, featuring detailed questions asked of supers in their home environs, is immensely popular; even most supervillains regard it as a mark of distinction to be asked to participate in an HI interview. (On the other hand, SuperWorld’s efforts to “HI” Dr. Destroyer during the Eighties resulted only in the deaths of three veteran reporters.) In recent years Farquar has led the pack in digital publishing, with a website and smartphone/tablet computer feeds that are often considered “state of the art.” Farquar Publishing also periodically produces *Uncaped*, a *Playboy*-style magazine featuring female superhumans.

Tabloid papers such as *The National Inquisition* cover superhumans extensively, though usually from a rather lurid or extravagant perspective. For example, the list of superheroines described as “about to give birth to Grond’s love child!” is too long to print here. Tabloid stories frequently link superheroes with other media or political stars romantically — though in the tabloids’ defense, occasionally those stories are true. Most superhumans just laugh the tabloids off, but a few (mostly villains) have gotten upset enough about them to trash newspapers’ offices and assault (and even kill) reporters and publishers.

ENTERTAINMENT

Superhumans are often entertaining all by themselves, but that hasn’t stopped Hollywood and the publishing industry from trying to exploit them for even more entertainment potential.

MOVIES AND TELEVISION

For reasons no one has ever managed to explain, superhero movies are extremely popular. Despite the fact that real-life super-battles are regularly featured on the evening news, people love to pay ten bucks to sit in a movie theater and watch fictional superhumans engage in fictional battles, romances, and adventures. A few superheroes have even licensed their images and stories to Hollywood for use in movies, though the resulting films typically bear little resemblance to the actual events that inspired them.

A typical super-movie plays on the average viewer’s desire to have super-powers. The hero starts out as a normal guy, then somehow gains superhuman abilities and has to use them to fight crime, save the city from destruction, and win the girl of his dreams. Even though the same basic plot has been used for dozens of movies, the public never seems to tire of it.

Superheroes appear on television shows, too. Several sitcoms, including *The Spectacular Squadron*, *Lightning Man And Falcon Girl*, *Capes And Cows*, and *SludgeMan* poke gentle fun at costumed crimefighters and their adversaries; occasionally real superheroes make a brief guest appearance (and donate their acting fees to charity). One soap opera, *To Save The World*, features the adventures and travails of a fictional superhero team called Justice Force Omega;

hundreds of thousands of “TSTW” fans tune in every day to find out things like whether Templar will keep the Pharaoh from destroying New York and discover that his teammate Charisma is carrying his baby. A few dramas, including the multiple Emmy Award-winning *Walking Gods*, take a more serious look at the heroes that protect Earth.

COMIC BOOKS

Comic books are a popular entertainment medium in the Champions Universe, though superhero books compete with many others, such as mystery and romance, for shelf space and consumer dollars. About half the superhero comics use fictional heroes, while the others feature real-life heroes who’ve licensed their images and adventures to the publisher. In some parts of the Superhuman World, whose book outsells who else’s book is a major point of pride — and sometimes the cause of jealousy-inspired super-battles.

ART AND MUSIC

Superheroes have had relatively little impact on art and music (more so on the latter), though the technological innovations they’ve invented or inspired have improved artists’ abilities to create their work in many cases. Several museums have featured exhibits of art by or about superhumans; a display of Ironclad’s etch-sculptings was a major hit for the Millennium City Museum of Modern Art in early 2004, for example. A few superhumans, such as Sapphire, are famous for their artistic accomplishments.

SPORTS

Professional sports haven’t been changed much by the advent of superhumanity; all major professional sports organizations have rules in place preventing superhumans from participating on league teams, for obvious reasons. Most professional athletes are Skilled or Competent-level humans; a character with even Legendary-level Characteristics and Skills is likely to dominate any sport he participates in, and a true superhuman could be an entire team by himself! Though several high-profile criminals and crimefighters have backgrounds as professional or amateur athletes (such as former pro-football star Reggie Morgan, who became the Scarlet Shield in the Seventies), no professional athlete has publicly attempted to continue his career after acquiring superpowers, or begin a career with innate superhuman abilities. This has not, of course, stopped rumors from spreading about particularly successful or talented players.

Still, sports promoters are well aware of the fascination superhumans exert upon the public mind, and have often taken advantage of that through special events. A traveling gymnastics, acrobatics, and track-and-field show was a financial failure in 1975 despite the participation of several notable supers. The past two decades have seen several charity sporting events pitting one superhero team against another to raise money for

JIMMY DUGAN

8 STR	10 DEX
10 CON	13 INT
10 EGO	20 PRE
3 OCV	3 DCV
3 OECV	3 DECV
2 SPD	
3 PD	3 ED
4 REC	20 END
10 BODY	25 STUN

Abilities: CK: Chicago 8-, CK: Millennium City 11-, CK: New York City 11-, CK: San Francisco 8-, KS: The Superhuman World 13-, PS: Interviewing 13-, PS: Print Reporter 14-, PS: Writing 13-, 30 points’ worth of Contacts in the media, Life Support (Diminished Eating: Can Survive On Cigarettes, Coffee, And Whiskey for a week)

Complications: Psychological Complication: Will Risk Life And Limb To Get A Good Story

Notes: In 1973, Jimmy Dugan was a young journalism graduate looking for something better than an obituary beat. By dumb luck he happened to meet David Farquar in a bar in Philadelphia, and the two hit it off. Farquar ended up hiring Dugan as SuperWorld Magazine’s first full-time reporter. Dugan’s worked for the magazine ever since, making a great living and having the time of his life. He’ll risk his neck for any good story, has suffered numerous injuries (and near-death incidents) on the job, and has a well-deserved reputation as a mostly harmless pest with a penchant for ridiculous questions (“Defender! How did it feel just now when Firewing blasted you from the sky?”).

3

THE ARENA

Since the Seventies, rumors have persisted about a secret network of underground pit-fighting competitions involving superhumans. Dubbed “the Arena,” even though it supposedly involves multiple locations in major cities, the circuit is said to be run by certain illicit promoters for the benefit of wealthy, jaded patrons who enjoy watching superhumanly-

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powerful fighters smash and crush each other. Most of the fighters are relatively low-powered superhumans (though they still put any normal human boxer to shame), but occasionally a tale leaks out about someone like Herculan or Grond getting involved for a big cut of the proceeds. To date, no law enforcement officers have learned anything concrete about the Arena, and most dismiss it as an urban legend.

charity, most notably the annual softball tournament played between teams of superhumans and Major League baseball players and sponsored by Nar-Cola in southern California every February. Inevitably these events make a lot of money, but almost as inevitably they seem to attract supervillain attacks. A few superhuman boxing matches have also taken place.

Some media moguls have floated the idea of establishing a superhuman-only league for some sport (usually football or wrestling). So far this concept hasn't taken off for the simple reason that there aren't enough superhumans with appropriate powers (mainly super-strength and toughness) to sustain them. A tabloid once accused Thomas Cassidy of researching ways to induce superhuman strength in test subjects so he could create a “SuperSports Network,” but no evidence of these charges was ever provided and they were retracted after Cassidy filed a libel suit.

Millennium City, which lost most of its professional sports venues in 1992, retains the original Detroit teams and names in all four major sports: the Tigers (baseball), Lions (football), Pistons (basketball) and Red Wings (hockey), who won the Stanley Cup in 2002. Vibora Bay has major league teams in both football (the Hammerheads, who have an unfortunate history as “lovable losers” in the AFC East) and basketball (the Copperheads, who've endured several years of mediocrity since a strong run in the early Nineties), but only a Triple-A level baseball team and no hockey franchise.

THE INTERNET

Superhumans are immensely popular in the world of cyberspace. Mailing lists, chat rooms, and websites devoted to them have multiplied beyond count in the past ten years. Most are devoted to a

single super, or single superteam, but some cover the entire gamut of superhuman activity.

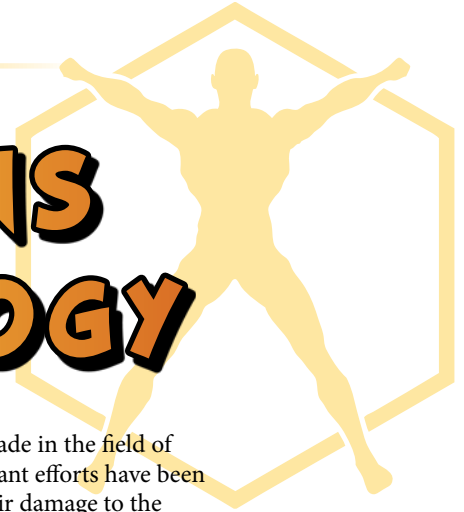
The largest and most popular of the superhuman websites is probably Super_Talk.Com, started in 1994 by two college students, Mark Binnaker and Sheila Swinson. Although they began it initially out of their love for the subject, their often-irreverent take on things, and seeming ability to get “scoops” before major news organizations, attracted both fans and investors. They've since parleyed their hobby into a business that employs a dozen people and pays them handsome salaries. Super_Talk.Com remains the first, and often only, stop on the World Wide Web for many fans of superheroes.

Fans whose tastes run to the darker often prefer VU.Net (www.vu.net). VU stands for “Villainy Unbound,” the name of a print magazine once produced by the website's owners but long since discontinued in favor of Web-only publishing. As the title indicates, VU.Net focuses almost entirely on supervillains. Motivated mainly by some unquenched spirit of adolescent rebellion and anarchistic loathing for respectable society, VU.Net's writers laud the (relatively non-violent) accomplishments of supervillains, write favorable feature articles about them, and so forth.

Some sites concentrate on a specific aspect of the Superhuman World. The best known of these is SuperRomance.Com, which tells its readers which heroes are romantically involved with each other (or with movie stars), and which super-couples are in danger of breaking up. It's a favorite site for people who like to gossip about hero-villain illicit affairs, whether Defender really prefers Sapphire over Witchcraft (even though he's dating the latter), and who was seen having dinner at Recherche with Firebrand last night.



SUPERHUMANS AND TECHNOLOGY



Perhaps no other field of human endeavor has been as influenced by the existence of superhumans as technology. Willingly or unwillingly, the scientifically-oriented heroes and villains of the past seventy years have made contributions to mankind's technical knowledge that have improved the capabilities and standards of living of nations and people around the globe.

Some examples of twenty-first century technological advances that have resulted, directly or indirectly, from the presence or efforts of superhumans include:

- Space stations. Since 1996 UNTIL has had a fully-functioning space station, GATEWAY, orbiting Earth. Although its primary purpose is to remain alert for signs of alien invasion or like threats, as the name indicates it's also humanity's first true step out of the cradle and into the wide galactic world. The United States launched its own orbital facility, the United States Space Station, in 2006, and after several years of delays UNTIL expects to begin work on a second station, AVALON, in 2011, with plans for two more (ASGARD and SKYGUARD) in the decade to come.
- High-tech fibers and materials discovered by superhumans, and scientists working with their data, beginning in the Sixties have led to stronger and more comfortable bulletproof vests, lightweight armored panels for military vehicles, more crash-proof civilian cars, and many similar advances.
- Communications has advanced significantly. Throughout the United States and Europe, and in many other developed or wealthy countries as well, virtually everyone has access to computers, smartphones, and similar devices that are easily carried, lightweight, fast, high-memory, extremely user friendly, and have extraordinarily long battery lives. Even in Third World countries, ownership of cellular phones and computers may exceed 50% of the population, thanks to advanced manufacturing processes and materials.
- Internal combustion vehicles and manufacturing are much cleaner and more environmentally friendly than the machines of old, and

major strides have been made in the field of alternative energy. Significant efforts have been made to clean up and repair damage to the environment, and to prevent further damage going forward. The superhero Technomancer has even experimented with quasi-magical robots that transform pollutants into building materials and other useful substances.

- Advances in medicine and genetics have eliminated, or diminished the impact of, many diseases. Scientists have adapted cybernetic technology first developed for powered armor and similar super-technology to devices that allow people with spinal injuries to walk again, and people with neurological disorders to function without significant impairment.
- Travel, whether by air, water, or land, is quicker and safer than ever before. Flights from the East Coast of the United States to the West Coast can be comfortably completed in just two hours in some cases.

The best example of the possibilities of modern technology is Millennium City. Built from the ground up since 1992, it incorporates dozens of technological innovations that are slowly making its way out to the rest of the world as they overcome infrastructural, logistical, and economic hurdles. (See page 84 for more information.) For the most part, the technological innovations wrought by superhumanity are most evident in the United States and the First World, but more than a few have reached poorer, less developed countries as well.

THE LIMITS OF TECHNOLOGY DISTRIBUTION

Despite these advances, the most sophisticated super-technology — the best powered armor suits, time travel devices, teleporters, and the like — usually remains restricted to its inventor (or finder) alone, to a small group of people, or to a specific government, instead of propagating out to the public as a whole. Leaving aside the fact that some of this technology (e.g., military-grade weaponry) isn't appropriate for public purchase, there are several reasons why not all super-technology becomes widely distributed.



First, not all “supertechnology” really works, or works exactly as it seems to. Instead, it serves as a proxy or “conduit” for *true* superpowers possessed by the inventor. Thus, while the device appears to function for the person who built it, it won’t work for anyone else.

Similarly, sometimes even when an inventor truly creates a piece of supertechnology, he does so through a once-in-a-lifetime set of circumstances he cannot reproduce, making the mass manufacturing of the device impossible. In the same way the ambient magic permeating the Champions Universe can give rise to the creation of superhumans, sometimes it makes possible the creation of otherwise impossible technology. Or it may be that the inventor has a superhuman “spark of genius” once, and then can’t ever figure out how to do it again, even through reverse engineering.

Third, even when supertechnology can be mass produced, it’s usually hideously expensive to do so. The parts and raw materials required may be unique, or nearly so, and the technical expertise can be even rarer. After all, many super-inventors are true geniuses, and sometimes mad to boot: getting ordinary scientists and engineers to duplicate their efforts (even in teams) is a difficult proposition. Only fanatical and dedicated researchers can create new super-technologies in many cases.

Fourth, some super-inventors, particularly villains, have no desire to share their technology. A certain amount of power and prestige comes from being “the only one” to have a particular weapon, or who can make a certain laboratory process work effectively and cheaply. Making the technology publicly available, even for huge sums of money, spoils the fun. And even if the inventor himself would prefer to distribute his creations, the person or government employing him may have other ideas.

To some extent, governments can avoid these restrictions. Powerful nations, such as the United States or Great Britain, have huge sums of money, well-stocked research facilities, and corps of brilliant scientists at their command — and if they work on something long enough, they may achieve results that would elude lesser strivers. For example, some Champions Universe governments have fielded units of soldiers equipped with low-strength powered armor (or at least high-tech defensive gear), made use of advanced spacecraft, and equipped special military and paramilitary forces with blasters and similar super-weapons. But even then, they often prefer to keep their super-technology to themselves as much as possible, due to the strategic and tactical advantages it provides.

SOURCES OF SUPER-TECHNOLOGY

Not every character who uses super-technology actually built it himself. Besides invention, Champions Universe characters could acquire super-technology in several ways:

Aliens: Sentient alien species exist who are more technologically advanced than humanity, including the Qularr, Gadroon, and Hzeel. They might give advanced technology to a human for their own inscrutable purposes, or a character could salvage systems from a crashed starship.

Find it: A character might stumble across super-technology somehow. Maybe it’s left over from a super-battle, or somehow “escaped” from one of ARGENT’s laboratories. Naturally, the inventor/real owner probably wants it back....

Get someone else to make it: A character who knows a technologically-oriented superhero like Defender or Juryrig could persuade him to make something for the character. A villain, or a desperate hero, could hire an underworld armorer, like the infamous Wayland Talos of Millennium City, to make super-tech devices for him... though “help” like that usually comes with a price beyond mere money.

Steal it: Quite a few villains, like Ankylosaur, Blowtorch, and Devastator, got their start by stealing super-tech from someone (typically a large organization like the United States government, VIPER, or UNTIL). A hero, conversely, might steal from a villain or villainous agency. In either case, the victim of the theft could end up Hunting the character to recover its property.

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Champions Universe characters who want to build super-technology devices themselves should consider buying appropriate Science Skills, such as the ones listed below, in addition to Skills like Computer Programming, Electronics, Inventor, and Systems Operation.

Density Physics: For building devices that alter the density of a person or object (*i.e.*, that provide Density Increase, Desolidification, or powers with similar special effects).

Dimensional Engineering: Necessary for building devices that breach dimensional barriers or accesses extra-dimensional energies (*e.g.*, most teleporters, time travel devices, and the like, not to mention certain kinds of weapons).

Force-Field Physics: For building devices that use or generate force-fields (usually to provide Resistant Protection or create Barriers).

Gravitics: For building devices that manipulate gravity to achieve certain effects (*e.g.*, some Telekinesis and Flight devices).

Psionic Engineering: Necessary for building devices that provide psionic or psychic abilities (*e.g.*, most gadgets built with Mental Powers, excluding Mental Defense).

Size Physics: Necessary for building devices that alter the size of a person or object (*e.g.*, that provide Growth, Shrinking, or powers with similar special effects).

TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY

Governments, scholars, and superhero fans spend a lot of time discussing and debating who has the most advanced technology on Earth. Given the secrecy which shrouds many superhuman activities, no analysis of the subject can ever claim to be truly accurate, but the following general parameters seem to most experts to be well-supported by the existing evidence.

Prior to his death, the general consensus was that Dr. Destroyer had the most advanced technology. Since his return to life with mystic powers, Mechanon has now taken his place as the most technologically-advanced villain, though Mechanon's general refusal to use biotechnology means the evil robot has to share the top honors with Teleios. Mechanon can create robots so sophisticated they're almost indistinguishable from true humans, build devastatingly powerful weapons, exert fundamental changes on discrete geological areas (e.g., cause new islands to rise from the ocean floor), and accomplish similar effects. By most experts' estimation, Mechanon's computers, weapons, operational bases, and vehicles are at least five to ten years (if not more) ahead of most other people and institutions.

In the fields of genetics and biology generally, the villain Teleios stands head and shoulders above the rest of the world. His seemingly effortless ability to clone humans (normal or super), interbreed life forms, alter human biology to give a person superpowers, and create new life forms in the laboratory makes him a definite threat to be reckoned with.

The villainous organizations VIPER and ARGENT both possess significant amounts of super-technology, usually developed by their teams of well-paid scientists but sometimes stolen or obtained by other means. They're roughly equal to each other, and both slightly ahead of their closest law-abiding equivalent, UNTIL.

The industrialist superhero Tetsuronin (Iron Samurai) of Japan, so called in honor of the World War II hero of the same name, is often considered

the most technologically advanced crimefighter in the world. In sophistication and overall power, his armor is significantly better than that of Defender, Stalwart, Devastator, or Ankylosaur (though the Warlord did fight him to a standstill in 2006). Tetsuronin has shared many of his technological innovations with the Japanese and American governments without any thought of compensation. Defender of the Champions, Marcy Gibson-Renton (formerly Electron of the Justice Squadron, now an employee of the Goodman Institute), the powered armor hero Cannonade of Seattle, and the gadgeteer Technon are also highly regarded for their technological expertise.

Among world governments, the United States (and its institutions, such as the military and PRIMUS) enjoys a clear technological superiority. Though it loses a few of its technical secrets to theft or industrial espionage, it retains more than enough of them to give it a significant edge in both commercial and military technology. Of all the nations on Earth, only the United States has the financial wherewithal and technological knowledge to build its own space station, plan manned trips to Mars, equip a permanent (albeit small) force of soldiers with powered armor, occasionally outfit law enforcement personnel with similar types of armor, or maintain an anti-supercrime agency as large as PRIMUS.

Astute observers have noted that no matter what the type of technology, there's usually at least one supervillain — if not more — at or near the top of the list of “who has the world's best.” The generally-accepted explanation for this is that supervillains don't have to contend with budgets, bureaucracies, approval boards, or safety restrictions. They can pursue their studies and their work with a fanatical obsession, untrammelled by the types of interference nations and corporations suffer from. Some superheroes, of course, have much the same freedom (if not always the same obsessions), but nevertheless typically lag behind villains due to their refusal to engage in unethical scientific practices (like human testing).

UNCANNY METALS

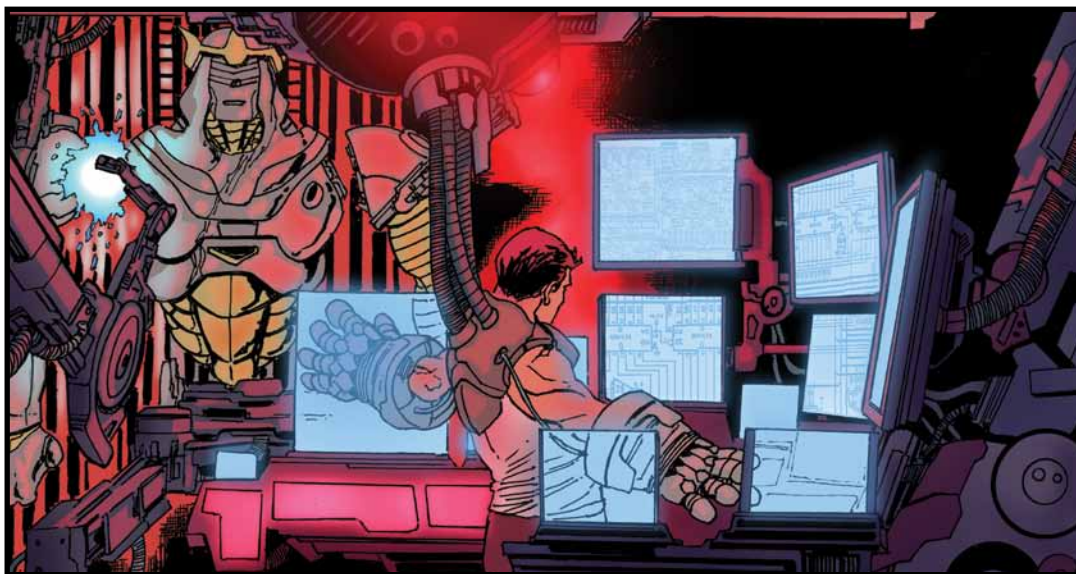
The scientists and engineers of the Champions Universe have created and discovered some amazing metals and alloys with unusual properties that make them perfect for super-technology.

Questionite is an amazingly durable, yet unusually light, metal found only in certain rare deposits. Between its rarity and usefulness, it's incredibly expensive. Questionite armor and machine parts are extremely difficult to damage; blades made of questionite can cut through nearly anything and never seem to lose their edge.

Neutronium is even more durable than questionite, but much, much heavier — so heavy that an average trained athlete can't easily lift a blade made of the stuff. Those who possess neutronium claim it comes from dead stars, though scientists have pointed out it's not nearly dense enough.

Kendrium, an alloy invented by Professor Darryl Kendrick, mixes high-grade titanium steel with certain chemicals and other substances to create a metal that's much stronger than steel, but not much heavier. Professor Kendrick won't reveal the exact formula for the metal, and so far attempts to reverse engineer it have failed.

3



**PROFESSOR
BEN E. SCOTT**

5 STR	8 DEX
8 CON	18 INT
12 EGO	16 PRE
2 OCV	2 DCV
3 OECV	3 DECV
1 SPD	
1 PD	2 ED
3 REC	16 END
8 BODY	15 STUN

Abilities: Computer Programming 13-, KS: History 11-, KS:

Layman's Superhuman World 16-, KS: Superpowers 16-, KS: World Religion 13-, PS: Professor

14-, SS: Biology 11-, SS: Chemistry 11-, SS: Physics 11-, SS: Sociology 13-, Fringe Benefit: Tenure

Complications: Physical Complication: debilitating injuries suffered during the destruction of Detroit; Psychological Complication: Intense Intellectual Curiosity

Notes: Once a sociologist studying religion in modern society, Ben E. Scott became fascinated and intrigued by superhumans, eventually switching his studies to focus on them instead. For the past 30 years he's been one of the world's foremost authorities on superhumans, their powers, and their role in society. Based at prestigious Duke University, Professor Scott is frequently consulted by governments, corporations, news organizations, the police, superheroes, and others with an interest in superhuman affairs.

SUPERHUMANS AND SUBCULTURES

In addition to their broad influence on government, technology, and the like, superhumans have also had a marked effect on many subcultures and discrete segments of society. (And of course they have a subculture of their own, the *Superhuman World*; see page 38.) “The touch of the superhuman,” to use the term coined by Professor Ben E. Scott, often affects many different aspects of peoples’ lives.

THE BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL WORLD

When superhumans first appeared, business took little note of them — there was, after all, a war to be fought. But in the post-war consumer boom, it soon occurred to advertising executives and manufacturers that perhaps there *was* a place for superhumans in the business world. The first superhuman recruited to endorse a product — famed war veteran Shenandoah, for Goldenrod Cigarettes in 1953 — was soon followed by a flood of popular heroes willing to cash in on their abilities. It was this trend, as it increased through the Sixties and Seventies, that eventually led to the passage of laws allowing superhumans to transact business in their costumed identities. (Prior to those laws, superhuman product spokesmen were typically paid in cash... and woe to the businessman who tried to cheat one.) Today, some superheroes command six-figure salaries for long-term advertising deals, though many (including the Champions and the Sentinels) prefer not to sully themselves by cashing in on their heroism.

The biggest superhuman influence on business wasn't nearly so visible to the public, though. Super-technology, and research into superpowers, improved many manufacturing processes, products, and business methods, thus helping to fuel the late twentieth and early twenty-first century American economy. Thanks to superhumans, people could get better goods quicker and cheaper than ever before.

Beginning in the mid-Sixties, a few businesses experimented with hiring superhumans as full-time employees. Sometimes these “company supers” played the part of corporate do-gooder, acting more or less as normal superheroes but constantly representing, and singing the praises of, their employers — the good publicity from

the hero's actions, in theory, made the corporation itself look good. In other cases the supers were hired specifically to use their powers to help corporate projects. For example, in the early Seventies, Donatelli Services, Inc. built the “Atlas” suit of powered armor and hired a man named Victor Scanlon to wear it. As Atlas, Scanlon helped Donatelli erect buildings and dams, demolish old buildings, clear land, and perform many other tasks. Although the practice of retaining corporate supers generally fell out of favor in the Eighties due to liability concerns, some businesses, such as the Binary Corporation (which sponsors the Millennium City superhero Binary Man), still try it as a way of garnering favorable publicity.

Since the Eighties, finance-savvy superheroes have been infiltrating the business world in other respects. Rather than sell their inventions to corporations for money, technology-oriented superhumans have taken stock or company jobs as payment instead, leading to more than one corporation with a superhuman on its board of directors. Instead of going to work for a large company, some superhumans have started their own businesses, preferring to cash in on their powers rather than spend time fighting crime. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these companies are Yesterday Delivery (“When you need it there yesterday!”), operated in New York City by a speedster named Roberta Yelnofsky, and Trans-City Construction of Millennium City (which relies on owner Jeff Baker's matter transmutation powers for many projects).

FRANKLIN STONE

The world of business and finance is filled with many rich, powerful people — men and women of discipline and ruthless ambition. But even among this group of exceptional individuals, Franklin Stone stands out. Founder, primary owner, president, and CEO of Advanced Concepts Industries (or “ACI,” as it's universally known), Stone is one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the world — and he wants to be wealthier and more powerful still. Born to working-class parents in Brooklyn, New York, Stone used his native intelligence and drive to work his way through college and the Wharton School of Business, and then to found ACI in 1973 and captain it to the forefront of world commerce.

Despite its name, ACI does more than heavy manufacturing — in fact, it has its fingers in just about every important economic pie there is. Divisions or subsidiaries of ACI are involved in high tech, mining, oil, banking and finance, shipping, various service industries (including the Ace Burger fast food chain), construction, and lobbying. There isn't a field of business out there that Stone isn't willing to invest in, and even try to dominate, if he feels there's profit to be made. He didn't get where he is today by hesitating — or by letting little things like business ethics or the law interfere with a deal when he could find a safe way around them.

THE ESPIONAGE WORLD

Although the earliest superheroes had relatively little involvement with espionage, by the mid-Fifties and Sixties both the West and the Soviet bloc had recruited superhumans to help them fight the Cold War. American and British heroes such as Reflection, Bearcat, Shadowwalker, and Ricochet were involved in covert operations opposed by Soviet superhumans like Red Eagle, Checkmate, the Swan, and the members of Red Winter. These conflicts — usually competitions to accomplish (or prevent the accomplishment of) some mission objective rather than true super-battles — mostly took place in the cities of Europe, though the FBI occasionally came across

Russian efforts to plant super-spies in American society. (How many of those super-agents, most the products of a Soviet superhuman-soldier program called Directorate Black-12, might have escaped the notice of American authorities remains unknown.) Some died or retired, only to be replaced by other agents as dedicated to the cause as they.

As the Cold War gradually slowed, and then came to an abrupt halt with the collapse of the Soviet Union, superhuman involvement with espionage mostly shifted to the arena of industrial espionage — supers who would once have gone to work for their countries have simply gone to work for themselves. Shapeshifting mercenaries like Masquerade or Menagerie command top dollar for their ability to infiltrate competitors' facilities, steal valuable data or equipment, and escape undetected. Rumors in the Superhuman World claim the Americans, the Chinese, and many other governments still use superhumans for traditional intelligence-gathering purposes, but there's no solid proof of this.

THE LAW ENFORCEMENT WORLD

Law enforcement has had to react to the existence of superhumans in two ways. The first, of course, is working with superheroes to combat crime, whether those heroes are sanctioned or unsanctioned. Approve or disapprove of superheroes as they may, police departments across the United States and the world have learned to live with, and adapt to the presence of, superheroes within their jurisdictions.

More importantly, law enforcement has had to develop procedures, tactics, and equipment to cope with superhuman criminals — since superheroes aren't always available to fight supervillains. Most major metropolitan police departments have created what are generally known as MARS (Metahuman Activities Response Squad) units. Equipped with powerful technology to capture or stop supervillains — sometimes including low-strength powered armor suits — and trained to fight superhuman foes, MARS cops risk their lives every day to save innocent citizens from the likes of Bulldozer and the Ultimates. Though some experts have raised serious questions as to MARS units' track records (one went so far as to describe them as “the biggest drain on police resources for the least gain of any unit in the force”), MARS officers proudly point to the stacks of thank-you letters they've received from grateful citizens and the many awards for bravery and heroism lining their squadroom walls.

MARS EQUIPMENT

Here are a few examples of equipment issued to typical MARS units:

MARS Capturefoam Grenade Launcher: This weapon fires grenades containing capture-foam, a quick-hardening chemical substance strong enough to prevent most targets from moving.

Entangle 4d6, 8 PD/8 ED, Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), 8 Charges (-½). **Total cost: 30 points.**

MARS Sniper Rifle: Equipped with high-powered ammunition specifically designed to hurt injury-resistant superhumans, these rifles are only used when the department considers them absolutely necessary.

RKA 4d6, Increased Maximum Range (x4, or 2,400m; +½), No Range Modifier (+½) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), 8 Charges (-½). **Total cost: 40 points.**

MARS Stunner Pistol: MARS cops are often issued this sidearm for use in situations where the need to prevent harm to innocents from misses and ricochets is paramount.

Blast 12d6, NND (defense is Power Defense; +½) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 30 points.**

MAJOR CORPORATIONS OF THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

In addition to ACI and the Binary Corporation, some of the most important businesses in the Champions Universe (based on size, wealth, power, and/or innovative resources) include:

Adair Publishing (publishing, television, mass media)

American Business Machinery (various fields)

Cambridge Biotechnologies (biotechnology)

Drake-Victoria, Inc. (defense contracting)

Duchess Industries (various fields)

Fordham ChemTech (various fields)

Genex Laboratories (biotechnology)

Harmon Industries (various fields)

Ironwood Industries (aerospace, defense contracting)

Kenwell Corporation (light and heavy manufacturing)

Pharos Industries (various fields)

ProStar (high tech, software)

Regent Energy (energy, communications)

Skyvox (high tech, software)

Tychon-Maxwell Inc. (various fields)

Whitcomb Corporation (various fields)

3

YENGTAO ABILITIES

Here's a selection of abilities and powers that characters who have studied at Yengtao Temple, or with fighters who themselves once trained there, might possess. Many others are possible.

The Catapulting Blow of Loc Sun Pak: Fighters use this blow when they need to knock an opponent far away — to gain breathing room or a chance to regroup, for example. It's also proven quite deadly in fights on tall buildings or mountaintops.

HA +6d6, Double Knockback (+½) (45 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼). **Total cost: 36 points.**

The Eagle Claw of Yoon Jung-oh: Yoon Jung-oh reputedly was one of the most skilled generals of the late Koryo Dynasty period in Korea (around the year 1200 AD). He fought valiantly to protect Korea from the Mongol invasions of that time. One of the “weapons” he created to help in his battles was his Eagle Claw technique, with which he could render an enemy weaponless.

+40 STR (40 Active Points); Only Usable With Disarm Maneuver (-2). **Total cost: 13 points.**

3

Inohara Kiyomi's Garden of Tranquility: Also known as the Lotus Trance of Inohara Kiyomi, this ability allows the practitioner to enter a trance so deep it approaches a state of suspended animation. Some sages speculate that a few past Yengtao masters may not actually have died, but are instead using the Lotus Trance to remain hidden and “asleep” until awakened by the proper stimulus.

Simulate Death. **Total cost: 3 points.** (For especially long trances, the GM might also require the character to purchase appropriate forms of Life Support.)

The Seven Strikes of Serenity: This technique, one difficult both to learn and to use, involves quickly striking seven major nerve points in the body. Most practitioners cannot work up the necessary concentration and ch'i to do it more than about four times a day. When properly executed, the maneuver paralyzes the victim. (Advanced practitioners may buy off

the Charges and Costs Endurance Limitations, but never the “Only Humans” and “Once Per Hour” Limitations.)

Entangle 5d6, 5 PD/5 ED, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+1) (100 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-¼), No Range (-½), Only Works On Humans (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Cannot Be Used On The Same Target More Than Once Per Hour (-½), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 23 points.**

The Sword-Breaking Blow of Xu Peng: As its name suggests, fighters use this attack to shatter an opponent's weapon, rendering him powerless in the face of a skilled martial artist. To break a weapon, the attacker locates the weakest point on the weapon and then applies a powerful strike to that point.

HKA 2d6, Penetrating (+½) (45 Active Points); Only Works On Weapons (-1), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1), No Knockback (-¼), Requires A Weaponsmith Roll (-½). **Total cost: 12 points.**

The Wall of the Heavenly Palace: This technique allows the practitioner to use his ch'i defensively to prevent himself from being hurt by debilitating strikes (such as the Harmonious Fist of Okano Akira).

Power Defense (18 points) (18 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½). **Total cost: 12 points.**

Zheng Hsiang's Hand of the Dawn: Despite its flowery name, this technique is very prosaic — it involves jabbing the opponent in the eyes hard enough to temporarily blind him, but not hard enough to cause permanent blindness. However, because of the precise aiming involved, the technique requires a great deal of concentration, and is rather taxing. Of course, the Hand of the Dawn won't work on someone whose eyes are covered by a helmet or similar protection, though contact lenses or the lenses in a mask aren't strong enough to shield the wearer from the blow's effects. Also, the blow is useless against foes whose eyes are not placed within a handspan of each other.

Sight Group Flash 8d6, NND (defense is rigid eye protection or oddly-located eyes; +0) (40 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-¼), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½); No Range (-½). **Total cost: 18 points.**

THE MARTIAL WORLD

Legends have credited martial artists with superhuman powers for years. For example, during the Boxer Rebellion, some martial artists claimed they could deflect bullets and perform similar wondrous feats. Most such claims proved to be idle bragging or fancy tale-telling, but since the advent of superpowers in the world, many martial artists *have* demonstrated amazing abilities that were once only the stuff of stories. Most students of the fighting arts remain perfectly normal people, of course. But through the study of ancient mystic martial disciplines, control of their ch'i, intense physical training, and other means, more than one martial artist has developed superpowers and used them to fight crime... or commit it. (See *Champions*, pages 81-82 and 266-67, for more information about superheroic martial artists and their possible powers; and Chapter Three of HSMA has nearly 250 special abilities specifically for martial artists.)

THE TOURNAMENT OF THE DRAGON

Among the most powerful and skilled martial artists, both normal and superhuman, rumors circulate about a fighting tournament like no other — *Bisai Lóng*, the Tournament of the Dragon. Supposedly the masters who hold the Tournament, the enigmatic Watchers of the Dragon, call together the greatest martial artists from around the world every sixty years to compete for the coveted title of Champion. The winner, it is said, receives not only great prestige, but the blessings of the gods themselves... and the chance to fight an ancient evil known only as the Death Dragon.

Lately the rumors concerning the Tournament have become more common, and more urgent. In the alleys of Shanghai, the streets of San Francisco's Chinatown, and the dojos of Millennium City, the best of the best whisper that it's nearly time for the Tournament to be held once more. Who will be chosen to compete? And what fate truly awaits the winner?

YENGTAO TEMPLE

Of equal importance to many martial artists are the legends of Yengtao Temple. Long ago, it is said, a great temple was founded in a hidden valley in the mountains of China. The masters there possessed wisdom and fighting skills greater than those of any other warriors, but would only teach students who were truly worthy, in body and mind, of their instruction. With their mystic arts they kept Yengtao concealed from the outside world, allowing only those with the necessary discipline and skill to find their way there.

Once he found his way to Yengtao, a humble and deserving student could study any martial skills he wished. Supposedly a student could learn any fighting style ever used anywhere in the world at Yengtao Temple, even if that style had long since ceased to exist in the world outside. The best of the students could progress further, learning special mystic martial arts powers, advanced fighting maneuvers, and even, according to some tales, Oriental wizardry. But only those who completed the courses of instruction established for them by Yengtao's masters earned the right to wear its two symbols, the Sapphire Phoenix and the Cherry Blossom.

Since the beginning of the Age of Superheroes, several costumed crimefighters (and a few villains) have claimed they once studied at Yengtao. The pulp-era mystery-man who called himself the Cobra said he possessed the knowledge of Yengtao, and the New York superheroine Fire Blossom, active in the mid-Seventies, also displayed abilities that experts say could only have come from Yengtao Temple. In the modern day, the Millennium City superhero Nightwind, his archenemy Jade Phoenix, and the Hong Kong superhero Jīn Lóng Quán ("Golden Dragon Fist") all claim to have studied at the Temple.

Over the past several years, stories have filtered out of deepest China claiming that at long last the Yengtao Temple has fallen. Few of these rumors agree on the details; some blame the Death Dragon, some the inscrutable sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu, and some internal conflict between the monks and students. Other stories advance even wilder theories, like the idea that the Temple was merely a front for aliens who have returned to their home planets. Nightwind has supposedly stated privately to the Champions that Jade Phoenix destroyed the Temple, but he's refused to confirm this. The truth may come out in time, but for now the fate of Yengtao remains as mysterious as its origins.

SHAMBALLAH

Second only to Yengtao in martial legends is Shamballah, a mythic city hidden somewhere in the Himalayas. Supposedly established long ago to preserve martial and arcane lore, it's overseen by nine mysterious persons known as the Immortal Monks. It's said that if the Monks deem a visitor worthy, they can teach him nearly any martial art in the world... though a visitor still has to find his way to the city and avoid the traps and guardians protecting the entrance cave.



THE MILITARY/ MERCENARY/ TERRORIST WORLD

Sadly, the existence of superhumans hasn't done much to end war, terrorism, or other forms of violent conflict. In fact, some experts claim that since superhumans first appeared on Earth, the world's become *more* violent — more prone to warfare, mercenary activity, and assassination — and that superhumans are to blame. Aside from the fact that super-technology is employed by most militaries to some degree, no real proof exists to support this particular theory, but nevertheless some people believe it.

Although most militaries still use standard-tech weapons (gunpowder-based bullets and rifles, tanks and howitzers firing explosive shells, manned fighter jets, and so on), the larger and more advanced armies and navies have incorporated some super-technology-derived weapons and systems into their arsenals. For example, the United States has small squads of light powered armor-wearing soldiers, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with smart-targeting capability able to fly at Mach 10, and many other such weapons. None of them provide the US with an overwhelming advantage in combat, but taken together they definitely extend and expand America's already-potent military capabilities.

In some cases, super-technology developments even trickle down to smaller militaries. For example, the US Department of Defense has expressed concern about countries like North Korea or Awad building and using relatively cheap magnetic “railgun” weapons to shoot down American satellites and planes. Sometimes it seems

that for every advance one nation makes, another finds a way to counter it using different super-technology... though the sources from which some lesser nations obtain their super-technology remain a subject of speculation.

Even mercenaries and mercenary companies get into the act sometimes. A few, seeking competitive advantage both on the battlefield and in the marketplace, have invested in (or otherwise obtained) powered armor suits, energy rifles, super-tech weapons, and advanced robotic vehicles. Supervillains like Lazer, Mechassassin, and the Steel Commando all got their start as mercenaries (at least in part), and still participate in that part of the global underworld if the money's right.

Combatants who want powerful weapons, up to and including some forms of super-technology, often turn to the same source for it — the supervillain who calls himself the Warlord. An arms broker and warmonger without peer, the Warlord foments conflict across the globe as a way of keeping himself in business. He even participates in some battles himself, seemingly for the pleasure of fighting. Thanks to his sophisticated and well-armed suit of powered armor, those usually aren't very fair fights, but he still enjoys them.

THE MYSTIC WORLD

Since 1938, magic has been more powerful and manipulable than at any time in the past several centuries. But that's not to say it's commonplace, or widely acknowledged. In fact, just the opposite is true: the vast majority of humanity scoffs at magic, considering it nothing more than superstitious nonsense. Even though mystic supervillains of tremendous power, such as Takofanes the Undying Lord, periodically threaten Earth, somehow their abilities end up conveniently forgotten or explained away as something besides sorcery. Such, perhaps, is the nature of magic.

The Mystic World usually takes pains to conceal its existence and scope from the rest of the world according to the same unspoken laws. Those who can cast spells and work sorcery deem it fitting that their powers should be hidden from the common ruck of humanity, and conduct themselves appropriately in most circumstances. Thus, even today, describing the Mystic World remains a difficult task, fraught with much guesswork.

As with super-technology, those of darkest heart and evil bent — supervillains, soul-bereft sorcerers, and others of their ilk — hold the greatest power. Following his initial appearance in 1987, none have ever doubted that the undead wizard who calls himself Takofanes the Undying Lord remains unrivalled on this world, and perhaps this entire plane, in magical might. Able to transform vast swaths of land to resemble other realms, raise armies of corpses to obey his every whim, and strike powerful superheroes dead with but a gesture, the Archlich has no mystical peer. Only his own pride, and the unflinching efforts of

SUPERHUMAN SECURITY

Superhumans have also affected the world of security services. In the United States, two firms compete for the lion's share of this business.

The first is *Bastion Alpha Security*, founded in 1995 by Anderson “Titan” Powell, a former New York City superhero with growth powers. Promising “Protection Beyond the Merely Human,” BAS offers its clients the chance to hire guards, bodyguards, soldiers, and other security personnel who have low-level superhuman strength and resilience. These employees get their powers through something called “the Bastion Process,” which the firm keeps very, very secret. Rumors swirl through the Superhuman World that BAS hires its people out to be agents for supervillains, but there's no proof of this.

The second is *Executive Control Solutions*, founded in 1993 by three former UNTIL agents. Although it's mostly a normal security/mercenary firm, ECS specializes in pursuing and capturing superpowered criminals for the bounties on their heads. It's developed a suite of equipment specifically designed to capture and restrain superhumans, and trains its personnel in anti-superhuman security procedures.

both superheroes and heroic mystics such as the members of the Trismegistus Council, have kept the world safe from him. Of scarce less power is the reclusive Chinese sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu, but he rarely seems to concern himself with matters of the world outside his ancient castle.

Several families of malign intent display magical prowess, and when their members work in concert instead of fighting amongst themselves, often pose a significant threat to nations and worlds. The Sylvestris of Italy, and their rivals the Vandaleurs of France, are chief among the mystic lineages; fortunately, one other, the de Morphants of France, died out centuries ago. The Warwick family of England, a line of noble and heroic men who once opposed these fiends, likewise seems to have passed away forever.

Similar to the mystic families, but with members related by common interests rather than blood, is the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, a group of spellcasters joined together for the purpose of acquiring power both magical and temporal. The group takes pains to conceal its exact number and powers from the rest of the world, but is known to have at least a dozen powerful sorcerers and witches among its ranks, and to propitiate demons and dark gods.

At least one mystically-oriented group, DEMON, has chosen to conduct itself after the fashion of villainous agencies such as ARGENT and VIPER. Its minions often fight superheroes in the group's quest to obtain magical lore and power, and its chief lieutenants, the Morbanes, rival superhumans in sheer power. DEMON's true aims, and the true depths of its resources, remain unknown, much to the concern of many DOSPA officials and superheroes.

No discussion of the Mystic World would be complete without mentioning two supervillains. The first is Dark Seraph and his followers, the Crowns of Krim. Once Sir Dennis of South Mallon, an English baronet, Dark Seraph sold his soul to Hell for the magic of the Iron Crown, greatest of the artifacts of the demon-god Krim. Now a being powerful enough to rival the likes of Firewing, Dark Seraph is even more dangerous because he has called the possessors of the other Crowns of Krim to serve him. Only the mightiest of superteams can stand against them. The other is a skilled sorcerer, the Demonologist, who also leads a group, this one called the Devil's Advocates. Determined to bring about a "Dark Renaissance" in which magic supplants technology, he and his followers represent a serious threat not just to humanity, but to reality.

And of course, not all magical threats come solely from Earth's plane of reality. Magic allows its users to cross into other planes of existence, and many of them hold powerful mystics of their own, or beings somehow inimical to Earth and/or mankind. A few of these threats are discussed on page 108.

Fortunately, not all persons possessing arcane power are inimical to humanity. Traditionally Earth's mystic protector is *the Archmage*, a spell-caster of great power armed with artifacts of great power. Unfortunately, Earth's last Archmage was killed in 1908, and for some reason no other has arisen to take his place. During that time many of the Archmage's responsibilities have been taken up by the *Trismegistus Council*, a cabal of white wizards that's often clashed with the Circle of the Scarlet Moon. The Council numbers among its allies Witchcraft of the Champions. (See page 142 for more information.)

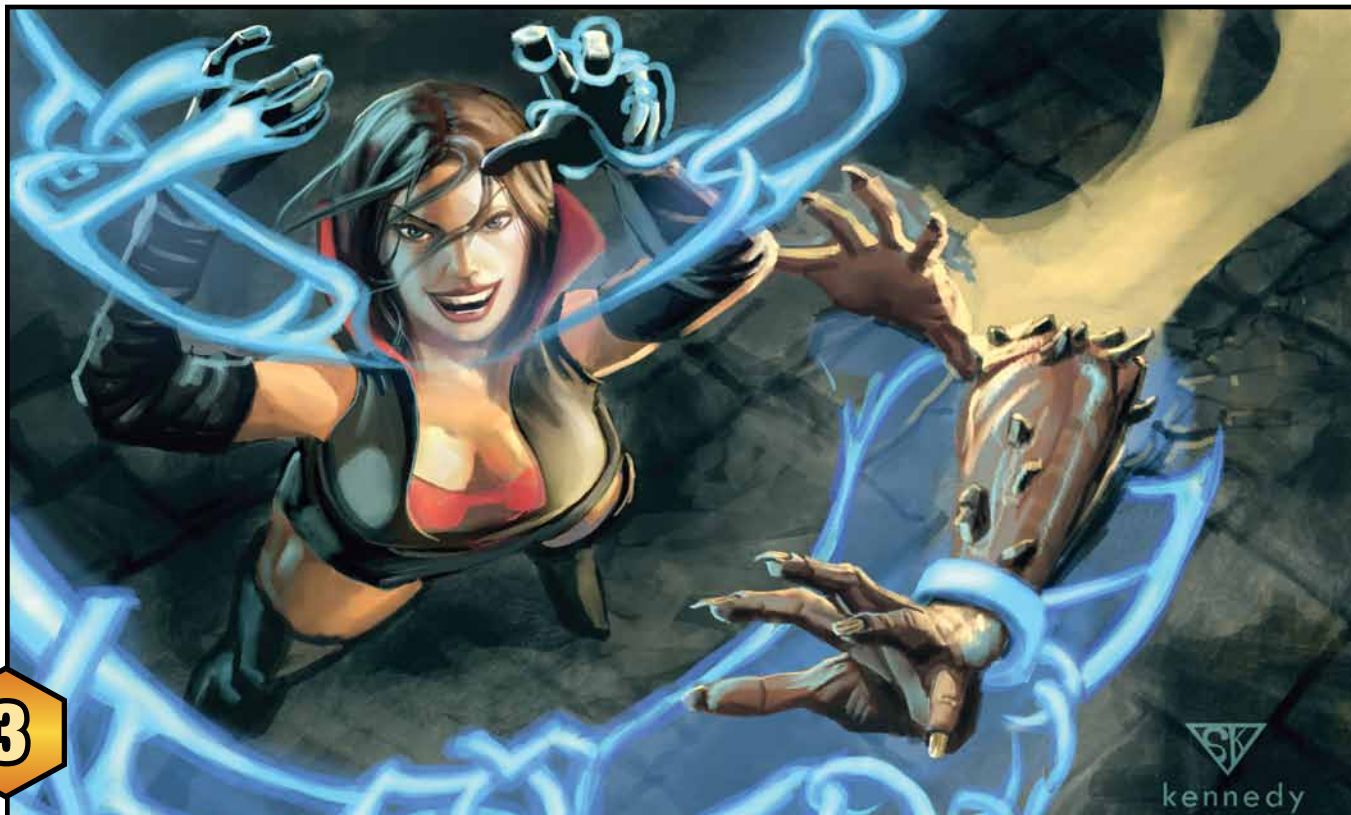
THE ZODIAC WORKING

Prior to the appearance of Takofanes, the mystic villain most feared by many heroes was John Fulten, who went by the name *Archimago*. Starting his career a minor Pulp Era villain, he soon grew in power to the point where he could take on entire superhero teams singlehandedly. He staved off death and misfortune time and again by pledging himself to some mystic entity of great power... then found a way to weasel out of each deal by pledging himself to a being of even *greater* power. Finally all that was left to him was to serve the Solipsist — the Decreator, the Anti-God, a force that embodies the opposite of being.

Ironically, before he could fulfill his pact with the Solipsist and obliterate reality, Archimago died of a heart attack. A group of mystic masters burned his body and cast every spell and rite they knew to bind and exorcise his soul to make sure he wouldn't come back in any form. But in at least one respect they failed, for Archimago continues to influence the Mystic World. Through the books, magic items, and enchanted minions he left behind, Archimago still works to fulfill his many debts and destroy the world. Unwary mystics and would-be sorcerers treasure Archimago's notebooks and tools as sources of easy power, guaranteeing that the master wizard remains an active player in the Mystic World.

Perhaps the most dangerous of Archimago's "relics" is *the Zodiac Working*, a spell of vast power he cast in 1979 that involved forcing twelve of the most powerful members of the Descending Hierarchy (the rulers of Hell) to mate with human women. His goal was to create a group of twelve followers with which he'd conquer the Multiverse. In one of their last missions together, the Fabulous Five thwarted the ritual, and for a time it seemed all was well. But it turns out that the effects of the Working may merely have been delayed, not stopped altogether. At least one supervillain, Frag, displays powers whose energies mystics can directly connect to the Working. It may be that other supervillains out there are part of a group of twelve waiting to form, or that the rest are still to be born....





THAUMATURGY

Mystics in the Champions Universe refer to the stripped-down, flashy, combat-oriented style of magic used by super-mages as *Thaumaturgy*. To cast a spell, a super-mage just waves his hands. He might pronounce the name of the spell, such as, “I call on the Scintillant Suns of Saravane!” or “Let the Baleful Bonds of Balthus ensnare you!” Balls and beams of light appear from the mystic’s hands to strike at his foes, deflect attacks, and do whatever else he wants. The alliterative names often refer to the powerful mystics or dimension lords who invented the spells.

Hog-tying and gagging a super-mage may prevent him from casting spells, but nothing less will do. Despite appearances, super-mages don’t actually use Gestures and Incantations: a super-mage can fire off spells while being slammed with attacks that would ruin any Gestures, and he doesn’t have to call out the spell’s name. Restrained, at $-\frac{1}{4}$, may be appropriate to represent how an enemy could prevent a captured super-mage from casting spells, but even that’s not appropriate in most cases. The greatest masters, including dimension lords, perform magic with no Limitations at all.

Thaumaturgical spells tend to come in many variations. A super-mage might cast a mystic bolt to strike one target, or an area; one time, the spell might blast apart brick walls, yet leave not a mark on another occasion. Shared special effects, or a common origin, link other spells. Therefore, many spells can be bought as Multipowers instead of single Powers (though a character doesn’t need to buy every variation of a spell, or place every spell within its own Multipower).

Here are just a few examples of Thaumaturgy spells:

The Bindings Of Bromion: The dimension lord Bromion, one of the Ordainers of Urizen the Lawgiver, began the use of these potent spells. Bromion hates free will in other beings; he calls it “rebellion.” He shared his Bindings with sorcerers on other planes who also served Urizen, to help them quash “rebellion.” From them the knowledge spread, not always with their blessing. Centuries later, sorcerers of whom Bromion would never approve use the Bindings, too.

Cost Power

- | | |
|----|--|
| 67 | The Bindings Of Bromion: Multipower, 67-point reserve |
| 6f | 1) First Binding: Mind Control 12d6 |
| 6f | 2) Second Binding: Mind Control 10d6, Telepathic (+ $\frac{1}{4}$) |
| 4f | 3) Third Binding: Entangle 3d6, 3 PD/3 ED, ACV (uses OMCV against DMCV; + $\frac{1}{4}$), Takes No Damage From Physical Attacks (see 6E1 217; + $\frac{3}{4}$), Work Against EGO, Not STR (+ $\frac{1}{4}$); Mental Defense Adds To EGO ($-\frac{1}{2}$) |
| 6f | 4) Fourth Binding: Telekinesis (30 STR), ACV (uses OMCV against DCV; +0), Line Of Sight (+ $\frac{1}{2}$) |

Total cost: 89 points.

The Fuzonic Flames: These spells evoke the awesome, fiery energy of the dimension called the Burning Sky. That dimension’s ruler, Fuzon, apparently never objects to anyone tapping the energies of his realm.

Cost Power

- 60 **The Fuzonic Flames:** Multipower, 60-point reserve
- 6f **1) Raw Flames:** RKA 4d6
- 6f **2) Bursting Flames:** RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼)
- 6f **3) Focused Flames:** RKA 2½d6, Penetrating (+½)
- 6f **4) Devouring Flames:** RKA 2d6, Constant (+½), Penetrating (+½)

Total cost: 84 points.

Koriol's Crimson Crystals: Koriol, a mighty sorcerer from the world of Loezen, invented this spell ensemble a few millennia ago, and it soon became popular on other worlds. Swirls of light coalesce into shards of red glass to envelop the target or form a protective barrier.

Cost Power

- 60 **Koriol's Crimson Crystals:** Multipower, 60-point reserve
- 6f **1) Crystal Shell:** Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED
- 6f **2) Crystal Bonds:** Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½)
- 6f **3) Reflective Crystals:** Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED, Backlash (+½)
- 4f **4) Crystal Wall:** Barrier 8 PD/8 ED, 8 BODY (up to 9m long, 3m high, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissable; Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½)

Total cost: 82 points.

The Lightnings Of Larethian: Larethian (or “the Loyal Larethian,” as he’s most often described) was the apprentice and assistant of two different Archmages from the alternate Earth dimension of Kalvrezon. He’s often held up to other apprentice mystics as a model of loyalty, diligence, and respectfulness. But Larethian was a skilled wizard in his own right, for all that he spent most of his long life helping even more powerful mages. He created several spells, but one suite of his magics — a group of attack spells based on mystically-created lightning bolt-like blasts — has become popular with super-mages in many dimensions, including Earth’s. The caster can control the color and general appearance of the lightning bolts if he wishes; most casters make them a single color, such as red or black.

Cost Power

- 75 **The Lightnings Of Larethian:** Multipower, 75-point reserve
- 6f **1) The Lucent Lightnings:** RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+¼)
- 6f **2) The Livid Lightnings:** RKA 3d6 plus Sight Group Flash 6d6; Linked (-½)
- 5f **3) The Lethal Lightnings:** RKA 5d6; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)
- 7f **4) The Labyrinthine Lightnings:** RKA 3d6+1, Area Of Effect (22m Radius Explosion; +½)

Total cost: 99 points.

The Lights Of Luathon: Mystics throughout the Multiverse use this set of eleven spells, which provide both attacks and a variety of useful effects for knowledge, concealment, and deception. The *Lights* range from a laser-like beam to dramatic lighting that makes the user appear powerful and impressive. These spells create globes of light around the caster’s hands, which radiate beams or glows to accomplish a particular effect. Each caster manifests a unique pattern of colors, so the *Lights* are as good as a fingerprint to identify a particular mystic.

According to legend, Earth’s first Archmage, Thanoro Azoic, learned these spells directly from Luathon. In other words, the *Eleven Lights* are so old no one can say what name Luathon now uses, or if this entity still exists.

Cost Power

- 63 **The Lights Of Luathon:** Multipower, 63-point reserve
- 5f **1) The First Light Of Luathon:** Sight Group Flash 8d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼)
- 6f **2) The Second Light Of Luathon:** Blast 10d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼)
- 6f **3) The Third Light Of Luathon:** Blast 6d6, AVAD (Sight Group Flash Defense; +1)
- 6f **4) The Fourth Light Of Luathon:** RKA 2½d6, Penetrating (+½)
- 6f **5) The Fifth Light Of Luathon:** Dispel Invisibility 21d6
- 6f **6) The Sixth Light Of Luathon:** Dispel Magic Powers 14d6 Variable Effect (any on Magic power or spell at a time; +½)
- 6f **7) The Seventh Light Of Luathon:** Sight Group Images, -6 to PER Rolls, Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½), Invisible to Mystic Sense Group (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
- 4f **8) The Eighth Light Of Luathon:** Telepathy 8d6
- 3f **9) The Ninth Light Of Luathon:** Invisibility to Sight and Mystic Groups (but not including the Tenth Light), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)
- 3f **10) The Tenth Light Of Luathon:** Detect Invisibility (INT Roll) (Mystic Sense Group), Ranged, Sense, Targeting
- 1f **11) The Eleventh Light Of Luathon:** +30 PRE; Only For Making Presence Attacks (-1)

Total cost: 115 points.

Mantle Of Mastery: Often also known as *Shields Of Sorcery*, this powerful arcane defense manifests as a sheath of prismatic light around the caster. For the good of heart, the *Mantle Of Mastery* sparkles brightly; for the evil, it shines in dark and murky hues. A magus can sustain the *Mantle* as long as he remains conscious, and it protects against most forms of mystical and mundane attack.

Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense), Allocatable (+¼) (75 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (coloration of Mantle reveals caster’s generally Good or Evil nature, always occurs; -½). **Total cost: 37 points.**





3

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

The Shadows Of Shaldus: This spell wraps a mantle of impenetrable darkness around the caster, making him harder to hit without hindering his own sight at all.

Darkness to Sight Group 2m radius, Personal Immunity (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (17 Active Points); No Range (-1/2). **Total cost: 11 points.**

Wings Of The Zephirim: Also known as *Winds Of The Zephirim*, this spell calls on the spirits who dwell in a dimension of clouds, winds, and storms. Swirls of light lift the magician, and perhaps other people, and carry them through the air or around the world. Many mystics only learn the Tireless Wind form of this spell.

Cost Power

- 45 **Wings Of The Zephirim:** Multipower, 45 point reserve
- 4f **1) Tireless Wings:** Flight 30m, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
- 4f **2) Shared Wings:** Flight 20m, Usable By Nearby (+1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)
- 4f **3) World-Spanning Wings:** Flight 20m, Mega-Scale (1m = 1 km; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)

Total cost: 57 points.

Superhumans and the world of religion have often interacted in strange ways. Initially, some churches and religious leaders condemned superhumans as the spawn of Satan or other unholy forces; a few still believe that today. Others, while not so inimical to superhumans *per se*, question their hubris and habits — and of course virtually all religions express nothing but opposition and pity for supervillains like Dark Seraph, who derive their abilities from infernal powers.

Over time, most religions have come to accept superhumans, taking care to note the good done by superheroes and deploring the cruelty and evil of supervillains. As one theologian famously noted, “Man is made in the image of God. Perhaps superhumans are but God’s image viewed from a different perspective — or more clearly.”

Superhumans such as Ushas (from India) or the Messenger (who fights crime in Texas), who claim to be gods, the descendants of gods, or to derive their power from gods, pose particular problems for established religions. Some religious officials denounce them as blasphemers. Others have remained quiet and reserved judgment.

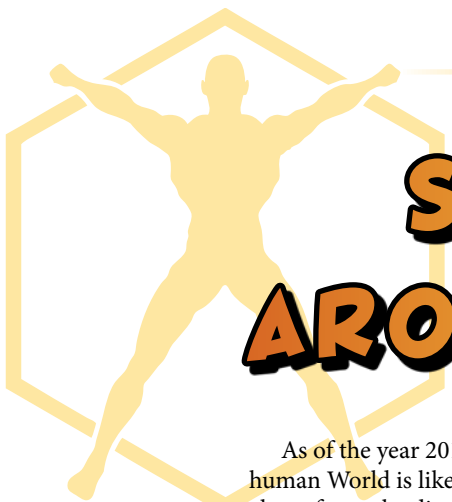
In a few cases, new religions have sprung up *around* superhumans. For example, during the Seventies, a small church formed in New York City to worship the superheroine Archangel, who claimed God Himself granted her the power to battle evil. The Church of the Archangel, never approved of or sanctioned by any other Christian organization, grew in size and strength until 1987, when the object of its adoration was murdered by Takofanes the Undying Lord. The church disbanded thereafter, though some former members claim they still worship Archangel and that she visits them in spirit form from time to time.



CHAPTER
FOUR

**WORLDS UPON
WORLDS**

**THE MULTIVERSE OF THE
CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE**



SUPERHUMANS AROUND THE WORLD

As of the year 2010, here's what the Superhuman World is like across the planet. You should also refer to the discussion about government policies and official superteams beginning on page 40; GMs can consult the GM's Vault for further information on all these subjects.

THE UNITED STATES

North America, primarily the United States, is unquestionably the center of the Superhuman World. In addition to its large crop of native superhumans, supers originating elsewhere often gravitate here, whether for companionship, a better standard of living, more opportunities to commit profitable crimes, or other reasons. Due to its extent, a thorough survey of superhuman activity in the United States is beyond the scope of this book; what's covered here are a few of the more active areas. Some areas of particular importance (Millennium City and Vibora Bay) are covered in their own sections beginning on page 84.

Every major metropolitan area in the United States, and many other places as well, has its share of superhumans. Whether they form superteams (or gangs), or fight (commit) crimes on their own, they're an unavoidable part of American life. The average citizen may never meet one in person, but he reads about them in the news, and sees the aftereffects of their battles and activities, every week.

Besides Millennium City, the most active American superhuman communities are in New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco.

AMERICAN HEROES

NEW YORK CITY

New York City boasts the largest number of established superteams — three — of any city in the world. The oldest and most renowned is *the Justice Squadron*, which got its start in World War II and has remained together (though with numerous changes of membership) ever since. Responsible for, among other things, helping to stop Dr. Destroyer's first attempt to conquer the world in 1975, and foiling an extra-dimensional invasion by the Chaos-Beast and his horde of

reality-warping demonic beings in 1988, the Justice Squadron has earned numerous accolades from the grateful people of Earth. As of 2010, its roster includes the Brawler (a brick and the team's leader), the teleporter Blink, the enormously powerful, mysterious mystic known as the Drifter, the fire-manipulating Flashover, the young energy projector Superstar, and the mystic weaponmaster Tomahawk.

Also of note are *the Sentinels*, an equally prestigious team founded in 1961 (see page 13). Simultaneously friends with and rivals of the Justice Squadron, the Sentinels have had more (and more frequent) membership turnovers than the JS has, but have nevertheless remained extremely effective in the battle against crime and evil. As of 2010, its roster includes Black Rose (a mystic and the team's leader), the super-strong Diamond, the mentalist Diadem, the wisecracking swordsman Bravo, the sonic heroine Dr. Vox, and the shapeshifting Proteus.

But in recent years the team that's attracted the most media attention is a new group of young guns — some teen heroes who call themselves Nova (they've never explained the significance of the name). Led by Decibelle, a charismatic young woman with sonic powers (some tabloids claim she's related to or associated with the supervillainess Howler), Nova was active in the first few years of the twenty-first century fighting drug smuggling syndicates and ARGENT, among others. But one of the team's members, the mystic air manipulator Arcane, was wanted by the police for the murder of a man named Hyrum Weismann, so Nova had no sanction and was constantly on the run from the authorities. In 2006 the team was captured and put on trial after ARGENT predicted one of the team's attacks and anonymously tipped off the police. But the Sentinels uncovered evidence showing that ARGENT had not only set the team up, but was ultimately responsible for Weismann's murder. The members of Nova were convicted of obstruction of justice and other charges, but at the urging of numerous renowned heroes the governor of New York issued a pardon for those crimes. As of early 2007 the heroes of Nova are free people and legitimate crimefighters... though they continue to fight the good fight their own way, rather than with the

flashy costumes and high-tech headquarters of the likes of the Justice Squadron.

New York also has plenty of heroes who don't belong to a team. Some of the more prominent solo heroes who call the Big Apple home include Electrotitan (a powered armor wearer), the Brooklyn Avenger (an acrobat and martial artist who primarily protects the borough of Brooklyn), Shadowman (a stealthy, blaster-wielding hero), and Magnetron (a magnetism manipulator).

Unfortunately, New York's supercriminals are every bit as active as its heroes. According to official estimates, VIPER has at least three Nests in the greater New York area (more are suspected), and obtains as much as one-fifth of its annual revenue from crimes committed within the five boroughs. Destructive superbattles are so common that superhuman insurance premiums are at a national high there.

BOSTON: THE NEW PALADINS

Boston's superteam dates back to the early Sixties, although the current membership has no actual connection with the original group (a loosely-associated team of costumed solo heroes operating throughout New England). The current team consists of four teenagers mutated by a secret ARGENT project; they're mentored by the veteran heroine Dr. Eclipse (who has extensive darkness manipulating powers and is a brilliant geneticist herself). Her team consists of Bodyguard (a nigh-indestructible brick), Lux (a light-manipulator), Python (a stretching brick) and Tandem (who can duplicate any power used against her). The team has enjoyed some successes, including a victory over Generation VIPER — but also its share of defeats, largely due to (a) inexperience, and (b) the tactical gaps in their overall power set (for example, other than Lux, none of them can fly or really have any significant movement abilities). The New Paladins have encountered the kids from Ravenswood Academy and consider them semi-friendly rivals.

CALIFORNIA: THE CALIFORNIA PATROL

Southern California was the home of several superteams in the Sixties and Seventies, but the last of these eclectic groups, the Justice Collective, broke up in 1979. For over a decade there were no superteams protecting California outside the Bay Area. That changed in 1991 when several heroes from the Los Angeles and San Diego area, including Downshift (who can create small timewarping effects, speeding up or slowing down time for herself or others) and Firewall (a fire/heat manipulator), decided to create an informal group to respond to threats too big for any of them to handle. Basically they arranged for anyone who wanted to be part of the "network" and who received a vote of approval from the existing members to receive a special communicator (disguised to look like a watch) so the other members could contact him whenever necessary.

Over the past decade and a half the California Patrol has achieved several notable successes, though its loose form of organization and frequently-shifting membership has kept it from providing the sort of "coverage" that teams like the Champions and Sentinels can. It's smashed two major DEMON plots, exposed and defeated a San Diego VIPER Nest, battled the Ultimates and the Crimelords on several occasions, and in 2006 got involved in a fight-turned-teamup with China's Tiger Squad when the Patrol traveled to the Far East in an effort to defeat a Chinese organized crime group run by superhumans. In addition to Downshift and Firewall, as of 2010 the members include: Faultline (an earth manipulator); Meteor Man III (wielder of powerful cosmic energy like his more famous forebears); Sequoia (a young woman able to grow over 100 feet tall); the Silicon Kid (a moderately-powerful cyberkinetic, no longer a kid but stuck with the name); and the Zodiac Man (a shapeshifter).

CHICAGO: THE PEACEKEEPERS

Chicago has a relatively large and active superhero community. Its best-known and most powerful heroes are the members of the city's only superteam, *the Peacekeepers*. The team was founded in 1973 by three heroes who got together to fight a gigantic sludge monster that had emerged from Lake Erie and was threatening to destroy the entire city. In the two decades since then the team has undergone numerous changes in membership, including disbanding entirely from 1981-82 and 1997-99. The current lineup, one of the most stable in the teams history, consists of five heroes: Dwarfstar (a brick with gravity powers; the team's leader); Arc (an electricity manipulator and teleporter); Inframan (who can transform himself into electromagnetic energy); Jack Flash (a cocky young speedster); and Zenith (who can render herself and other people or objects intangible).

The Peacekeepers are well-known for their longstanding animosity toward VIPER (for among other reasons, the fact that the snakes killed the team's last leader, the Huntsman). In 2004 the heroes struck VIPER a serious blow, uncovering and destroying one of the Nests in the greater Chicago area and capturing two members of Dragon Branch, Verity (a precognitive) and Whipsnake (a whip-wielding weapon-master). The former resided in Stronghold until the 2009 breakout; the latter was incarcerated in a federal penitentiary until VIPER broke him out in 2006. Additionally, in the past few years the Peacekeepers have fought the Crowns of Krim, ARGENT, and an invading army from a dimension called Keprizoth. The team's since used Keprizothian technology to upgrade some of their own systems.

The Peacekeepers maintain their headquarters in the top floors of the world-famous Ketricks Building. They're formally affiliated with DOSPA and enjoy excellent relations with UNTIL and other authorities.



SOLO HEROES

Not every costumed superhero works with a group. Some are the only superhumans in their geographic area, some simply prefer the solitary life, and a few just don't play well with others. Some of the best-known solo heroes in America include: Cascade, a water manipulator from Seattle with a limited degree of power over other natural phenomena; Fallout, the nuclear-powered hero of Phoenix; the Messenger, a telekinetic hero based in Houston who's also noted for his evangelical Christian beliefs; Roundhouse, a brick from Kansas City; Straight Arrow, archeress and defender of Baltimore; Surge, a technologically-gifted powered armor wearer from Atlanta; Thunderhead, the weather manipulator from Cincinnati who fights crime all over Ohio; Voodoo Doll, the gorgeous female mystic from New Orleans; and White Shroud, a mysterious, ghostly vigilante who patrols the streets of San Diego by night.

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DENVER: THE ALLIANCE

Based in Denver, this loose confederation of heroes from across the Midwest is held together by the forceful personality of Captain Glory, a formerly fictional comicbook character brought to life by a teen psychic named Peter Filanger in 1994. Peter himself, now in his early twenties, is a member of the team under the code name Contact; he has powers of transmutation and illusion. The other heroes in the Alliance include Crossbow (a marksman and master hunter based in upstate Colorado), Impetus (a kinetic energy manipulator from Lincoln, Nebraska), Mandala (a psychic energy manipulator from Santa Fe), and the Silver Scorpion (a Mormon ex-cop from Salt Lake City enhanced by a drug similar to Cyberline).

HOUSTON: THE HERO CORPS

Houston's primary superteam is also one of the youngest in America, having been founded in 2003 by La Bruma, a Mexican-American heroine able to turn into clouds of mist. She uncovered a plot by the insidious Brain Trust, but realized she couldn't take on the entire villain team by herself. Through a combination of personal charisma and appeal to their heroic ideals she recruited four other heroes to help her: the Green Knight (a swordsman); Paradox (a telepath); Sparrowhawk (a teenaged mutant with wings); and White Lynx (a were-cat). Together the five of them defeated the Brain Trust's scheme and forced the group to flee Texas altogether to avoid capture by the Texas Rangers. Recognizing the need for a team in the Houston area, La Bruma convinced the others to remain together. In the past three years they've fought the Brain Trust (which wants revenge against them), ARGENT, VIPER, the Ultimates, and various solo villains.

MIAMI: THE WATCH

This collection of low-powered heroes originally banded together to take down the Trujillo crime family in Miami in 1989, but stayed together and received sponsorship from DOSPA to fight crime in the greater Miami area. It often works closely with the DEA to interdict drug smuggling in the Florida and Caribbean region, and has opposed various VIPER schemes on occasion. Sometimes its members travel to Vibora Bay to help the Queen City's heroes cope with major menaces. The team includes Arsenic (an expert marksman and martial artist), Corsair (who uses a powered armor suit), Jetstream (an amphibious heroine who can telekinetically control both air and water), Mage (a powerful mesmerist), and Voltage (who generates powerful bioelectric charges).

PHILADELPHIA: THE LIBERTY LEAGUE

Philadelphia's primary hero team, the Liberty League, has been around since the mid-Seventies thanks to a fairly stable roster and strong ties to DOSPA. It's currently led by the Mechanic, who has no true superhuman powers but wields a wide array of gadgets (he also created the Starracer,

the team's remarkable amphibious jet). His team currently includes Atlas (a brick who claims to be the genuine Greek Titan), Blue Flame (a fire-wielding lawyer), Oak (a woman made of solid wood who speaks to plants), Streamline (a teenage girl able to fly faster than the speed of sound), and Vortex (a powerful telekinetic).

Over the Liberty League's history the team has fought just about every super-menace imaginable, including participating in the Battle of Detroit. The Mechanic and Mechanon in particular are enemies, so the fiendish robot often decides to unleash its schemes in a way that strikes at or inconveniences the League.

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco's best-known super-team is *the Bay Guardians*, an informal collection of heroes, most of them mystics. They have no sanction or formal relationship with the city's government, but have protected both their city and Earth's dimension from threats (mystical and otherwise) on several occasions. The team's current roster includes Eldritch (an eccentric but powerful supermage), Blacklight (who draws psionic force from emotions and creates "light" or "dark" energy from them), Druid (a mystical plant- and weather-manipulator), Hannibal Grey (a powerful mentalist who can manifest his astral form), Stigma (a healer who wields powerful "blood magics"), and Totem (who mystically gains the powers and abilities of various animal spirits).

The Guardians' most notable adventure over the past few years was undoubtedly the team's conflict with the Devil's Advocates in 2005. The Demonologist decided that gaining control of the many "sites of mystic significance" in the Bay Area could boost his power significantly, so he set out to obtain that control through various means. Sometimes he tried to gain access to them legitimately through purchases or other means, but on a couple of occasions he had to attack and seize a site to make use of it long enough to cast his spells. The Guardians narrowly missed capturing him and the Advocates on several of these occasions, but fortunately at a climactic confrontation in Golden Gate Park were able to defeat the villains and disrupt the Demonologist's spell. The only downside was that protective magics prepared in advance by the Demonologist spirited him and his followers away, preventing their capture.

THE FREEDOM PATROL

San Francisco's other major superteam, the Freedom Patrol, is on a slow slide downhill. A major defeat by ARGENT in 1999 took the wind out of the sails of a team weakened by the loss or retirement of several members. In the past five or six years it's barely been active at all. The team's longtime leader, the flying brick Condor, as well as other members like Windshear (an air manipulator) and Retrograde (a limited cyberkinetic), insist that the Freedom Patrol remains in existence, but as far as most observers are concerned it's on life support (at best). It's probably only a matter of time before the remaining members

drift off to join the Bay Guardians, the California Patrol, or other groups... or simply go solo or retire. There have been some reports that the Patrol's approached the Champions about joining the famed Millennium City team as its West Coast "auxiliary."

WASHINGTON, DC: THE CAPITAL PATROL

Compared to many major American cities, Washington, DC has relatively few superheroes (but also relatively less supercrime). The most active heroes in the District are a loose but effective team that calls itself the Capital Patrol. Led by a martial artist/weaponmaster with low-level super-strength who calls himself the American Avenger, its roster includes FalconMan (a flying hero), Pentagonram (a supermage with an "energy projector" emphasis), Monument (a brick), and the Insider (a mentalist).

VILLAINOUS AGENCIES

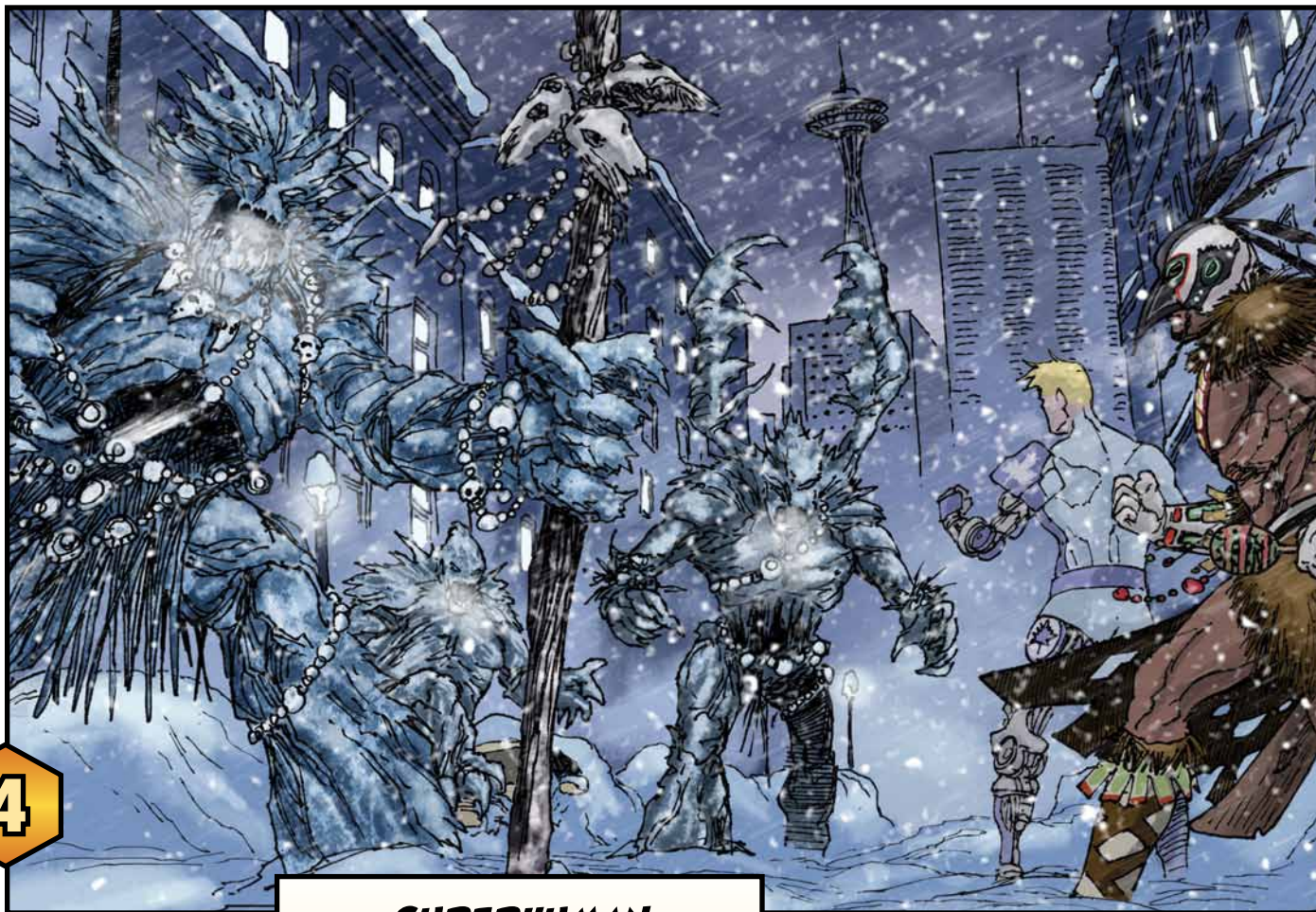
Besides having an enormous community of supervillains (the worst of whom are discussed in Chapter Five), America also suffers from the depredations of villainous agencies. VIPER is more active in the United States than any other nation. In recent years its schemes have included drug smuggling, attempts to steal enough aeronautical technology to build a VIPER spaceplane,

financial fraud, and numerous raids on banks, museums, and similar high-profit targets... among many others.

ARGENT and the Institute for Human Advancement, both of which originated in the United States, remain strongest there. ARGENT has increased its profile in Millennium City significantly, and some authorities speculate that it may secretly be behind some of the corporate donors who funded the "City of the Future." The IHA, flush with cash following a bequest from a wealthy supporter, has stepped up its lobbying efforts to have the government regulate mutants and similar superhumans.

Although it's less flamboyant than VIPER, the occult organization DEMON is no less dangerous. In recent years DEMON seems to have stepped up its activities considerably, with more public crimes, and thus apparently more recruitment, than ever before. Museums, libraries, jewelry stores and gem brokerages, various private collections of antiquities, and even a few banks have been the target of DEMON's schemes. Cities often considered to have mystic significance, such as San Francisco, Vibora Bay, and London, have been the sites of many of these schemes. If there's a single thread linking all these crimes, neither the authorities nor the Trismegistus Council can see it.





SUPERHUMAN BORDER TENSIONS

The supervillain Teleios was responsible for the most serious incident in US-Canada superhero relations. In early 2001, an attack by Teleios's monsters in upper New York state caused the Justice Squadron to cross the border in search of their foe. The Justice Squadron neither had nor has permission from Canadian authorities to operate on Canadian soil or violate Canadian airspace, and ended up accidentally fighting the newly established StarForce, whom the Squadroners mistakenly believed were Teleios's minions.

The Justice Squadron-StarForce incident is far from the only misunderstanding that's ever occurred between American and Canadian heroes, but it was one of the most significant and prompted some action on the issue. With the assistance of UNTIL, both nations began talks to facilitate easy cross-border travel by established superheroes from each country. However, due to fears of terrorism, the Department of Homeland Security has blocked any final agreement. Lately, Canadian authorities have been equally hardline on border issues, especially after a 2006 incident in which "gunslinging" American superheroes defeated by Necrull ended up making the necrotic madman stronger.

CANADA

Although not as super-heavy as its neighbor to the south, Canada has plenty of superhumans to call its own. Since the collapse of the second incarnation of the nation's unofficial "official super-team," the Northern Guard, in 1998, it's relied on local superteams and solo heroes given national sanction when large-scale emergencies arise. As of 2010, the most prominent and active superteams in Canada include:

- the *StarForce*, based in Toronto. Led by Justiciar (a cyborg brick and the most popular hero in Canada according to most polls), its members include the Constable (a low-powered brick who seems to be the incarnation of all that's best about the Mounties), Prism Girl (an energy projector), Dust Devil (a low-powered brick with some speedster and energy projection powers), and Argosy (a mentalist);
- *Les Esprits Gardiens*, the superteam of Quebec, consisting of Le Fort (a growing brick), Voyageur (a telekinetic), Surcheval (a low-powered teleporting brick), and Chatelaine (one of Canada's most powerful mystics); and
- *COMET* of Ottawa, five college students granted powers by a strange alien artifact, each with the same bioluminescence powers.

Additionally, the Canadian army has fielded an official team of military supers, *JTF-X*, in Afghanistan and elsewhere on occasion. The membership of this team remains a top secret matter, and its activities are kept quiet as much as possible. Based on the information that's leaked out, the team seems to include at least two superhumanly strong heroes, one gadgeteer, and a mystic, but the team's exact size and composition are unknown.

For domestic matters, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has the *Steelhead Division*, Canada's equivalent of PRIMUS. Founded in 1986 and led by Mark Dillenger (the sometimes-controversial Eighties superhero Avenger), the Steelhead Division is tasked with tracking, investigating, and if possible capturing superpowered criminals, liaising with local heroes, and so on. The Division has a small number of agents equipped with "Steelsman" light powered armor for particularly dangerous assignments. It also maintains the *Steelweb*, a series of sensor installations designed to track superhuman movement and power sources operating in remote wilderness areas. So far the Steelweb has yet to truly justify its enormous pricetag, though it's yielded some useful data.

Canada's also blessed with a number of powerful solo heroes. These include the cosmically-powered superhero Celestar, the armored hero Forceknight, and the powerful Haida shaman Ravenspeaker of Vancouver. Scattered throughout Canada are a number of other retired and semi-retired heroes like Thundrax, Edmonton's Polar Bear, St. John's Fisher King, Montreal's *Le Astrologue*, Halifax's Surfacers and Fire Maiden, and even marginal heroes like Toronto's "Mr. Maple" and "Leaf." Unfortunately, this number is dwindling rapidly: nearly a dozen local heroes and fledgling teams have been destroyed by Necrull and his minions in the last five years.

CANADIAN VILLAINY

Canada's heroes have many threats to contend against. Many American villains commit crimes there from time to time, and of course organizations like VIPER and DEMON are active there, and the authorities believe Teleios has his primary secret headquarters somewhere in the country. The most recent Gadroon invasion focused on an area in the Canadian wilderness.

In the modern day, the most wanted supervillain in Canada is one of its oldest: a radical patriot and terrorist named Borealis, who first appeared in 1988. Possessing powerful light-manipulation abilities, he's a major threat to world peace and security.

Another major threat facing Canada is *Kigatilik*, a fallen Inuit god known as the "slayer of shamans" whose goal is to kill anyone who protects the Inuit people... which, by extension, includes most superheroes. Kigatilik's deadliest scheme to date was summoning the powerful demon Tilingkoot and inflicting him on the world, but Canada's heroes have no doubt they haven't heard the last of him.

Several other Canadian villains are equally dangerous. First among them is *Baron Nihil*, who in 1999 was somehow released from the extra-dimensional prison where the original Red Ensign trapped him. Nihil killed Red Ensign III in 2007, earning him the enmity of superheroes worldwide.

The most macabre villain operating in Canada today is *Necrull*, a mad doctor whose medical experiments have advanced the cause of "necrotic science" and achieved a mockery of immortality. Over the last two centuries, Necrull has committed hundreds of murders to forward his unholy experiments; some people even suspect he was Jack the Ripper. Active in Canada since the Thirties, Necrull has gradually built his power to its current superhuman levels. He recently absorbed the powers of several members of the short-lived Vancouver superhero team Vanguard (who named themselves after the superhero who fell in Detroit). Necrull is Canada's equivalent of Takofanes, and a very unsettling one at that.

ORGANIZATIONS

Canada's most infamous home-grown criminal organization is *the Hunter-Patriots*, a conspiratorial/terrorist organization whose goal is the removal of British influence and culture from Canada and the severing of the western part of the nation from the eastern. Its key members are bonded with a mystic mark that increases their physical abilities and wield high-tech weaponry. The lower echelons of the organization are ordinary people equipped with ordinary gear.

VIPER's very active in Canada. Quebec's premier villain, *Mechaniste*, took over Montreal's VIPER operations in 2000 and began an aggressive campaign against the Steelheads and local heroes like Le Fort. The villain Redstone took command of VIPER activities on the West Coast, where he's been opposed by Ravenspeaker. Another VIPER-aligned group, The Chain Gang, a team of duplicating thieves, first appeared in 2005 and has committed numerous robberies in Toronto.

MEXICO

Mexico has less superhuman activity than Canada, but still more than most similar nations because of its proximity to the United States. Bloodstone and Temblor of the Crowns of Krim both appear in Mexico frequently, and probably have some connection to Mexico in their original or secret identities. DEMON has likewise launched several schemes here, most involving efforts to acquire Aztec or Mayan artifacts supposedly possessing mystic powers.

Mexico's ruling party, the PRI, once sponsored a small superhero team called *Los Defensores de Méjico* (the Mexican Defenders), but the team fell apart in 1997 when it was revealed that most of the members were receiving significant bribes from the Mexican drug cartels to overlook drug smuggling activity. Nearly all of the members quietly retired; one, El Aguila ("The Eagle"), committed suicide in disgrace; and two,



Acantilado (“Rocky”) and Macahuitl (“Obsidian Sword”), continue to fight crime (mainly around Mexico City).

The most prominent superteam in Mexico as of 2010 is *Los Ángeles de la Guarda* (“the Guardian Angels”), which also operates throughout Central America. Its members include *Señor Atómico* (“Mr. Atomic,” a radiation-manipulating energy projector), *Hallazgo* (“Brainwave,” a mentalist not to be confused with the retired San Francisco crimefighter of the Eighties), and *Puma* (“Cougar,” a brick); it doesn’t seem to have a set leader. In early 2005 it scored a major victory in a battle against VIPER that netted it six powerful VIPER hovercraft, four of which it donated to the Mexican government.

Some of Mexico’s major villains include *Raya de Plata* (“Silverray”), a female speedster who was a key figure in the Defensores scandal; *El Tiburon* (“the Shark”), a shark-man; and the terrifying Tezcatlipoca, avatar of the fearsome Aztec god of the same name. Mexico’s most prominent villain team calls itself the Crime Kings (*Los Reyes de Crimen*). Led by an aquatic brick named *Escollera* (“Breakwater”), it commits crimes throughout Mexico, sometimes branching out to hit Caribbean, Central American, or Southwestern US targets. Other members include *Tronido* (“Thunderclap,” a wind and weather manipulator), *El Rompecabezo* (“Jigsaw,” a disturbing supervillain who can split his body up into approximately two dozen tiny but strong little men), and *Cuchicheo* (“Whisper,” a female mentalist).

SOUTH AMERICA, CENTRAL AMERICA, AND THE CARIBBEAN

These regions of the world see relatively little superhuman activity due to their distance from the centers of the Superhuman World and their relative poverty. For many years the most powerful superhumans in the region were a supervillain group, Terror Inc., which maintained a well-defended headquarters on an island off the coast of Peru. But in 1998, the group self-destructed when two of its members, Scorpia and Feuermacher, murdered its leader, Professor Muerte, and defected to Eurostar (taking much of the group’s technological and data resources with them). Terror, Inc.’s agents abandoned the island (whose facilities were later destroyed in bombing raids conducted by the US Air Force) to join existing criminal groups or form gangs of their own.

The group’s one remaining member, a super-strong brute named Giganto, retreated into the isolation of the Amazon jungle and wasn’t seen for a long time. Eventually, with much of his intelligence restored due to treatments funded by the hero El Dorado (see below), he re-appeared as a member of *La Brigada de Victoria* (“The Victory Brigade”), a superhero team based in Rio de Janeiro but active all over the South American continent, and sometimes in the Caribbean. Its leader is *Capitão Batalha* (“Captain Battle,” a Brazilian weaponmaster and martial artist who uses a gimmicked metal quarterstaff); some of its other members include *El Maestro de Jungla* (“Junglemaster,” a plant manipulator, usually referred to simply as “Jungla”), and *Escarlate Xamã* (“the Scarlet Shaman,” a Brazilian mystic).

The most famous South American superhero is a wealthy young philanthropist, Miguel Esconsada de Villareal, better known to the world at large as *El Dorado*. Although most active in the cities of Brazil, he’s also fought crime in just about every other part of the continent, using his martial arts prowess and gadgets to thwart the schemes of many villains and villainous agencies. More importantly, he’s spent an enormous amount of money and effort on public works projects to benefit the poor and downtrodden.

The superhuman registration laws of the nations in this region vary wildly. Several of them have no registration laws at all; they don’t think they need them, since they have few, if any superhumans and no supercrime problem. Argentina, Brazil, Jamaica, and Mexico all have registration laws patterned after those of the United States, but even less well enforced. Chiquador’s law, on the other hand, resembles China’s: all superhumans must register with and work for the government, on pain of imprisonment or execution. The only publicly-revealed superhuman actually working for the Chiquadoran government is *El Grifo Rojo* (“the Red Griffin”), a flying brick whom some observers say is as powerful as Charm Girl of Japan.

GUAMANGA

A tiny nation between Honduras and Lago de Isabél, Guamanga is afflicted with poverty and despair. A mere five percent of the population owns approximately ninety percent of the land, consigning the peasantry to a life of subsistence tenant farming. Many have turned to the drug trade, or the theft and sale of Mayan relics from archaeological sites, to survive.

In 1994, ARGENT attempted to engineer a coup in Guamanga to oust the die-hard Communist president, Martín Orama-Tijernas, and replace him with a figurehead it could control. Fortunately, the Justice Squadron got wind of the plot and stopped it, doing significant harm to ARGENT’s interests in the region. Long-forgotten superweapons and other relics of the conflict occasionally appear, causing more trouble in this already troubled nation.

In 2005 Menton used his powers to manipulate the Guamangans into electing him their president — the first step in a planned campaign of world conquest. Without any solid proof of what he’d done, the nations of the world wouldn’t act against him. But unwilling to let things stand, UNTIL secretly recruited two teams of mercenary villains and sent them after him. The attack was not going well... but then Rakshasa, disguised as one of Menton’s mind-controlled followers, revealed himself and shot Menton in the head. Menton was confined in Stronghold until he “awakened” in 2009 and freed himself, precipitating the second major breakout from the super-prison.

CHÍQUADOR

This tiny nation, wedged in between French Guiana and Brazil, has been causing problems in eastern South America since 1979, when General Lorenzo João Garrastazu e Silva overthrew the government and declared himself President For Life. In power since that time, he has commenced a military buildup that worries the other nations in the region. As yet he has made no moves to use his army and air force, but he must have something in mind for them, given the money and attention he spends on them. A lot of observers, including many in the United States, keep a nervous eye on events in Macapa (the nation's capital).

COSTA AZÚL

An archipelago consisting of three principal islands and several smaller ones located south of Jamaica and Haiti, Costa Azúl has a well-deserved reputation as a haven for drug smuggling, money laundering, and other criminal activities. In 2003 its former leader, the notorious Colonel Enrique Pineda, was implicated in an attack by a South American villain team, *Los Aplastantes* (“the Crushers”), on Washington, DC. In response the US invaded Costa Azúl in 2004 and overthrew Pineda. Since the US ended its occupation in 2006, a series of councils and leaders has tried to steer the country down a better path, but it remains better known as a hotbed of criminal activity than a tourist destination.

VILLAINS

The most powerful villain associated with South America is Eclipsar, who's mostly laid low since escaping from the Guardhouse in 2004. Her darkness powers are so vast that she can stop the sun from shining over entire continents, and the authorities are very concerned about what she may be planning.

Brazil's most notorious superteam, *Os Depredadores* (“The Predators”), has been around for nearly a decade and a half. Besides *Bruxo Negro* (“the Black Sorcerer”), the team's super-mage leader, the other current members of the team include *Caimão* (“Caiman,” an alligator-man with devilish cunning and vicious natural weaponry), *Avalanche* (an energy projector with vibration powers), *Gritador* (“Brawler,” a grotesquely-muscled, hideously-scarred brick), and X (a strange, possibly extradimensional, being with powers of intangibility, invisibility, and teleportation). Mostly the Depredadores commit robberies and similar crimes, and they've pulled off more than a few spectacular heists during their time.

EUROPE

Outside of North America, Europe (especially Great Britain) has the most active and visible superhuman community in the world. With the European economy going strong, supercrime is on the rise, as the likes of VIPER take advantage of the situation.

The most prominent and dangerous supervillain group in Europe as a whole is Eurostar, which even operates in America on occasion. Led by Danar “Fiacho” Nicole, a diplomat turned terrorist, Eurostar seems to commit crimes as much for the sheer love of destruction and panic as anything else. In recent years the group's become more powerful than ever, adding two members — the super-strong *der Westgote* (“the Visigoth”) and the bestial Pantera. Aside from the conquest of Europe, the group's agenda is known only to itself; its usual crimes — bank robberies, terrorism and assassination for hire, industrial sabotage and espionage — may simply be preludes to some greater scheme.

Although most European supers (particularly villains) are primarily associated with a specific country (such as Siegfried, a German brick), they tend to commit crimes and participate in plots throughout Europe. Given the common currency, and the ease with which they can cross borders, there's usually little reason to restrict themselves to one nation. British supers tend to be an exception to this rule, though.

SUPERHERO REGISTRATION

Most nations in Europe require some type of official registration for superhumans, though the strictness, onerousness, and enforcement of such laws vary widely. France maintains the strictest registration laws in Europe: superhumans must fully reveal their identities and powers and register with the Bureau of Superhuman Activity. Failure to register within a month of manifestation of superhuman abilities (the definition of which itself remains the subject of much debate within French jurisprudence) is a major felony with mandatory fines and prison sentences, though in practice France usually only prosecutes this crime in full alongside other crimes — most violators can get any charges dismissed simply by complying with the law. France's policies have led to a small but significant number of superhumans leaving the country, most notably the hero *Incendie* (“Blaze”), who moved to Quebec in 2002 rather than reveal his identity.

Other European countries with similarly harsh registration laws include Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, and San Marino. Italy throughout the Eighties and Nineties had strict but rarely-enforced registration laws on the books. Its Parliament overturned many of those laws after the last two rounds of elections, so the situation there remains in flux; most superhumans have not registered. Cyprus has mandatory military conscription for all of its superhumans, though Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot supers disagree over which army to join; both groups routinely flout the law.

Most other nations have some form of superhuman registration, but follow the leads of Great Britain and Germany in using the carrot instead of the stick (see page 49). Registration isn't mandatory in either nation, but without it a superhuman cannot receive any sort of government sanction for his activities and will be prosecuted for any

laws he may break (as well as being fully financially responsible for any property damage or other liability he creates). In Great Britain, the Ministry of Superhuman Affairs oversees the registration and sanctioning of superhumans, controls the activities of the New Knights of the Round Table (the official government team), and coordinates with the efforts of private teams like the London Watch when appropriate. Germany has a similar program, but rarely grants official government sanction even for the most popular and respected local superhumans (and what sanction it does grant is temporary). Nations with similar programs include Albania, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

A third group of countries has no particular laws requiring registration, usually (but not always) because there's little superhuman activity within their borders. These nations include Armenia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. Bosnia and Herzegovina have no official laws regarding superhuman registration, but rumors persist of military officials simply seizing young superhumans for covert military units.

THE BRITISH ISLES

Superhumans are both more common and more active in the British Isles than in most parts of the world. Thanks to the many sites of mystic import throughout the region (Stonehenge and other stone circles, places associated with King Arthur, and the like), and its dimensional proximity to Faerie (also called the Land of Legends; see page 108), the British have more than their share of magical heroes and villains.

BRITISH SUPERS

Besides the New Knights of the Round Table (page 49), the Scepter'd Isle is graced with numerous superheroes who defend it against threats from within and without. Most operate solo, occasionally teaming up, or temporarily allying themselves with the New Knights, when confronting an enemy too powerful to take on alone.

Albion, a mysterious humanoid being seemingly made out of some sort of solidified white energy, claims to be the living embodiment of the nobility and heroic nature of the British people. First appearing during the Battle of Britain in World War II, he's shown up periodically since then whenever terrible danger confronts the British Isles. All efforts to contact him at other times, or to identify who he is, have failed.

Almost as powerful as Albion, but much less mysterious, is Hyperion, an immensely powerful hero with the ability to generate effects based on what he calls "the burning light of truth." A 2002 conflict between Hyperion and the alien supergladiator Firewing destroyed a large swath of

London, which Hyperion himself has since helped to repair. Extremely popular with his countrymen, and as wealthy as a lord, Hyperion frequently appears on television and at charity events.

London's best-known and most beloved super-team is *the London Watch*, which is active not only throughout the islands but in mainland Europe as well. Its members include Blazon (who wears a suit of mystically-powered armor and rides a flying horse), Yeoman (a warrior with high-tech archery equipment and weapons), Repulse (a telekinetic), and Swift Swallow (a flying speedster). The group has clashed with Eurostar repeatedly, and hopes to bring those criminals to justice someday.

Several mystic superhumans — Shade, a kindhearted vampire; Drune, who claims to be an elven-prince from Faerie exiled to this world for the sin of falling in love with a mortal woman; Rhiannon, a sorceress who takes her name from a Welsh mythological character; and Taliesin, who can generate magical effects with his harp-music — periodically band together to fight mystic threats, such as a recent attempt by several Fomorians (mis-shapen, even demonic, evil giants from Faerie) to ravage Cornwall. They have no name for themselves, though overenthusiastic reporters have dubbed them "the Nightwatch." They all guard their privacy and secretly identities carefully, though Rhiannon has responded to some inquiries from her Internet fan club.

Well-known British supervillains include: Crusher, who wears a powerful suit of powered armor; Thrash, a mutant energy projector of punk-anarchist bent; the Cat, a thief and martial artist; Samhain, a sort of fear-spirit; and Clockwork, an eccentric and malevolent gadgeteer.

IRISH AND SCOTTISH SUPERS

Scotland has been the home of a number of supervillains, most of them, for some reason, women. Besides Cateran, who actually spends almost no time in Scotland, there's Black Annis (a haglike witch), Lamprey (an aquatic supervillainess), and Stormcloud (a weather controller able to project powerful bolts of lightning from her hands), among others. Scotland's best-known male villain is Claymore, a sword-wielding super-strong thug with a taste for violence and a love of bloodshed. Scotland has a few superheroes, too, like Evergreen (a plant controller) and Dreamscape (a psionic and dream-manipulator).

Ireland's superhumans are almost all mystical in nature. Superheroes such as Cuchullain (supposedly a "reincarnation" of the legendary spear-wielding hero) and Dweomer (a powerful mystic) battle against supervillains like the Redcap (a clawed, extremely resilient magical mutate) and the aforementioned Fomorians, as well as foreign villains who show up to exploit Ireland's mystic sites.

FRANCE

Other than its official “Sixteenth Bureau” superteam (see page 49), France is home to a number of superheroes. Tricolor’s daughter, going by the codename Seine, can duplicate herself into two heroines calling themselves Left Bank and Right Bank. She protects Paris, mostly fighting street-level crime and VIPER. The Chevalier, a flying energy projector, fights crime all over France, as do the winged gadgeteer *Autour* (Goshawk) and the powered armor brick Bastille.

On the other hand, France has also seen plenty of supervillain schemes and attacks within its borders. VIPER is quite active there, and DEMON is said to have spent time investigating the mystic potential of prehistoric cave-painting sites. The IHA has strongly lobbied the French government to pass anti-superhuman legislation on several occasions. The supervillainess Gravitator often commits crimes in France, as do Venin Vert (Green Venom, a mutant with powers of chemical control), Obélisque (Obelisk, a brick whose strength is said to sometimes rival Grond’s), and Bouc (Scapegoat, a mentalist), among others.

GERMANY

As noted on page 49, the Germans have traditionally been a little reluctant to talk about their relations with superhumans. Today they remain comparatively rare in German society, though that seems to be changing as the public becomes more accepting of them. The best-known German superheroes include *Mondfeuer* (“Moonfire,” an elemental mystic), *der Bogenschütze* (“the Archer,” who uses a high-tech bow and trick arrows), and *Zeitgeist* (“Spirit of the Times,” a low-powered chronomanipulator). Panzer (a well-armed powered armor character with plans to restore Nazi rule to Germany), *der Schwarze Tod* (“the Black Death,” a disease inflictor), and Neutron (who can vastly increase his own density and strength) are some of the villains native to Germany.

RUSSIA

In addition to the heroes mentioned on page 50, the Motherland is also home to a number of heroes, including *Vulnapyездka* (“Waverider,” an aquatic hero, a former Soviet submariner mutated by exposure to the engines of nuclear submarines) and *Zemletpyasenee* (“Quake,” an earth and stone manipulator). Since the year 2000, a group of several heroes has banded together periodically to fight Russian crime, mostly in and around Moscow. Informally known as *Russkiye Zashchitniki* (“The Russian Defenders”), its members include Stalnoy Volk, Zemletpyasenee, a telekinetic named *Syeryebro* (“Silver” or “Miss Argent,” so called because her powers manifest a silvery-colored light-like energy), the superhumanly-strong *Mamont* (“Mammoth”), and a former Spetznaz soldier who calls himself *Kapitan Ukrayina* (“Captain Ukraine”), who has superhuman reflexes and intelligence

to complement his military training and special weapons. Sadly, another superhero associated with the group, the shapeshifter Taiga, was killed in battle with Eurostar in 2004 (or so his comrades believed; in fact he was reincorporated and needed nearly five years to re-assemble his body and then recuperate).

Russia has harsh laws regarding superhumans. Registration of superpowers with the authorities is required, and failure to obey this law can constitute a capital offense. Despite this, most superhumans flout the law, and no authority seems to actively enforce it. Superhumans from other lands entering Russia are required to report to the authorities, register temporarily, and obtain permits to use their powers. However, given the nature of the sorts of superhuman crises that attract heroes to the area, there’s rarely time to follow the official procedure. Russian law also requires superheroes to report their “activities,” including any use of a superhuman power (even for mundane purposes, or clearly unobjectionable ones like telekinetically pulling an old woman out of the path of a speeding bus). Superhumans obey this law even less frequently than the registration law.

RUSSIAN VILLAINS

Several superhumans created by, or once employed by, the KGB and other arms of the Soviet government have often become supercriminals (either for themselves, or in the employ of Russian organized crime gangs); some of these felons include *Slun* (“the Bishop,” a low-grade mentalist; see page 120), *Molnya* (“Lightning,” an electricity manipulator), *Tekhniki* (“the Technician,” a cyberkinetic), and *Beek* (“the Ox,” a brick). The Warlord’s also known to maintain some bases in eastern Russia

Outside of Russia, the best-known Russian supercriminals are a team of six villains known as *Red Winter*. Formerly superhuman soldiers working for the Soviet military and the KGB, since the USSR’s collapse they’ve gone to work for themselves... or whoever can pay their price.

LARISAGRAD

Located deep in the Ural Mountains, Larisagrad was once a top-secret Soviet city whose inhabitants worked mostly on Directorate Black-12 (the Cold War era superhuman-soldier program) and related research. Merely attempting to enter the city without proper authorization was a capital offense. Since the collapse of the Soviet regime, all government work in Larisagrad has ended. To support themselves, the scientists there work as contractors and consultants for whomever will hire them... including more than a few supervillains, according to UNTIL reports. Larisagrad officials vehemently deny these charges.

In 2005 UNTIL received even more disturbing intelligence. According to its clandestine sources, the criminal corporation ARGENT has effectively taken control of the city. Further reports since then tend to confirm this information, though the Tribunal doesn’t yet have rock-solid proof.

OTHER EUROPEAN SUPERHEROES

Some of the other superheroes active in Europe include:

Beowulf, a Danish strongman who’s adopted a medieval motif for his costume and speech (no relation to the American superhero of the Sixties with the same name)

Corrente (“Chain-mail”), a Portuguese brawler who also uses chains as weapons.

Domn Bronz (“Mr. Bronze”), a Romanian brick.

Fűzfa Tél (“Winter Willow”), a Hungarian superheroine with cold-based powers.

Fortuna, a luck-manipulating Italian superheroine.

Geschwindigkeit (“Velocity”), a German speedster.

Previsione, a hero with precognitive powers.

Striker, a Polish speedster.

Zamara, a Gypsy clairvoyant and mystic.

Zmierzch (“Twilight”), a Polish darkness manipulator.

4

AFRICA

Africa has fewer superhumans, and less superhuman activity, than any other inhabited continent besides Australia. What superhumans it does have tend to cluster at the opposite ends of the continent, in South Africa and Egypt. It has no established superteams; if necessary groups of heroes team up to fend off a particularly dangerous villain or other threat, but that's just a temporary arrangement.

Egypt, naturally enough, has spawned more than a few superhumans connected with its ancient civilization and the gods it once worshipped — villains like Anubis (who actually operates mostly in America) and the Living Sphinx (a half-human, half-beast killing machine of devilish cunning), heroes like Maat (supposedly imbued with the powers of the goddess of justice) and Pharos (an energy projector-brick). But that's not the extent of its contact with the Superhuman World; New Karnak, the VIPER's Nest in Cairo, is a sophisticated, high-tech criminal operation with no real connection to Egyptian history or mysticism, for example. (Its other major Nests on the continent, the Black Tower in Lagos and the Compound in Johannesburg, are equally powerful.) DEMON has displayed a strong interest in Africa's mystical sites and artifacts, but so far hasn't been able to gain a permanent foothold there as far as the authorities can tell.

South Africa's superheroes are often relatively young and inexperienced — the older supers from the days of apartheid (including the Boer, the

country's greatest hero), unable to adjust to the new ways, retired after the old regime fell. Today's heroes, such as Blaze and the Gazelle, mostly fight organized crime and dangerous militant rebel groups, but occasionally battle supervillains like Ironhorn.

Few reports have reached the rest of the world about superhumans in the interior of Africa, though undoubtedly some do exist. Rumors have filtered out about one called Pridemaster, who can summon and control lions and uses them to wage bloody war on poachers, and another, Ogun, a Nigerian with power over all things metal. Several African nations, including Kenya, Lurranga, and Nigeria, are heavily involved in the drug trade and other forms of transnational crime, and sometimes thus attract the attention of foreign supers.

LUGENDU

On the West Coast of Africa, wedged in between Nigeria and Cameroon, lies the small country of Lugendu, an oppressive place ruled by a man named Joseph Otanga from a luxurious palace in the capital of Nahambane. After appointing himself President-For-Life following a bloody coup in 1995, Otanga saw to it that many of his remaining enemies simply “disappeared.” No one knows what happened to them, though natives who dare to speak of such things claim Otanga possesses dark powers of sorcery that he uses on anyone he suspects of plotting against him. Outsiders scoff at these stories as mere superstition, noting how easy it would be for a man in power to make his enemies “disappear” through mundane means like bullets and shallow jungle graves.

4



WESTERN ASIA

The Middle and Near East has become an increasingly politically volatile area over the past decade, with Israeli-Palestinian tensions, the American military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, Iranian nuclear ambitions, Islamic fundamentalism, drug smuggling and organized crime in the tiny nation of Taqiristan, concerns over oil reserves, and many other factors creating tension there and abroad. Superhumans have often become involved in these matters; for example, the US has sent Ameriforce One (page 42) into Iraq several times.

Although native superhumans are relatively uncommon in this part of the world, they're not unknown. According to most experts (including the Department of Defense's Superhuman Survey), the most powerful superhero group in the Middle East is the Children of Atatürk, a team sanctioned, but not directly employed, by Turkey. Its members — team leader *Güneşpalev* ("Sunfire," an extremely versatile energy projector), *Çekiç* ("Hammer," a brick), *Gizli* ("Occult," a mystic and mentalist), and *Yörünge* ("Orbit," a speedster and skilled detective) — are truly dedicated heroes who've put their lives and souls on the line more than once to save innocents from supervillains, alien invaders, extradimensional horrors, and other threats to the Turkish people and state. Immensely popular at home, and well-regarded elsewhere in Europe and Asia, their unwavering support for maintaining the secular nature of the Turkish government is widely perceived as significantly weakening the Islamic fundamentalist elements in that nation.

Sayeret-19 ("Reconnaissance Unit 19") is Israel's main force of government superhumans, though it's not a "team" in the usual sense of the word — the agents go where their commanders order, and do what they're told; some of them have never worked together. As of 2010 the Unit has approximately a dozen members, including Ballistic (a weaponmaster so adept at gunplay that he can, literally, shoot the wings off a fly), the Adept (a kabbalistic mystic), *Ha'Pele* ("the Wonder," a mentalist), and Ambush (a former UNTIL agent who gained strength, resiliency, and shape-shifting powers when captured by Teleios and subjected to DNA-manipulating experiments). A large staff of well-trained soldiers armed with the latest in high-tech gear and weaponry supports the Unit's operations. These have included participating in "peacekeeping" activities, which raises concern among the Arab states (particularly when battles between them, and Palestinian supers like the Liberator, cause extensive destruction in areas inhabited by already-impooverished peoples).

Since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, several of the superhumans employed by him have become villains. Chief among them is *Turs al-Shab* ("Shield of the People"), who murdered the American hero Janissary in 2003. Western analysts believe Turs's powers resulted

from a joint program between Hussein's Iraq and its close ally Awad (see below) to create superhuman soldiers, and fear that there may be more like him out there.

Other superhumans known to be active in this region include the Dagger (a superhumanly fast killer who claims to possess the knowledge and skills of the ancient sect of the Hashishim), Caracal ("Desert Cat," a Saudi superhero), *A'sifa Rumliya* ("the Sandstorm," a powerful sand- and earth-manipulating superhuman who protects the Arabian Desert), the Fist of Allah (the official superhero of Iran), and the Ifrit (a fire-wielding supervillain who thinks he's a creature from Arabian legend).

AWAD

The tiny nation of Awad, between Yemen and Oman on the Indian Ocean, is becoming an increasing world security problem. The sultans of Awad, most of whom are closely related to its iron-fisted ruler Thamar el-Hiri, are incredibly wealthy thanks to their country's vast oil deposits, and care little for how their actions affect others if they can increase their own power and bank accounts. Harsh Muslim fundamentalists, they intensely dislike Western culture in general and the United States in particular, and have for years funded numerous terrorist organizations. Awad supported Iraq during the Gulf War and Iraq War.

Awad is in effect a dictatorship, with Sultan Thamar el-Hiri controlling all aspects of public (and, as much as possible, private) life. The *shari'ah* (Islamic law) is strictly enforced, and stringent efforts are made to stamp out all Western influences. Maiming and the death penalty are common punishments, even for infractions that would be considered relatively minor in the West. Visitors are usually watched, even followed, wherever they go. Despite these policies, most Awadis are relatively happy, since the government uses petroleum income to guarantee every citizen a minimum level of income.

In recent decades Awad has invested extensively in technology, ranging from computers to bio-engineering. As a result, today it's considered one of the centers of world technological development, though many high-tech firms deal with it reluctantly (if at all) due to its repressive political climate. Some Western officials fear that the Awadis use their high-tech expertise to equip terrorists with weapons and devices that would otherwise be well beyond the reach of most such groups. They also suspect strong ties between Awad and ARGENT and VIPER.

TAQIRISTAN

Another "trouble spot" in the region that particularly worries UNTIL and other law enforcement agencies is Taqiristan, a tiny country wedged in between Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. Once part of the USSR, it declared its independence in 1992. Since the mid-Eighties it's been led by Bodrush Meklani, formerly a high-ranking Soviet official in control of the area but since 1992 "President for Life." He rules his tiny

country like a cross between a medieval baron and a gang boss: he controls everything and takes a cut of every business transaction, large or small, that occurs in Taqiristan.

Since Meklani has no scruples about where his money comes from, Taqiristan has become a major transshipment point for heroin and other drugs, a popular place to launder money, and a haven for criminals with nowhere else to go. As long as a “business partner’s” money is good and he doesn’t threaten Meklani’s rule, the President for Life doesn’t care who he lets into his country.

As far as Western observers can tell, Meklani has no designs on other countries in the region; he’s content with his own piece of the pie, as long as no one threatens him. He doesn’t seem to have any superhuman soldiers or agents, though he could certainly afford to hire some if necessary.

INDIA

Besides the large and powerful Superhero Division (page 49), India has many superheroes. India’s superhumans tend to congregate in Bombay, Calcutta, New Delhi, and Madras; few rural areas have any heroes (or villains). Like heroes in the US and Europe, they often form teams. The most prominent of India’s non-official superteams is *Mumbai Santari* (the Bombay Sentinels, no affiliation with the Sentinels of the United States). Led by *Chamakana Dhala* (“Shining Shield,” a martial artist and weaponmaster), the team includes *Bhutatodana* (“Demonbreaker,” a mystic), *Tapalahara* (“Heatwave,” an energy projector who controls heat and flame), *Surkha Khamba* (“the Ruby Monolith,” a brick), and *Badhana* (“Stretch,” a wisecracking malleable-bodied metamorph). Some of the independent heroes include Himalaya (whose growth powers make him superhumanly strong), the Mongoose (master of a long-lost fighting art), Pantheon (a duplicating heroine), and Spark (a fire-controlling dwarf).

India has a superhuman registration law similar to that of the United States. (So do Pakistan, Indonesia, and most other nations in the region, though some, such as Myanmar, harshly repress superhumans of every stripe unless they’re formally enrolled in government-controlled squadrons.) But the law is at best sporadically enforced. Unless a recent incident has caused the

government to crack down, it usually has better things to do than pursue superhumans who are violating the registration law. As of 2010, the enormous amount of good publicity heroes have received for their disaster relief efforts (including helping victims of the 2005 tsunami) has effectively made the law meaningless for a long time to come.

India’s heroes have their work cut out for them, for the dark side of India’s superhuman community is just as large and diverse. Major native supervillains and other threats include the Black Tiger, the knife-wielding Katar, the weather-controlling Monsoon, the Lord of Rats, and the demonic Survaresh. VIPER, DEMON, and ARGENT are all known to be active on the subcontinent, and Dr. Destroyer has shown an unhealthy interest in it as well.

EASTERN ASIA

Thanks to the economic and technological expansion that began in the Eighties, superhumans have become much more common in the Far East than they once were. Martial arts- and technology-oriented power sets are the most common, but by no means the only types found there. For example, Silverwing, a Singaporean superhero, is a mutant energy projector, and the Filipino supervillain Atoll received power over both earth and water due to an industrial accident.

CHINA

As discussed on page 48, China controls the Tiger Squad, the world’s largest team of superheroes, and uses harsh, strictly-enforced laws to prevent any other supers (whether of heroic or villainous bent) from operating independently within its borders. A number of superheroes in cities, including *Bái Hóu* (“White Monkey”) of Shanghai and *Dìshēng Lóng* (“Whispering Dragon,” a teleporter) of Hong Kong, openly defy the government’s laws, fighting crime and helping people in their own way (and often supporting pro-democracy movements). Though labelled “villains” by Beijing, they are not...

...but China has its share of actual superpowered criminals. They include *Lam Kuei* (“Blue-Faced Demon”), who commits many assassinations and other crimes with his mystic martial arts powers; the pain-manipulating mentalist Ying, who’s helped propel the upstart Red Dawn Triad to a position of prominence in China’s underworld; the powerful sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu; an armored villain called “the Overlord,” sometimes referred to as “China’s Dr. Destroyer,” and the mysterious Taoist demon-wizard who calls himself Li Chun the Destroyer. DEMON, VIPER, and more recently ARGENT are also active in the Middle Kingdom, and it sometimes seems as if the Warlord’s constantly trying to foment armed conflict in the region.

KOREAN SUPERHUMANS

Though not as active or populous as China’s or Japan’s, Korea’s superhuman community contains a few superhumans of note. Its heroes, such as Hwarang (master of Korean martial arts), Soaring Eagle (a mutant with flight powers), and Bold Mountain (a brick), have been of service to the Korean people many times. Korean villains include the Strangler (a North Korean agent and Hwarang’s arch-nemesis), the Eel (a malleable-bodied thief and killer), and Trigram (an *I Ching*-manipulating wizard).



JAPAN

Japan possessed few superhumans prior to the mid-Sixties. Compared to the United States, Germany, and Great Britain, Japan had only a handful of superhumans on its side during the war, including the powerful sorcerer Iron Father, Himeki (a cousin of Emperor Hirohito who was supposedly gifted with solar powers by the sun-goddess Amaterasu), and Tsunami (protector of the Japanese seas and destroyer of many American ships). No one's ever provided an acceptable explanation for this lack, or why so many of Japan's superhumans had mystic powers.

Most experts do agree, however, that the flowering of Japanese superhumanity that began in the early- to mid-Sixties was a result largely of the effects of the radiation released by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. At that time, mutant superhumans were more common in Japan than in most parts of the world, and they remain so today. Combined with Japanese scientific and technical knowledge, which led to a plethora of powered armor superheroes and gadgeteers beginning in the early Eighties, Japan has one of the most vibrant and colorful superhuman communities in the world. Many Japanese fans practically worship their superhuman idols, who often become wealthy through image licensing for toys and movie deals. Japan's most popular heroes include the powered armor-wearing Tetsurionin, the mystic martial artist *Akumashibaru* ("Devil-Fighter"), media darling Charm Girl (an extremely strong flying brick), and the teen gadgeteer *Shōnen no Kufū* (Gadget Boy) and his robot buddy Gokin.

While heroes in China and Singapore rarely form teams (since fear of arrest seems to make them all loners), Japan has four major superteams.

The most prominent one is the Tokyo Super Squad. Led by *Tō* ("Tower," a powered armor wearer), its members include *Kiku* ("Chrysanthemum," a mystic martial artist), *Fidobakku* ("Feedback," a sonic energy projector), and *Kōdōtai* ("Zodiac," a shapechanger).

But where superheroes abound, so do supervillains. Japan's heroes often have their hands full dealing with Kagamishoki, the mirror-demon; the wind-wielding samurai Kazonin; *Kazan* ("Volcano"), a powerful villain with lava- and earthquake-related abilities; the reality-manipulating "criminal from the sixth dimension" *Teikei* ("Trapezoid"); and the powered armor martial artist *Tetsuryu* ("Iron Dragon").

AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA

Supercrime is relatively uncommon in Australia, and so superheroes are as well. The land Down Under has no formal organization of superheroes, either governmental or private, but is home to a few solo heroes. Walkabout is mentioned on page 48; others of note include Harrier (a flying superhuman with extensive martial arts and weapon training) and Brigade (defender of the city of Sydney). Most of their opponents are superhuman thieves and robbers, or weird menaces spawned from the Dreamtime. One notable exception is Taipan, a fast and deadly superhuman assassin who's currently incarcerated (see page 121).

There are virtually no superhumans in Oceania. Heroes and villains rarely even visit, much less live in, that isolated part of the world.

4

ANTARCTICA

The only continent not permanently inhabited by man, Antarctica sees even less superhuman activity than Oceania. From time to time a world-threatening master villain has built a base there, but so far as is known, none currently live on the perpetually-frozen continent. However, some officials in the United States intelligence community claim their data suggests that Dr. Destroyer has built a facility down there, or once had one that's now abandoned.



MILLENNIUM CITY

"We hope for better things; it shall arise again from the ashes."

—Father Gabriel Richard, pastor of Sainte Anne's Church, after Detroit burned to the ground in 1805.

In the Champions Universe, where Detroit, Michigan once stood now stands *Millennium City*, a glittering, high-tech metropolis. Born of fire and destruction, it was rebuilt as the "City of the Future," incorporating the best America and mankind had to offer, and in less than two decades has already become one of Earth's great cities.

HISTORY

Founded in 1701 by the French as a fort and fur-trading outpost, Detroit was captured by the British in 1760 and passed to the control of the United States following the Revolutionary War. Although mostly destroyed by fire in 1805, it was quickly rebuilt and became a major commercial center. Its position on the Great Lakes made it a prominent port and trading center, and later home to industry and manufacturing. The presence of Henry Ford and other early automotive pioneers made it "the automobile capital of the world," its name synonymous with cars and vehicle manufacturing.

Detroit's first hero, Mr. X, made his debut in 1939 as part of the wave of costumed adventurers who sprang up around the country in that year. Unlike most adventurers of the day, he had no superhuman powers and eschewed a flashy costume; instead, he wore a plain suit and tie, with a respectable hat and only a domino mask to hide his identity. A brilliant detective and formidable brawler, Mr. X was the alternate identity of crime reporter Peter Dix. He regularly battled mobsters and thugs throughout the war years. He even helped the Defenders of Justice on one notable case in 1943 when a supervillain called the White Knight used subsonic broadcasting devices to foment race riots in neighborhoods where blacks had recently moved in to work in munitions and equipment factories.

After Mr. X's retirement in the mid-Fifties, Detroit had no superhuman champions until 1966, when football star Reggie Morgan became

the Scarlet Shield. Throughout the civil rights struggle (including the devastating 1967 riots that caused \$150 million in damage), Scarlet Shield tried valiantly to keep peace while battling racism, with limited effect. Morgan died in 1974 when he was shot by assassins working for organized crime. But by that time, several other minor heroes had made Detroit their home, though they never coalesced into a superteam.

Detroit's next prominent hero was Shadowboxer. Joey Greene was a moderately talented boxer who'd crossed the mob and gotten shot in 1981... but his body was dumped at a construction site that was also the location of some illegally-stored toxic waste. Greene eventually awoke with the ability to generate fields of black energy around his hands and lower arms; he could expand the field to fill a small area and blind his opponents, or use it to deal out devastating punches that could smash through a brick wall. Shadowboxer became a highly effective vigilante, crippling the mob in Detroit as well as thwarting several attempts by VIPER to establish a Nest in the area.

THE COMING OF THE DESTROYER

In July of 1992, however, a menace came to Detroit far beyond the abilities of any one hero to handle. Doctor Destroyer, whose plans to take over the world had only been defeated by the narrowest of margins in the past, had just suffered his most severe setback with the loss of his island base, Destruga, to his enemies. Determined once and for all to eliminate the American heroes who'd constantly interfered with his plans, Destroyer likewise decided the Earth would be much easier to control without the United States getting in his way. Retreating to a secret laboratory he'd built beneath an abandoned factory in Detroit, Destroyer designed a gigantic tractor beam with which he planned to draw a series of small asteroids into a collision course with Earth — or, more precisely, North America. He intended to duplicate the effect of the asteroid that had caused the extinction of the dinosaurs, but on a much smaller scale controlled by him, with the resulting ecological devastation and dust clouds rendering America helpless and likely straining the ability of the rest of the world to defend itself.

Putting his fiendish plan in motion, Destroyer hired several mercenary supervillain teams across

the country to distract and harass the heroes he knew would oppose him. Then he activated his beam, seizing control of a cluster of asteroids and sending them hurtling through space directly toward Earth. On July 23rd, several heroes became aware of this threat (in part because a group of students from Ravenswood Academy stumbled on Destroyer's hidden base) and joined forces to stop it. They split into two teams: heroes with powers useful in space went to stop the asteroids; while an earthbound team set out to find and defeat Destroyer himself.

The spacefaring team was at first unable to stop the asteroids despite multiple efforts, until the hero Vanguard sacrificed himself by crashing into the largest asteroid at top speed, pulverizing it into harmless dust. Unfortunately, Destroyer simply selected another group of asteroids with his beam and made a second attempt to carry out his evil plan — leaving the team of heroes back in Detroit as the only hope for victory. While some heroes dedicated themselves to a perhaps-futile effort at evacuation, others located Destroyer's well-guarded base. There, they found themselves in combat with several of Destroyer's robotic Destrroids and a horde of villains and mindless monsters he'd recruited or built to hold them off, including Grond and Glacier. The assembled heroes of Earth, with more arriving constantly to join in the battle, fought their way through Destroyer's "army," demolishing much of the city in the process. Several brave heroes lost their lives in this battle, the largest superhuman confrontation in recorded history.

After hours of combat, a few valiant heroes won their way past Destroyer's minions — only to find Destroyer himself waiting for them. With his own weapons, Destroyer slaughtered several of them, casually turning aside counter-attacks with his powerful armor. But their efforts distracted Destroyer long enough for the superheroine Electron to find the Asteroid Attractor's controls and reverse its polarity, saving Earth. And as the battle wore on and more and more heroes arrived, it began to look as if the day would at last be won.

But Destroyer could not be defeated so easily. Battered and bleeding, his armor cracked in a dozen places, he refused to give up. "Not to the likes of you," he said when MeteorMan, *de facto* leader of the Sentinels, demanded his surrender. "If Destroyer must fall, he will fall to his own hand, not to his enemies." With a mocking bow, he triggered his last, and greatest, weapon: an orbital bombardment cannon. A beam wider than a city block struck the ground where he stood, obliterating him and killing two more superheroes instantly. Before the heroes in space could find it and stop it, the cannon swept its deadly ray across much of the city. The resulting devastation levelled most of the city — and what was left was quickly engulfed by fires, flooding, or both. All that was ever found of Destroyer was his shattered helmet.

Official records of the death toll resulting from the city-wide battle and Destroyer's suicidal strike eventually listed nearly 60,000 fatalities.

HEROES SLAIN IN THE BATTLE OF DETROIT

The following heroes, now all represented by statues in Memorial Park in Millennium City, were killed by Dr. Destroyer during the Battle of Detroit:

Vanguard, an immensely strong flying superhero, regarded by most scholars as the most powerful superhero yet seen on Earth;

Amazing Grace, who said she was given holy powers by an angel, but whose healing powers weren't enough to preserve her own life in the face of Destroyer's attacks;

Crusher, a telekinetic hero who'd received his powers in a VIPER experiment;

Eclipse, a mischievous, playful heroine with darkness powers who claimed to be a sentient sunspot;

Firefight, a pyrokinetic who mostly used his powers during the battle to save innocents from the numerous fires that sprang up, and was killed by Dr. Destroyer when he responded to the call for help during the final battle;

Flechette II, a gun-wielding former street criminal turned hero who was slain by Destroyer's orbital cannon blast;

Goblin, a human who gained his powers by bonding with a strange alien spirit, but who wasn't strong enough to keep Dr. Destroyer from breaking his neck;

Icestar, one of the most experienced and beloved heroes from the early Eighties;

Johnny Hercules, possessor of the "Hercules Force" (page 17) that made him super-strong... but not as strong as Destroyer;

Nimbus, who had power over both wind and cold, which she used during the battle to suck power away from the monstrous Glacier and create a snowstorm to slow down some of Destroyer's forces;

Radion, an electricity controller created by Destroyer based on Gigaton's DNA, but who'd turned on his creator years ago, and suffered Destroyer's revenge for his betrayal during the battle;

Shadowboxer, one of Detroit's few native heroes, who was crushed to death by Glacier;

Swashbuckler II, successor to a famed Golden Age hero of the same name, whose body armor wasn't enough to save him when he tried to stop Grond's rampage during the battle;

Tiger, leader of the Sentinels, who'd led UNTIL's attack on Dr. Phillippe Moreau's Ural Mountains compound but was accidentally injected with one of Moreau's sera during the fight and transformed into a man-tiger hybrid; and

Vigil, a mutant with energy powers who often worked for the Department of Defense and spent much of the battle fighting Destrroid robots.

MILLENNIUM CITY VITAL STATISTICS (2010)

Population: 3.88 million (SMSA), 1.2 million (urban center)

Race: 44% White, 41% Black, 10% Asian, 5% Other

Religion: 44% Protestant, 40% Catholic, 9% Jewish, 7% Other

Major Industries: Heavy industry, light manufacturing, technology, pharmaceuticals, steel

Nickname: The City of the Future

4

City Government: Mayor, nine-seat City Council

Mayor: Calvin Biselle

Few buildings, especially in the city's center, remained standing and intact; numerous neighborhoods were virtually wiped off the face of the Earth. Fifteen superheroes lost their lives as they struggled to stop Destroyer. Today, a memorial to their bravery stands in the center of Millennium City's Memorial Park.

THE AFTERMATH, AND THE REBUILDING

In the days following the disaster, the world mourned the massive losses. President George Bush, standing in the middle of the field of rubble that was once the Renaissance Center, delivered a passionate speech that challenged both superhumans and corporations alike to rebuild Detroit before the end of the millennium. He promised a series of tax breaks for companies willing to move to this new city once it was built, and to donate their expertise and technology toward making Detroit the leading city of the twenty-first century.

American business and America's superhumans rose to the call. Over the next seven years, Detroit was rebuilt from the ashes. Corporations such as Cambridge Biotechnologies, American Business Machinery, Harmon Industries, Duchess Industries, and countless others committed vast resources to the project. And several superheroes volunteered time and energy to the cleanup project; for example, for a month Diamond, MeteorMan, and Golem worked alongside cranes and bulldozers helping move massive girders, while Element Man transmuted rubble into harmless gas and Diadem telepathically coordinated their efforts.

But the planners had more than funding and superhuman help, they had vision. Responding to President Bush's impassioned speech, they decided

not just to re-create Detroit, or to copy any other city in the world. They chose instead to take advantage of the opportunity to design an all-new city — one incorporating the latest technological advances and sociological and architectural theories. New buildings were erected with space-age materials. Roads were built with transmitters designed to control automobiles operated within the city limits — and to minimize the need for cars, a massive and effective maglev monorail was built around and through the entire city.

As the city was slowly rebuilt, residents returned. One by one, businesses began work, new universities opened their doors to students, and citizens started their lives over in all-new homes. By late 1999, the efforts of all the countless thousands of builders, planners, and contributors were rewarded when the city, renamed Millennium City, was officially declared finished and re-opened. (Though in truth, as of 2010 there are still parts of the city in need of serious work.) A special ceremony in the new Memorial Park dedicated it to the memory of all those who'd fallen to protect the city. Dozens of large corporations moved their headquarters to the revived downtown, and their ubiquitous presence enabled them to elect a City Council friendly to their needs.

New superheroes were drawn as well. Defender relocated to Millennium City in early 2001 and recruited several heroes to form the Champions, the region's first superteam. Doctor Silverback moved there along with his sponsor, Cambridge Biotech, in 1997. And they were far from the only ones; over the past ten years, Millennium City's become a virtual mecca for superhumans — heroes and villains alike.



LAYOUT

Millennium City, formerly known as Detroit, is one of the most prominent centers of superhuman activity in the Champions Universe. With a population of approximately 1.2 million, Millennium City proper takes up slightly less space than its former self. The boundaries of the city are generally considered to extend from Livernois Street on the west and southwest down to the Detroit River, over to Hayes Avenue on the eastern side up to the Millennium Highway (formerly known as the “8-Mile Road”) in the north. That border leaves some of what was formerly Detroit outside, primarily to the west; some has been subsumed into the city of Dearborn, while the section to the northwest is now a suburb called North Detroit.

With large amounts of space to work with, the architects of Millennium City saw little need to build *up*; only in the Renaissance Center, something of a showcase for the entire project, will you find extremely tall buildings, and in the rest of the city the largest buildings are only 30-40 stories tall at most. Instead, the engineers built *out*, and filled each level — the most notable and ubiquitous features of the city are the multilevel walkways, ramps, arches, and bridges connecting many buildings. Every block in downtown Millennium City has several levels of walkways above the street, most enclosed but usually at least one with openings on the side (also allowing the wind to pass through) and some totally open to the elements (and closed to foot traffic during bad weather).

The main geographic and cultural dividing line splits Millennium City between the east — where you’ll find the Renaissance Center, most skyscrapers, the best shopping, most of the arts and entertainment venues, and a generally better standard of living — from the west (which contains the docks, Chinatown, some industry, the city jail, and various working-class neighborhoods). The western part of the city is actually physically *lower* than the east, thanks to the effects of one of Dr. Destroyer’s weapons; getting from one part to the other requires using ramps (for cars) or staircases (for pedestrians).

The Detroit River, which passes to the south and divides Millennium City from its Canadian sister city Windsor, connects Lake St. Claire to Lake Erie. This cold and swift river moves an enormous amount of freight, although most of the shipping business in the area actually runs through Windsor. Commuters can cross this river either by quick ferry service, by under-river tunnel, or by one of two aerial gondola lines, which are very crowded during rush hour.

LEAVE THE DRIVING TO US

When someone enters Millennium City by car, the first thing he notices is that his car’s no longer under his control! One of the City of the Future’s most amazing innovations is a “cyber-smart traffic system” that works within the city limits. Devices implanted in the roads and in

small roadside modules control all vehicles within the city, restricting how fast they can move. All the driver has to do is indicate where he wants to go by moving the wheel and using his turn signal (though the system prevents radical movement such as running off the road). Some cars, designed specifically for use in Millennium City, can be steered with the driver’s voice commands alone. There are still stoplights and stop signs, but they’re not necessary — the VCS (Vehicle Control System) makes sure no car hits any other car (or objects, or people). Since this system was put in place, the number of auto accidents within the city limits has never exceeded a dozen a year, and none of the few that have occurred have involved major property damage, serious injury, or death. Finding ways to avoid the VCS’s restrictions is a major concern with criminals who want to make a fast getaway from a robbery!

But you don’t have to drive if you don’t want to — Millennium City’s designed to be pedestrian-friendly. There are aboveground walkways connecting buildings, each lighting up at night when motion sensors detect movement nearby. The walkways, streets, and sidewalks contain powerful heating elements that keep snow, ice, or even standing water from accumulating. Many buildings have rooftop parks or gardens, taking advantage of the space available at higher levels to create a more comfortable urban environment. It’s possible to cross Millennium City in several directions without ever descending to street level, and some citizens take pride in doing so as little as possible.

As a visitor walks through Millennium City, he notices the flashy video billboards, some of which utilize three-dimensional “hologram” technology. Large displays are mounted on the sides of tall buildings, but there are smaller ones on walls at ground level as well. On most street corners one can also find “Info Kiosks,” small stands where vendors sell newspapers and snacks while large screens broadcast news and advertisements. Each of these kiosks also features private phone/Internet access booths, separated by screens which turn opaque when a user enters.

Visitors who stay for extended periods learn about some of the other unique features of Millennium City. The libraries and schools have state-of-the-art computer systems and store the vast majority of their data electronically. Every building within the city limits is wired for ultra-high-speed Internet access. The city’s governmental systems use the latest equipment; for example, the voter rolls are online, and voting itself is fully automated and can be done from the privacy of home, vastly increasing turnout.

Obviously, a city as wired as Millennium City draws an enormous amount of power, and the electricity supply is an ongoing concern. The city is covered with solar panels, which take up much of the roof space of taller buildings. Northeast of the city along the shores of Lake St. Claire are numerous “windmill farms,” each with thousands of small turbines spinning in the breeze.



The primary sources of electricity remain the two nuclear plants in Monroe, thirty miles south (known as “Fermi 2” and “Fermi 3”) and a dozen fossil-fuel plants. Several scientists in Millennium City, including Dr. Silverback and his colleague Dr. Abnel Ali, are committed to solving the city’s energy supply problems.

GOVERNMENT

Millennium City is the largest city in Michigan and the county seat of Wayne County. The mayor, elected in 2004 and reelected in 2008, is Calvin Biselle, a Democrat. Biselle is a black man, 46 years old, divorced with two children. He receives strong support from the local unions, the casinos, and the young, “hip” workers who’ve moved to Millennium City in the last few years to take high-paying programming and engineering jobs. Biselle is notorious for his public “misstatements” — he regularly mangles the English language and makes numerous factual errors in speeches and other public appearances that his staff immediately corrects in hurried “clarifications.” However, Biselle strongly supports the arts (both classical and contemporary — he numbers among his personal friends several rap artists, actors, and writers), is socially progressive, and projects a youthful, energetic image. He is up for reelection again in 2012 (the last time term-limit laws allow him to run), and is favored to win again as the Republicans in Millennium City seem resigned to waiting until he’s forced from office.

Mayor Biselle is a widower who dated actress Leah Ross for several years, but hasn’t had a steady female companion for awhile now. His daughter Brianna, a bright, gregarious young woman, attends Millennium City University.

While the Mayor controls the executive functions of city government, the City Council handles the legislative and fiscal considerations. The nine-seat Council is largely made up of moderate conservatives selected and supported by the corporations that built and run Millennium City. One notable exception is Councilman ReeAnn Cook, a Chippewa Indian who represents the 5th District (which includes two of Millennium City’s three Indian-run casinos).

The City’s Police Commissioner is Ruth Arnold, formerly head of Old Detroit’s Organized Crime Task Force and a thirty-year veteran. Well-regarded for her ability to tie mob heads up in administrative red tape, Arnold has inherited a force deeply divided between young “techie” armed with the latest cutting-edge science and equipment and an aging force of Old Detroit’s veteran cops holding on for their pensions. Millennium City has a police force of 10,000, approximately 70% of whom are officers.

Millennium City’s internal government frequently finds itself competing with Wayne County’s government, including the County Executive Leonard Berman and County Prosecutor Daniel Watson. Compared with the city, the rest of Wayne County frequently considers itself underfunded, especially the cities of Dearborn, Livonia, and North Detroit.

THE SUPERHUMAN WORLD

Millennium City is one of the hubs of the Superhuman World, with a level of costumed activity that some experts think has already equalled, and maybe even surpassed, that of New York City. Its chief defenders are, of course, the Champions, one of the most powerful and popular superteams in the world. The Champions have an “auxiliary” program for certain hero allies; current auxiliary members include simian super-scientist Dr. Silverback, the martial artist Nightwind, the gadgeteer Ultratech, the brick Blockhead, and the blaster-armed Crusader (who spends most of his time fighting crime on the west side). Former member Nighthawk sometimes provides the team with his investigative expertise as well.

When the Champions or their auxiliary aren’t available, another team, the Millennium City 8 (or “MC-8”) often steps in to fill the breach. Members Commando Rubberbando, El Aguijón (“the Sting”), Lady Liberty, Megaera, Psiphon, Raaktor, Stalker, and Steadfast first came together when the Champions disappeared during the “Reality Storm” crisis of 2004, and are always willing to help out when crime or disaster strike.

SUPERVILLAINS

Of course, the reason there are so many heroes in Millennium City is that plenty of villains commit crimes there. Practically every supervillain in the Champions Universe, major and minor, has been involved in some sort of scheme or caper in the City of the Future. Even worse, Millennium City’s often the target of major supervillain attacks, such as the Mega-Mechanon incident or Takofanes’s “Blood Moon” scheme.

Villains who are particularly associated with Millennium City include: Brainchild; Devastator; Fenris; the bizarre killer Freakshow; Grenadier; the supernaturally lucky mercenary Hazard; the insect-powered Hornet; Interface; Riptide; Shrinker; “armorer to the supervillains” Weyland Talos; ZigZag; the criminal mentalists of PSI; and the Crimelords. And if that’s not bad enough, VIPER’s extremely active there (the authorities suspect it has at least three major Nests in the area), and both Mechanon and ARGENT are thought to covet the city’s high-tech resources and systems.

GANGS OF MILLENNIUM CITY

Additionally, Millennium City has a fairly serious gang problem. Most of the gangs have their “turf” on the west side of town, but by no means all of them. Taking their cue either from the gaudily-garbed superhumans around them, or perhaps the movie *The Warriors*, many of the gangs dress in distinctive styles and adopt specific mannerisms or habits. They include:

- the *New Purple Gang*, the largest and toughest gang in the city, led by the powerful telekinetic Kevin Poe, a sworn enemy of the supervillain organization PSI;
- the *Black Aces*, who wear face paint and bowler hats and give their leaders card-inspired names;
- the *Cobra Lords*, a biker gang whose members favor chains and knives as weapons; and
- the *Maniacs*, who dress in bizarre ways and act like they were escapees from an insane asylum.



HUDSON CITY

On the southern coast of New Jersey sits the large, bustling metropolis of Hudson City. A center of finance, industry, culture, and art, it’s also widely recognized as one of the most crime-ridden and corrupt cities in the United States. Crime (both organized and disorganized) is rampant, public corruption flourishes, and innocent citizens take their lives in their hands if they go into certain neighborhoods after dark... or even in broad daylight.

Although Hudson City is home to several costumed vigilantes as well as a number of criminals who seem to possess weird “powers” that may or may not constitute superpowers (albeit very low-level ones), no powerful superhumans live there, or even visit the place. By some unspoken agreement, the criminals and crimefighters of Hudson City (as well as the nearby smaller city of Fell’s Point) keep to themselves, and superhumans stay far away.

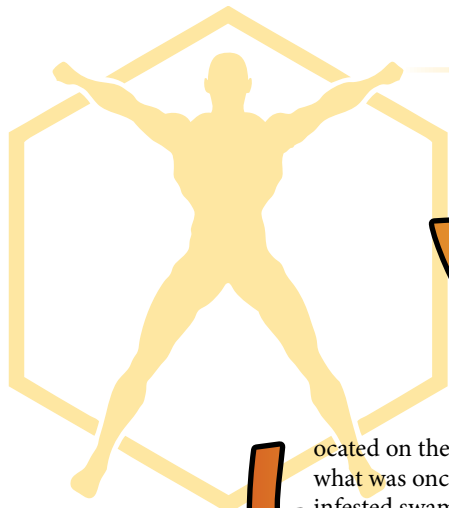
For more information on Hudson City and its inhabitants, please refer to Hero Games’s Dark Champions line of modern-day action-adventure and vigilante crimefighting games.

MILLENNIUM CITY UNIVERSITY

Straddling the boundary between the Theater District and Northside, Millennium City University is a large, elegantly-designed campus. It consists of four concentric “rings,” plus outlying related facilities and support buildings: the Central Quadrangle; the Inner Ring; a loop road; and the Outer Ring. It has 22,000 undergraduate and 5,000 graduate students (not including students at Sakarian School of Law or the MCU Medical School), with a roughly 50-50 men-women student body. Several superheroes, including Defender and Dr. Silverback, have taught courses there at one time or another.

MCU offers nearly 100 possible majors, ranging from traditional liberal arts subjects like History, English, and Anthropology to more “vocational” subjects such as Journalism and Accounting. MCU is regarded as strongest in the subjects of electronic engineering, computer science, superhuman studies, sociology, psychology, and women’s studies; its law, engineering, and medical schools also consistently earn high rankings.

MCU’s colors are Red and Gold (the red is a distinctive shade now known as “MCU red” in some circles). Its mascot is the Vanguard (named in tribute to the fallen superhero of the Battle of Detroit, though “the Vanguard” is used in a more abstract sense; the mascot who appears on school logos and in costume at sports events is dressed more or less like an ancient Greek soldier).



VIBORA BAY

Located on the Florida panhandle coast in what was once a snake- and mosquito-infested swamp, Vibora Bay is a strange blend of old and new — a modern city that clings to its old roots and old ways. It's a place where despite the sunny, humid days, a certain darkness always seems to lurk in alleys and cellars, and there's a mysterious chill that runs up and down one's spine....

HISTORY

Vibora Bay was first settled about three hundred years ago, toward the end of the seventeenth century, by Spanish explorers. Its broad, relatively deep bay made it an ideal place for ships to visit, even if it wasn't always the nicest place to live. More than a few settlers died of strange diseases in the early years, and the snakes that gave the place its name never seemed to diminish in number. Even today it's not unusual for a resident to wake up and find a snake warming himself on the patio... or in the house!

During the years of British colonization of America, and on into the Revolutionary War, Vibora Bay grew fat and prosperous selling to both rebel and Redcoat alike. Even after the city became a part of the United States under the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 and Americans began settling there in great numbers, it retained its own distinct culture — a blend of Spanish and the strange customs and patois of the many African slaves that lived and worked in the area. Somehow, Vibora Bay seemed to change people to fit it, rather than changing to fit its new inhabitants.

The city remained a bustling and wealthy trading center until Union blockades during the Civil War brought trade to a screeching halt. Vibora Bay weathered most of the War pretty well, but in the end it suffered horribly when Major Roderick Burnham, an underling of General William T. Sherman, treated it not much differently than Sherman treated Atlanta. The survivors were left with a city devastated by weeks of shelling and intermittent fires, but rather than complain they rolled up their sleeves and got to work, rebuilding wherever they could and building anew where they must. Surprisingly, few of their slaves, now free men and women, left the area — but just as surprisingly,

there was little tension between former slaves and former masters, unlike many other regions of the defeated South.

Before long trading ships and railcars were entering the city in full force once again and life resumed along more or less the same lines as it had before. For the past century and a half, Vibora Bay has coasted along, slowly growing, but never experiencing true bursts of expansion and modernization like so many other Southern cities. Something about it seems to defeat the fast modern lifestyle, slowing people and events down to a more sedate pace. Viborans point out with pride how many of their buildings are the same ones from the Reconstruction period (or before), and how many of their customs — like the annual Easter Festival, a riot of colorful parades, excessive drinking, and lewd behavior — remain almost unchanged from the early days.

In the twenty-first century, Vibora Bay has become a city of contrasts. Although not untouched by the technological revolution of the late 1900s — the city houses some important high-tech industries — its heart lies still in the past. Life there has a certain quality all its own, unlike that of any other city in the world, and the Viborans wouldn't trade it for anything.

LAYOUT

Vibora Bay originally grew along the waterfront, and that remains the oldest and most heavily developed part of town. Although the center of the business district has shifted somewhat to the north, the oddly archaic-looking and quaint waterfront buildings nevertheless hold many offices, services businesses, and even residences. Major industries, particularly shipbuilding, have spread east and west along the coast, while the rest of the city grows north from the central waterfront through what was once swamp and lowland (making parts of Vibora Bay distressingly prone to flooding).

Much of the city is split along east-west lines, with the eastern part (Easton) being mainly white, and the western part (Weston) mainly black. The dividing line tends to be High Street, which roughly bisects the city, but this varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. The city's best-known tourist attractions — Blackman's Square, where

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VIBORA BAY VITAL STATISTICS (2010)

Population:
3.02 million (SMSA),
877,000 (urban
center)

Race: 49% White,
38% Black, 8%
Hispanic, 5% Other

Religion:
51% Protestant, 33%
Catholic, 11% High
Apostolic, 3% Jewish,
2% Other

Major Industries:
Agriculture; fishing;
light manufacturing;
oil; publishing; ship-
building; tourism

Nickname:
The Queen City

City Government:
Mayor; city
controller; ward-
based City Council

Mayor:
Richenda Barker

City Controller:
Preston Richardson

once the slave market was held, and the High Apostolic Church, home to the strange religion of the same name — are both in Weston, as are over half of the city's best nightclubs and entertainment spots... but so are some of its darkest alleys.

Vibora Bay is noted, and often studied, for its architecture. According to some scholars, there are more buildings in the old Spanish styles in Vibora Bay than any other city in North America, and students can also find evidence of Georgian and Victorian architecture in a sort of mish-mash that only a Viboran can truly understand. The streets, particularly near the waterfront, are often cramped and twisting, making it easy to get lost, and giving the city something of an Old World feel. More than one visitor, uncertain of his bearings, has later reported that as he wandered around trying to make heads or tails of his map, the very buildings seemed to subtly lean over and glare at him.

THE SAN SEBASTIAN SWAMP

North of Vibora Bay proper is the San Sebastien Swamp. While nowhere near as large as the Everglades, the San Sebastien remains one of the most extensive undisturbed natural areas in the state. Parts of it are protected as both state and national wildlife preserves, while others are open for public hunting and fishing.

For the most part, the San Sebastien is unsettled and undeveloped. Periodic attempts over the centuries to penetrate deeper into the swamps, or even to drain parts of them, have always met with failure thanks to the thick undergrowth, swarms of biting insects, copious venomous serpents, and countless other difficulties. Despite these problems, here and there some loner or family has set up a shack and somehow made a life for himself amidst the snakes, stench, and periodic flooding. Some families have lived there

THE HIGH APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The High Apostolic religion, founded in Vibora Bay and mostly confined to that city, is a strange, supposedly Christian faith, an offshoot with both Catholic and Protestant roots practiced almost entirely by blacks. In truth its roots are older and darker, and lie far back in the native religions of Africa, which when brought to this country metamorphosed into what most people call voodoo. Although the modern Church claims to have grown away from those practices and become a simple Christian faith, albeit one with some unusual customs, many in Vibora Bay don't accept that explanation. It's widely believed in certain circles that the High Apostolic Church, or at least some elements of it, continue to participate in voodoo rituals similar to, but definitely distinct from, the kind still practiced in Haiti (where, the Church freely admits, it does much missionary work).



for generations, shunning contact with the outside world as much as possible. Viborans refer to such people as “swamp folk,” and consider them inbred and backward.

But the Swamp’s most infamous denizen isn’t some hairy-palmed fisherman armed with a shotgun — it’s the Skunk Ape, Vibora Bay’s own contribution to the world of cryptozoology. Eight feet tall, and possessing a stench that could floor a charging rhino, the Skunk Ape first entered popular lore in the Twenties, though reports of a mysterious “swamp-man” date back to Revolutionary War times. According to the most common tales, the Skunk Ape lives by catching and eating small animals... and sometimes humans who venture too far into the swamp! Others believe he’s a gentle giant who just wants to live by himself in peace, or that he’s some sort of “protector of the swamps.” People who believe the latter tale often attribute the problems that various developers have had trying to build in or drain parts of the San Sebastien to the Skunk Ape, claiming he vandalizes construction equipment and causes other problems that make building in the swamp impossible.

Cryptozoologists have advanced many theories to explain the Skunk Ape, though they’ve uncovered remarkably little evidence of “his” existence (mostly just a few grainy photographs showing roughly a humanoid “being” with what might be plants and mud stuck on its body). Most who believe “he” exists think he’s actually an unknown

species of primate that lives in the swamp, or perhaps a surviving clan of Neanderthals. More extravagant theories claim he’s a space alien, an insane, immortal superhuman, or some sort of robot.

THE SUPERHUMAN WORLD IN VIBORA BAY

Unsurprisingly given the history, culture, and feel of the city, superhumans in Vibora Bay favor the mystic. There are a few technology-oriented superhumans, and a mutant or two, but most superhumans in the area have mystic origins or powers. Mystics from other places — such as Dark Seraph, Witchcraft, Takofanes, and Talisman — often come to Vibora Bay for reasons of their own, and DEMON is said to maintain a large Demon-hame somewhere in the San Sebastien Swamp.

Vibora Bay has no superteam of its own, but several independent heroes call the Queen City home. They include Black Mask, the tenth hero (and first woman) to wear the mantle of America’s first costumed adventurer; Juryrig, a gadgeteer with a wicked sense of humor; Brother Thunder and Sister Rain, a (possibly married) couple who have mastered many of the powers of voodoo; the aquatic hero Amphibian; Redsnake, a martial artist who takes his name from that of an unusual local species of rattlesnake; and Dr. Ka, a sorcerer said to have once studied under the god Thoth, but who fell from the god’s path to seek his own way in the mystic realms.

Perhaps the most unusual superhuman figure in Vibora Bay is a strange man who goes by the name Robert Caliburn. He wears simple clothes (jeans, t-shirt, a faded old Army jacket, fingerless gloves), and his face makes him seem like he’s about 25 — but his eyes have a hundred-year stare that many people find unnerving in one so young. He smokes constantly, yet never coughs... nor has anyone ever seen him use a match to light his cigarettes. A few folk have said they’ve seen him accompanied by a large lizard of some kind, though most dismiss such tales as urban legends. What is known for sure is that all the mystics of the city, superheroic and mundane, accord him wide latitude and a deep respect for reasons they won’t explain. What you can also count on is that if there’s trouble in the Queen City, you’ll probably find Caliburn right at the heart of it.

Vibora Bay has its share of crime and villainy as well. In addition to mundane lawbreakers — such as Guy Sweetland’s organization, Sweetland’s competitor Clark Robinson and his underlings, or the Sovereign Sons street gang — there are plenty of superpowered criminals. Some of the most prominent include the Cirque Sinister villain team, the mysterious undead assassin Deadman Walkin’, the demonic sorceress Valerian Scarlet, and the duplicating “one-man street gang” Mr. Gemini. Other villains who seem to visit Vibora Bay frequently include Black Paladin, Esper, Hornet, Leech, and Morningstar.

THE ELEMENTAL GEMS

One of the mystic items Robert Caliburn owns is the Flame Gem, which is one of the four *Elemental Gems*. Despite their name, they’re not associated with the four Aristotelean elements, but instead with the Four Elements of Mankind: the Earth from which he was made; the Soul that God gave him; the Flame of his intellect and creativity; and the Chaos that so often resides within his heart. Caliburn doesn’t know who owns the Soul Gem or Chaos Gem (if anyone — both were last mentioned in chronicles from the Renaissance and may still be lost). The owner of the Earth Gem is an old enemy of his: Cairngorm, the archdruid of a malefic human-sacrificing cult from the British Isles.

Like Caliburn, anyone who owns a Gem is vulnerable to attacks from the other Gems. Each of them is “attuned” to the others (especially its opposite [Fire-Earth, Soul-Chaos]), and this allows more of the force of an attack to affect the target.

Individually, each of the Gems holds great power — Caliburn has only barely begun to unlock the might within the Flame Gem, and only in the most basic way of literally enhancing fire-based magics. Were one man to obtain all four Elemental Gems, he would wield ultimate power over the Four Elements of Mankind, and thus over Men. Caliburn (and other right-thinking folk) want to prevent this, since placing such power in the hands of a fallible Man would lead to havoc, destruction, and evil. But he would like to know where they are so he can keep tabs on them.

HIDDEN LANDS AND ANCIENT SECRETS



In the minds of most people, the world is a place defined by what they see on maps. But unbeknownst even to historians and scholars, there's more to the world than what people read about in atlases. Hidden from the rest of humanity, but known to at least some members of the Superhuman World, are several realms and peoples long thought lost, or whom normal folk consign to legend and myth.

ATLANTIS

Many millennia ago, the realm of Atlantis was founded on a large island of great mystic power. Legends told in Atlantis to this day say that an ocean-god, whom the Atlanteans call Poseidon when speaking with surface-dwellers, brought the first inhabitants — a farming couple, Evenor and Leucippe — to the island. There they discovered *orichalcum*, a strange mineral or metal found nowhere else on Earth. Reddish-orange in color and similar to copper in consistency, orichalcum holds the “charge” of enchantments with great facility, which makes magical devices created with orichalcum powerful and easy to craft.

Evenor and Leucippe had a daughter, Cleito, who bore to Poseidon ten sons, the founders of the Ten Families of Atlantis. First and greatest of Cleito's sons was Vondarien, who ruled over all the Dominion of Atlantis for its entire existence. Immortal and powerful, Vondarien had wisdom to match his strength, and was beloved by all Atlanteans. His brothers — Gadrius, Ampheres, Euaemon, Mneseus, Autochthon, Elasippus, Mestor, Azaes, and Diaprepes — though not so mighty and wise as he, were nevertheless noble and true-hearted, the perfect men to help found so great and wondrous a kingdom.

During the so-called Atlantean Age, dated by Theomistekles Venedictos of the Trismegistus Council as approximately 32,000 to 30,000 BC, the Dominion of Atlantis became the most powerful and sophisticated realm in the world. Its wizard-lords extended their sway over the other, lesser, nations of the world, exploring uncharted lands and fighting mighty armies with their magics. Only to the east, where they encountered the city of Arcadia, home of the immortal Emphyreans, and west and south, in Lemuria, did they meet their match.

The Atlantean Age was a veritable golden age, faint whispers of which have come down in the myths and tales of many civilizations since, recast as the accomplishments of their own ancestors. Using orichalcum, the mages of Atlantis created a magic-technology unlike any other seen before or since. They built vast palaces and towers, sailed the seas in enchanted ships, and made the island of Atlantis a paradise on Earth. But a shadow fell on this land of wonders, as the people began to turn away from their gods of old to worship the mightiest of their spellcasters and the pure power of wizardry itself. Eventually those mages came to believe that they *were* gods, or at least as powerful as gods, and dissension arose within the once-peaceful land of Vondarien.

Chief among the troublemakers was Cormar the Mighty, who tried, and failed, to overthrow Vondarien in the 1,478th year of the immortal king's reign. Vondarien slew Cormar, but the rebel's son, Dalsith, escaped the king's armies and fled into the hinterlands of Atlantis. Reckoning of naught but revenge, there he performed a terrible ritual and sacrificed his soul to beings so horrifying no chronicle mentions their names. The power he received transformed him, and he became *Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer*, Vondarien's last and greatest enemy.

THE CATAclysm

The clash between Vondarien, mightiest of hero-mages, and Sharna-Gorak, imbued with accursed power, was so awful it shook the very world. Mountains were shattered, continents destroyed, cities razed, forests incinerated. The civilizations of men were swept away like feathers in a breeze, and the towers and palaces of Atlantis were reduced to rubble. At the very last, as Vondarien and Sharna-Gorak destroyed each other, the island of Atlantis itself sank beneath the waves and disappeared.

But that was not the end of the fabled isle. A scant 200 of her sons and daughters, people who'd remained faithful throughout all to Poseidon and the other gods of their forefathers, prayed for deliverance... and deliverance was granted. Through the divine grace of the god of all the oceans, the two hundred survivors were given the power to live and breathe beneath the waves.

The early days of the new realm of Atlantis were difficult ones, for the world had been

ARIC ROSTON RHODES

18 STR	15 DEX
18 CON	18 INT
12 EGO	18 PRE
5 OCV	5 DCV
4 OECV	4 DECV
3 SPD	
6 PD	5 ED
8 REC	35 END
13 BODY	32 STUN

Abilities: Acting 13-, KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 14-, KS: Lost Civilizations 14-, KS: Monsters 13-, Oratory 13-, Paramedics 13-, PS: Explorer 13-, PS: Self-Promotion 13-, SS: Anthropology 13-, SS: Archaeology 13-, SS: Cryptozoology 14-, Stealth 12-, Survival (all environments but Urban) 13-, WF: Small Arms, Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Linguist and a generous selection of Languages, Traveler and a generous selection of AKs, CKs, and CuKs.

4

Complications: Physical Complication: Missing One Eye; Psychological Complication: Explorer's Curiosity; Psychological Complication: Loves The Spotlight; Social Complication: Famous

Notes: The world-renowned "Explorer of the Unknown," a delver into the strange, the mysterious, the lost, and the weird, Aric Roston Rhodes (he always uses all three names when referring to himself) is an unusual blend of adventurer and pitchman. The star of a highly-rated cable television show, he travels the globe finding unusual phenomena to investigate, explore, and report on. Although not superpowered, he's more than capable of taking care of himself in most situations; he's hunted monsters and encountered superhumans many times in the past (and even had some as guests on his show). His big dream in life is to go to Mars.

reshaped by the Cataclysm that sank their island home. Several millennia of perils and hardship followed, as the new Atlanteans struggled to survive in the face of the loss of much of their spellcraft, magic-technology, and learning. New continents arose, to be peopled by other survivors, but being unstable sank back beneath the waves after a time. The undersea realms were not always as safe as the Atlanteans might have wished.

But the restless world shifted again, and new continents — the ones the world knows today — arose, and a similar measure of peace settled on Atlantis as well. For tens of thousands of years the Atlanteans struggled, rebuilding their new kingdom into a pale shadow of what their forebears had possessed, and slowly gaining in knowledge and power. Because of their unfortunate history, the study of any type of magic beyond that of the Poseidonic priests was forbidden, though some arcane secrets were passed on by hidden cults of wizards. And the rulers of the undersea kingdom forbid Atlanteans to have any contact with the surface world. Except for occasional accidental exchanges with sailors or explorers, the lands of men saw no more of the people of Atlantis.

THE MODERN PERIOD

Over time, Atlantis grew as a city, to approximately 100,000 inhabitants, plus several thousand more who lived as itinerant farmers and hunters in the small barbarian tribal lands at the edge of the original continent's borders. The throne was still held by the descendants of Vondarien. In the surface year 1867 the young prince Oceanus became king, and married his distant cousin and true love Orana in 1878. Oceanus was very progressive for an Atlantean; he felt the time had come to resume peaceful contact with the surface world. He wasn't motivated solely by altruism; he knew humans were advancing technologically and their oceangoing vessels were becoming more common. He felt renewed contact between the races was inevitable and that it was his responsibility to make sure it happened peacefully. But his people did not share his opinions. A soldier named Gangar, who believed the Atlanteans should strike to conquer the surface world while they were still able, attempted to take the throne in 1914. A civil war broke out, and Oceanus himself slew Gangar in battle.

Though it seemed the conflict was over, a secret organization, made up of Gangar's sympathizers and opposed to Oceanus, survived and even thrived in the dark alleyways of Atlantis. Oceanus and Orana had but one child, the princess Mara, in 1922 before Orana died in 1924. Oceanus raised his daughter to believe in his ideals, thinking he'd send her as his ambassador to the courts of the human kingdoms. But in 1937, Gangar's son Dargon organized the opposition, and with the aid of the evil wizard Nereus slew Oceanus and claimed the throne. Enough of the army was opposed to the idea of contact with humanity that they accepted Dargon as their new leader. Dargon himself sought to legitimize his claim with

an arranged marriage to Mara, but she escaped. Nereus, who was supposed to have captured her but failed, instead reported her as dead.

Mara fled to the coast of New England, where she made several friends among the surface people and eventually joined the Defenders of Justice (page 11). Meanwhile, Dargon secretly made contact with Nazi Germany and pledged his support to its cause, intending to use it to conquer the surface world on his behalf and then to overthrow its leadership and seize the surface lands himself. The Defenders battled the forces of Atlantis on several occasions, until finally, in 1943, Princess Mara and the Defenders invaded the city and helped Atlantean rebels overthrow Dargon, who died in combat with Mara. (Nereus was killed by the human hero Optimus, who'd become Mara's lover.) Mara was restored to the throne, ending Atlantis's membership in the Axis, and with Optimus as her Prince Consort set about rebuilding the war-torn country.

Unfortunately, the relationship between Mara and Optimus was unable to survive the stresses of the different environments (and the difficulty the Atlanteans had in accepting a "lander" as their prince), and they divorced in 1948. Queen Mara remarried in 1960, this time to Andros, one of the tribal chieftains of the outlying barbarian tribes, and they had two children together, Prince Marus and Princess Thalassa. Andros himself died accidentally in 1987, and Mara still rules to this day. Marus spends much of his time among the "landers"; he even studied at Ravenswood Academy briefly, and sometimes serves as a member of the Sentinels. Thalassa, embittered by jealousy and a desire to take the throne for herself, has tried several times to kill her mother and brother; she's known to the surface world as the villainess Stingray.

ATLANTIS TODAY

Mara has tried to fulfill her father's dream of peaceful relations with the surface world, but the process has been slow, with much mistrust on both sides. Atlantis has sent ambassadors to many of the governments of the surface world, but despite occasional small successes the surface and underwater worlds remain too different for any extended political relationships. The United States, which has had the most contact with Atlantis, is generally mistrustful of the Atlanteans due to an unfortunate incident in 1968, when Mara temporarily lost control of her army and the Atlantean villain Steel Shark attacked the coast of Florida. Atlantis also showed little interest in the Cold War, sending representatives to the Soviet Union and China in the Seventies and thereby feeding fears of an alliance with Communism.

Nevertheless, a political alliance with Atlantis remains a goal of the United States, largely due to the tremendous natural resources the Atlanteans have access to, and Atlantis's natural role as a counterbalance to the undersea threat of Lemuria. American scientists are also intrigued by the possibilities of oricalchum, which seems to have several interesting properties apart from

the magical (it's light and malleable, but exceedingly strong when alloyed with steel). Access to the oricalchum mines outside of Atlantis proper is forbidden but coveted.

The United Nations has extended an offer of membership to Atlantis, but as of 2010 Mara hasn't accepted. Currently Prince Marus acts as Atlantis's occasional representative to the UN, where he works for stricter laws against oceanic pollution all over the surface world.

ATLANTEAN SOCIETY

Atlanteans are a hardy and long-lived race thanks to the divine magic that still flows through their bodies (and that since 1938 occasionally manifests itself as mystical "mutations" that grant individual members of the race remarkable powers). In general they retain human proportions, though as a population they're more physically fit than Landers — both obesity and unusual thinness are extremely rare. They live longer than Landers, with an average lifespan exceeding a century; they're considered "adults" at about age 40.

Atlanteans typically have green skin, though the exact shading varies from a dark, mossy green through emerald to something closer to blue. Hair, which grows exclusively on the head and face, generally matches the skin but is several shades darker (hair so dark that it appears black is not uncommon). Atlanteans have a wide range of eye colors, including some shades (like bright orange) that are extremely rare among Landers, and tend to have stereotypically "Roman" features: long, aquiline noses, sharply-defined cheekbones, hair that curls if left to grow out.

The typical Atlantean tends to be reserved, conservative almost to the point of rigidity, proud, and a bit haughty. He prefers order, predictability, and routine, though he's not necessarily a slave to them. He usually dresses and talks like his peers, and is most likely to socialize within his own class (noble, commoner, or priest), though a noble's willingness to fraternize with commoners is appreciated and regarded as a sign of good character. Many Atlanteans have an ingrained xenophobia, particularly towards Landers — though they wouldn't refer to it as such, since they regard distrust and dislike of outlanders as a normal and sensible thing, not a psychological aberration.

Atlantean religion involves the worship of Poseidon as creator, preserver, and the embodiment of morality and goodness (but also a god who at times challenges and tests them, for their own good). The faith has a conservative approach that stresses following tradition, being respectful of the community, and promoting "the Atlantean way of life." The Atlan is the ceremonial head of the Temple, but the priest class does all the real work.

The accompanying text boxes provide Templates describing the typical abilities of Atlanteans and Atlantean half-breeds (the latter are rare for social reasons, but biologically possible).

ATLANTEAN TEMPLATE

ABILITIES

Cost Ability

- 5 +5 STR
- 5 +5 CON
- 6 **Swift Swimming:** Swimming +12m (16m total)
- 2 **Tough Body:** Resistant (+½) for 2 PD/2 ED
- 4 **Atlantean Physiology:** Life Support (Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold; Longevity: age at half normal rate)
- 5 **Atlantean Eyes:** Nightvision
- 5 **Nictitating Membrane:** Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points)
- 4 **Aquatic Movement:** Environmental Movement (no penalties while in water)
- 0 **Breathing Underwater:** Atlanteans breathe water as their default environment. They cannot breathe air, and thus can only remain out of water as long as they can hold their breath (or longer, with the use of SCUBA-like water tanks)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 36

COMPLICATIONS

Value Complication

- 15 **Dependence:** must dowse or immerse self in water once per Hour or suffer 3d6 damage (Very Common)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 15

ATLANTEAN HALF-BREED TEMPLATE

ABILITIES

Cost Ability

- 3 +3 STR
- 3 +3 CON
- 2 **Strong Swimmer:** Swimming +4m (8m total)
- 1 **Tough Body:** Resistant (+½) for 1 PD/1 ED
- 5 **Breathing Underwater:** Life Support (Expanded Breathing: breathe underwater; air is default environment)
- 3 **Atlantean Physiology:** Life Support (Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold)
- 5 **Atlantean Eyes:** Nightvision

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 22

COMPLICATIONS

Value Complication

- 0 **Dependence:** must dowse or immerse self in water once per Day or suffer 1d6 damage (Very Common)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

ATLANTEAN GEOGRAPHY

Atlantis sits in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, about 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) west of the Cape Verde Plain, 530 kilometers (330 miles) east of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and 160 kilometers (100 miles) north of the equator. It's approximately 250 meters (820 feet) beneath the surface, making it accessible by a wide variety of Lander submersible vehicles and robots. The regions surrounding the city contain the orichalcum mines, fish ranches, and kelp farms.

The city of Atlantis is a perfect circle with a radius of nearly three miles. It consists of a series of concentric stone walls — the Outer Wall, tall, thick, and sturdy (6m tall, PD 4/ED 4, BODY 20),

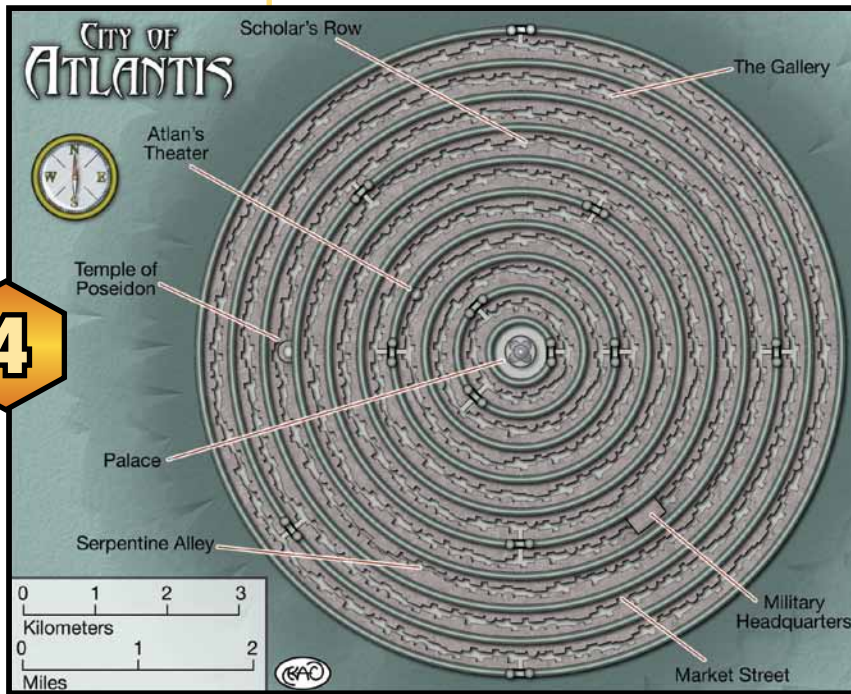
and the lesser inner walls (4m tall, PD4/ED 4, BODY 14). The Outer Wall has metal gates to north and south (the gates are 20m wide, and have PD 4/ED 4, BODY 18); each of the inner walls has various gates along its circumference (typically 8m wide, PD 4/ED 4, BODY 10). Of course, anyone can swim over the walls rather than going through the gates; the walls gates exist mainly out of a sense of tradition, though they do make it easier to move large, heavy objects. Prominent locations within the walls include the Royal Palace, the Temple of Poseidon, Market Street (the main commercial district), the Atlan's Theater, and the Gallery (a sort of public art museum).

ATLANTEAN MAGIC

There are two types of magic at work in the world of Atlantis. First is the divine magic that Poseidon used on his faithful during the time of the Cataclysm to transform them into sea-dwellers. This magic remains inherent in Atlanteans and occasionally manifests itself in additional "mutations," particularly in certain bloodlines like the direct descendants of Glaucus. The most common such mutations are enhanced strength and *Atlan's Gift* (the ability to breathe air and survive out of the water for extended periods of time), but others are known (such as the Queen's sonic blast or Marus's superhuman strength). No one knows why or how these additional abilities appear, but they tend to be powers that are particularly useful for living underwater, such as sonar or the power to mentally control sea creatures, as opposed to (for example) pyrokinesis.

Atlanteans also have a trove of knowledge about forms of practiced magic that draw on ambient forces or call on the favor of extradimensional beings. The bulk of these spells are rituals (usually involving extensive time to set up and an array of materials, symbols, and recitations) or alchemical recipes that create potions or transmute elements (such as the most famous and commonly-used spell in the city, the creation of Keto's Flame from water, various plants, and pure orichalcum dust.) Most of these spells date back to the Atlantean Age and have survived due to their simplicity and utility; Atlantis has few mages who wield power comparable to the true masters of the surface world (who themselves are quite rare).

Spells more powerful still remain hidden in the secret libraries of those who worship darker gods than Poseidon. Nereus, Dargon the Usurper's advisor, had a secret cache of golden scrolls, most of which were stolen by Stingray before she fled the city, but other copies may still exist. Persistent rumors abound that deep beneath the city lie catacombs and tombs untouched since the Cataclysm, which may contain the lore of the great wizard-kings of old.



ARCADIA AND THE EMPYREANS

In a hidden valley deep in the Antarctic wasteland lies the golden city of Arcadia, home of the mysterious Empyreans.

The Valley of Arcadia sits at approximately 74 degrees South and 55 degrees East, more or less due south from Madagascar and 1,450 km (900 miles) from the South Pole. A modest mountain range 161 km (100 miles) long shelters the Valley, which has temperatures in the high 20s-low 30s Celsius (80s Fahrenheit) year-round thanks to strange, powerful devices created by the Progenitors tens of thousands of years ago, and placed here by the Empyreans when they moved Arcadia to the southern polar region. Fortunately for the Empyreans' sense of privacy, the devices also create a "camouflage field" that makes the Valley, its structures, and its aberrant temperature undetectable by the probing sensors of satellites or instruments placed by humans elsewhere on the continent. Indeed, the devices keep the Valley physically *invisible* even to the eyes of explorers until one approaches within a mile of the Valley itself, which few humans have. A small river runs the length of the Valley, emerging from the mountains and running to a lake at the northernmost end. This river is also artificial, pouring forth from massive geothermally powered pumps within caverns in the mountainside. All of these devices, though originally built and placed by the Progenitors, are currently maintained by the Empyrean Master Builder Zadin. On the floor and hills of the Valley live creatures long extinct, kept safe through the Cataclysm and many other disasters, and brought here to live in the preserves of Noatar.

Arcadia itself is a large city, with a lot of wide-open space in courtyards and parks. Over fifty square miles in size, Arcadia currently has a population of approximately 350 Empyreans and a handful of other beings. However, at least eighty of these Empyreans have embraced the philosophy of Shaderon and become *Silent*, living in the enormous Temple of Silence without moving, eating, or talking while their astral selves explore "higher" planes of existence. The Temple of Silence is a golden ziggurat 61m (200 feet) high, which dominates the landscape as the largest (but only second-tallest) structure in the city. (The tallest is the Watchtower, maintained by Chard, the Empyrean entrusted with the security of King Hazor and the city of Arcadia. Over 76m (250 feet) high, it commands a majestic view of the Valley from the single entry gate into the city.)

This hidden Antarctic valley is the second location of the city of Arcadia. The first was situated far to the north, at a point on the globe not far from where the modern-day city of Athens now sits (though of course, neither the continent of Europe or Athens existed at that time). The Cataclysm which sunk Atlantis likewise destroyed the first lands of the Empyreans. They tried to rebuild, but the sinking of the new continents several thousand years later wrecked that effort. When even newer continents arose, they journeyed far to the south,

to what's now called Antarctica, and founded a new realm that's thrived ever since.

Since the time of the first Arcadia, the Ancients (the original twelve Empyreans directly created by the Progenitors) ruled all of the later generations. The First King, Amlin, ruled Arcadia for thousands of years with the aid of his wife, Marya. About ten thousand years ago, a war was fought between Amlin and his rival, the powerful Ogurn, and both were slain. With Amlin's death, the rest of the Ancients chose to depart Earth under the leadership of Queen Marya, leaving behind only the Historian Garon to make sure they were not forgotten. Where they went and what's happened to them remains a mystery.

Hazor was chosen King of the remaining Empyreans, since he was universally regarded as the wisest of the second generation, and he's ruled ever since. His son, Zoltar, and grandson, Archon, have each in their time been the most powerful warrior and champion of the Empyreans. Archon himself, still a youngster at less than three thousand years old, is an occasional ally of the Sentinels. Hazor has faced a few challenges to his reign, however — most notably the defection of his wicked brother Arvad, who left Arcadia to become ruler of the Lemurians some two hundred years ago (see page 101). For most of the time since then, the Lemurians have fought a guerrilla war against their hated rivals, frequently manipulating the ignorant masses of humanity in the process. King Hazor remains uncertain what to think of the Lemurian civil war and Arvad's supposed change of heart, but he remains hopeful that Arvad's turn to the light is genuine.

HUMAN-EMPYREAN RELATIONS

By about the year 2000 BC, many Empyreans began to take an increasing interest in Humanity. Humans had evolved culturally to the point where they fascinated many of the Empyreans. Their political institutions, religions, and social customs differed greatly from those of the Empyreans — and to the Empyreans, many of whom were beginning to feel that life in Arcadia was somewhat stifling and bland, these differences were fresh and exciting. More and more Empyreans began to leave the City of Gold for extended periods of time to live among mortals in disguise.

In response to this, King Hazor dictated that no Empyrean might reveal his powers, or the existence of Arcadia, to any non-Empyrean Human. Empyreans soon began referring to this as "the facade." Ever since then they've done their best to live up to the king's edict, since they all knew how dire the consequences could be if Humanity discovered it shared Earth with a race of super-powerful immortals.

For better or worse, Arcadia's full isolation from normal humanity ended in 1966, when the Fabulous Five fought King Arvad and the Lemurians and Arvad tricked them into attacking Arcadia. The ruse was soon uncovered and the heroes and immortals teamed up to defeat the Lemurians. This incident opened the Empyreans' eyes, showing them just how noble... and powerful... a Human could be. Archon in

4



particular was impressed by the bravery and valor of the Five, and ultimately chose to spend several years among Humans with their allies, the Sentinels, as a crimefighter. Not all Emphyreans are so accepting of humanity, but the Fabulous Five weren't the last superhumans to learn about Arcadia, and King Hazor knows it's only a matter of time before his people's existence is revealed to the world.

THE EMPHYREANS

The Emphyreans are a powerful race, related to humanity but diverging from it many hundreds of thousands of years ago. They're the result of genetic experiments and manipulation performed by the *Progenitors*, alien scientists who visited Earth several times between 2 million and 500,000 years ago. (According to the Emphyreans, other Progenitor experiments caused *Homo sapiens* to become the dominant species of man, eliminating australopithecines, *Homo erectus*, and *Homo habilis*.) The few Emphyreans interbred, but because of their immortal nature they chose to have few offspring.

At different times in history the Emphyreans have interacted with humanity in various ways, occasionally appearing as rulers, gods, wizards, or devils depending on the whims of the individuals involved. Many of the folktales and legends about the heroes of different cultures actually refer to Emphyreans, although certainly not all of them. (The same is true of legitimate accounts of certain Human historical figures.) Since the decline of

magic on Earth, the Emphyreans have largely chosen either to live among humans without revealing their true natures, or to withdraw from humanity entirely (like those who follow the teachings of the great philosopher Shaderon, who tired of immortality over three thousand years ago and became Silent).

Although he looks like an ordinary (if handsome) human, a typical Emphyrean has impressive physical attributes, near-complete control over his bodily processes, and vast and varying mental abilities. Since most Emphyreans are centuries old, and some have even survived the passage of millennia, they know much, and can do much. After a few centuries of gathering broad experiences, an Emphyrean typically specializes in a certain area of study and becomes its true, undisputed master. Examples include the Builder Zadin or Musician Jubal, who have advanced knowledge of their subjects beyond human ken.

EMPHYREAN CHARACTERS

The accompanying Emphyrean Template describes the abilities common to all Emphyreans. Most Emphyreans have other powers, as indicated by the power templates below.

There's also a "Human Child of an Emphyrean Parent" Template — Emphyreans can mate with Humans, but this doesn't always result in low-powered "crossbreeds." One such birth in a thousand is an Emphyrean (what the Emphyreans refer to as the "Third Generation"). The other 999 are ordinary Humans — though they're almost always remarkably attractive, healthy, and intelligent.

EMPYREAN TEMPLATE

ABILITIES

Cost Ability

60	+20 STR, +10 DEX, +10 CON, +5 INT, +5 EGO
46	+10 PRE, +1 SPD, +2 OCV, +2 DCV, +1 OMCV, +1 DMCV
5	+5 BODY
37	Graviton-Manipulating Flight: Flight 30m, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)
36	Empyrean Physiology: Life Support (Diminished Eating: only has to eat once a month; Immunity: all terrestrial diseases and poisons; Longevity: Immortal; Safe Environments: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum; Self-Contained Breathing)
10	Empyrean Toughness: Resistant (+½) for 10 PD/10 ED
10	Empyrean Physiology: Power Defense (10 points)
10	Empyrean Mental Shielding: Mental Defense (10 points)
3	Lightsleep
20	Universal Translator
100	Powers Template (see below)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 337

HUMAN CHILD OF AN EMPYREAN PARENT TEMPLATE

ABILITIES

Cost Ability

16	+3 STR, +1 DEX, +3 CON, +5 INT, +3 PRE
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Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 16

EMPYREAN POWERS

The following templates, each containing 100 Real Points' worth of abilities, represent some "typical" Empyrean power suites. Every Empyrean is distinct, with powers that often relate to his special interests, so you should tailor or customize these as you see fit. But they're a good way for GMs and players to quickly create Empyrean NPCs if necessary.

BIO-ENERGY EMPYREAN

Cost Ability

10	+5 DEX
5	+1 OCV
10	+10 ED
60	Bio-Energy Powers: Multipower, 60-point reserve
6f	1) Bio-Blast: Blast 12d6
6f	2) Bio-Energy Field: Barrier 8 PD/8 ED, 8 BODY (up to 9m long, 3m high, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissable
3f	3) Bio-Energy Storm: Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (18m Explosion; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½)

Total cost: 100 points

MENTAL EMPYREAN

Cost Ability

5	+5 INT
10	+10 EGO
9	+3 OMCV
60	Mental Powers: Multipower, 60-point reserve
6f	1) Mindblast: Mental Blast 6d6
6f	2) Mental Control: Mind Control 12d6
4f	3) Mindscapes: Mental Illusions 9d6

Total cost: 100 points

STRONG EMPYREAN

Cost Ability

20	+20 STR
5	+5 CON
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
10	+10 PD
10	+10 ED
7	+7 BODY
10	Increase Empyrean Toughness to Resistant (+½) for 20 PD/20 ED
10	Knockback Resistance -10m
18	Leaping +36m (40m total)

Total cost: 100 points

SWIFT EMPYREAN

Cost Ability

22	+11 DEX
5	+5 CON
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
20	+2 SPD
5	+5 PD
38	Increase Graviton-Manipulating Flight to Flight 60m

Total cost: 100 points

TELEKINETIC EMPYREAN

Cost Ability

60	Telekinetic Powers: Multipower, 60-point reserve
6f	1) Telekinesis: Telekinesis (40 STR)
5f	2) Precise Telekinesis: Telekinesis (30 STR), Fine Manipulation
5f	3) Telekinetic Blast: Blast 10d6
4f	4) Telekinetic Spear: RKA 3d6
20	Telekinetic Shield: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED); Costs Endurance (-½)

Total cost: 100 points

TRANSMUTER EMPYREAN

Cost Ability

100	Transmutation: Severe Transform 3d6+1 (anything to anything, heals back through another application of this or a similar power), Improved Results Group (+1)
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Total cost: 100 points



BURNING SANDS, NEW MEXICO

Although it's not exactly hidden or lost — the general public is well aware of its existence — for most people the area now known as Burning Sands in the New Mexican desert is practically as far-removed from their lives as Atlantis or Lemuria.

The site of nuclear tests and advanced American weapons development programs since the mid-Forties, the White Sands, New Mexico area was often a hotbed of espionage, subterfuge, and even superhuman activity. But it became a “hot” region in a much more tangible and deadly way in 1978 when the test of a new super-tech weapon referred to as the “Delta Bomb” went awry. What was planned as a small, carefully-managed explosion cascaded out of the scientists’ control, killing them and hundreds of other people living nearby... but they didn’t all remain dead. The radiation that soaked into the ground, the rocks, and all the living and unliving tissue in the area somehow transformed many of the victims into strange, mutant “radiation zombies” filled with pure, unbridled hate for all not like themselves. The American military quickly barricaded those parts of White Sands that weren’t already cut off from the rest of the world by desert geography and the place earned itself a new name: *Burning Sands*.

Since then, Burning Sands has remained a dangerous, irradiated wasteland, full of radiation zombies, mutant animals, and other forms of life hostile to ordinary people. Facilities in the area — towns, trailer parks, the Snake Gulch robotic Wild West theme park — remain abandoned, and have often become homes for the mutants. The government and many superheroes have tried to find ways to clean the place up and destroy (or transform back into normal humans) the radiation zombies, but so far all such efforts have failed.

Perhaps the most unusual “resident” of Burning Sands is the monstrous supervillain Grond. Something about the place seems to speak to the hulking brute, and he often goes back there when no one’s chasing, distracting, or using him. In fact, he’s there so often that the United States Army established its base for Project Greenskin (see page 112) there, and some of the radiation zombies have carved a gargantuan statue of him and seem to worship him as a god.

But Grond isn’t the only threat that lives in Burning Sands (besides the mutants and zombies, of course!). The Qularr made it a focus of part of their 2009 invasion (perhaps to obtain biological samples) and may still have a hidden outpost there. It’s long been rumored that VIPER maintains a Nest in the region where it conducts hideous experiments and tests weapons. Some experts even claim DEMON’s been active there, performing rituals to summon the spirits of the restless dead.

THE CITY OF THAAR

The island of Thaar (site of the city of the same name) is a mountainous, mist-covered speck of land in the southern Indian Ocean, well away from standard shipping lanes. It’s the home of the Birdpeople, a race of humanoids who were mutated by alien visitors (perhaps the Progenitors, but no one knows for sure) twelve thousand years ago. Their “creators” gave them several avian characteristics: functional wings; feathers instead of hair; lighter bone structure.

The Fabulous Five discovered Thaar by accident in 1965. At first warily welcomed by the Birdpeople, they were acknowledged as heroes when they saved King Gudra from assassination by Gyrfalcon, his treacherous Captain of the Guard. Princess Klee, Gudra’s daughter, became the new Captain; Gyrfalcon fled in disgrace to become a recurring villainous opponent to the Five, though he was killed in battle with some UNTIL agents in 1983.

Princess Klee spent a great deal of time with the Five, and later with the small team of anthropologists who came to the island to study her people. From them she learned much of the ways of humans. In 1970, when the scientists had finished their study and returned to America to publish a book on them, Klee accompanied them to see the world of “the wingless folk.” While there she became involved in a villainous plot hatched by Gyr Falcon and his new ally, Revenger. Klee and the Five defeated the villains, and she began a romantic relationship with Kid Chameleon. When Amazing Man and Siren retired from superheroing shortly thereafter to raise young Peter, Klee accepted Chameleon’s offer to join the team as the superheroine Kestrel.

Kestrel served with the Fabulous Five from 1970 until 1979. During her tenure the team suffered several tragedies, most importantly the death of her lover Kid Chameleon at the hands of Dr. Destroyer in 1975 and the subsequent madness of her friend and teammate Scirocco. When the team finally disbanded, Klee returned to Thaar and resumed her post as Captain of the Guard. King Gudra died in 1985 of natural causes. The throne was hers by law, but she abdicated in favor of her cousin Kea, who rules to this day as Queen.

Few wingless humans have spent time on Thaar, and most of them are either superheroes or scientists; the Birdpeople prefer to remain isolated from the world and do not welcome tourists. Officially, Thaar is a protectorate of the United Nations and off-limits except with special permission, arranged through the Atlantean consulate, who acts as their diplomatic representative. Prince Marus is friendly with Klee and Queen Kea and takes his responsibility for their security very seriously. The Sentinels have visited there a few times recently because Amazing Man III and Diamond remain close friends with Klee and her family. Klee and Gyr Falcon are the only Birdpeople to have visited the world of men, though several of the younger generation have expressed an interest in doing so. Klee herself last came to America in 2005 for Amazing Man II and Electron’s wedding.

LEMURIA

The enemies of the Emyreans and Atlanteans are the Lemurians. Former inhabitants of the now-sunken archipelago of Lemuria in what would later become the Indian Ocean, the Lemurians pose a serious threat to humanity as well.

Lemurian history begins tens of thousands of years ago. Lemuria was a powerful nation, strong enough to withstand the conquering armies of Atlantis. Its power was based on a strange mechano-mysticism first developed by Lemuria’s founder, the sorcerer-scientist Faltrah Lem. Using enormous ovens, furnaces, and engines that burned “pure” forms of the Four Elements, the Lemurians were able to construct magical flying vehicles, weapons of vast power, and a mighty civilization.

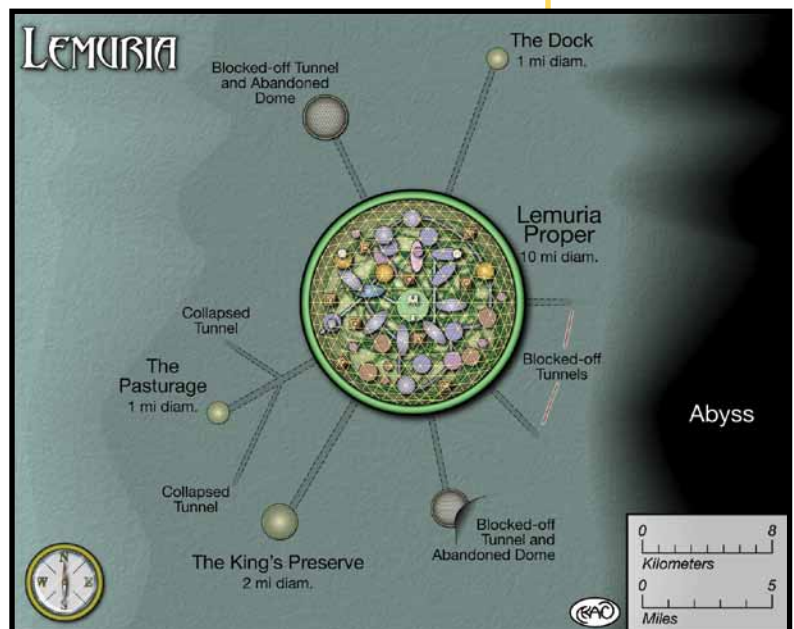
Originally the Lemurians were a reptilian race with the power to change shape. But after Faltrah Lem convinced them to abandon their gods, the *Rastrinfhar* (“Bleak Ones”), in favor of Lem’s elemental gods, they began to fear death as never before. Hungering for immortality, they submitted to a great ritual cast by Andrith the Golden, grandson of Faltrah Lem, that would greatly extend their lives. The ritual worked... but at a price. It robbed the Lemurians of their shapechanging abilities, locking them into forms indistinguishable from humans’.

When the Lemurians discovered the existence of the Emyreans they waged war on them to obtain the secret of immortality. They developed a magical weapon, the *Mandragalore*, and threatened to use it against the Emyreans. But the weapon backfired on them and sank their continent in approximately the year 37,000 BC. The only survivors of the great Lemurian Empire were the Mole-Men, furnace-workers who lived and toiled underground for their more magically powerful masters, and a small population of Lemurian lords of pure stock.

Having adapted to life underground and underwater, the Lemurians have long since forgotten how to create new technology. Instead, they use their old, failing mechano-mystical equipment in periodic efforts to destroy the Emyreans — and, incidentally, the rest of humanity. In this they have long been led by an outsider: Arvad the Emyrean, who fled to Lemuria after his rebellion against Hazor failed in 1800. In 1854 he used his mental powers to force the Lemurians’ then-ruler, a sentient, senile magi-construct called the Bronze King, to acknowledge his overlordship.

On several occasions during Arvad’s rule, Lemuria struck against the surface world or its superheroic defenders (for example, it sided with the Axis powers in World War II and kept the Allies out of the Persian Gulf for a few years). Often its schemes have involved attempts to

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LEMURIAN SUPER-WEAPONS

While the *Mandragalore* is the most infamous and deadly super-weapon the Lemurians ever constructed, it's not the only one. They built many, and in some cases the parts or remnants of them remain in the lost ruins of ancient Lemurian strongholds and outposts. Some of the best-known include:

The Aeroreme Armada: A fleet of aeroremes (flying ships) filled with *fulminor* (purified Air) that were once used in an attack on Arcadia, but were defeated by the faster, more maneuverable flying Emphyreans.

The Lunal-Kinesis Projector: A long-lost weapon recovered by the Lemurians near Derbent, a city on the Caspian Sea, in a 1971 attack. Designed to move the Moon and thus cause flooding and quakes on Earth, the Projector still worked after millennia, but Arvad's plans for it were stopped by the Soviet military and the People's Legion. However, the retreating Lemurian forces disassembled the weapon and took it back to Lemuria for study, where it presumably remains.

Shirak the Destructor: A 122m (400 foot)-tall Lemurian golem made of dark grey mystical metals. It's powered by a gigantic magical furnace burning *ignatium* (purified Fire) built into its back; the dull red glow of the furnace illuminates it from behind, and the heat the furnace gives off can be felt from dozens of feet away. Created by the great Lemurian sorcerer Kanarak the Bold, it wreaked great destruction on Arcadia until driven to the edge of the Antarctic ice shelf and into the frigid waters of the South Atlantic, where it sank and froze. It's been lost ever since.

The Solar Tormentia: This weapon consisted of large frameworks supporting huge lenses of perfectly transparent *crystallos* (pure Earth) that captured the Sun's light, amplified it, and fired it as a destructive beam of terrible heat. The Emphyreans defeated it by reflecting its beams with gigantic mirrors; no one knows what became of it, but presumably the Priest-King had it disassembled and stashed in some long-forgotten storeroom.

The Ultra-Coruscator: The Ultra-Coruscator used *corusqua* (pure Water) to create storms, draw on their power to fly, and then unleash immensely powerful lightning bolts on any target below. It could have destroyed Arcadia, but several brave Emphyreans dragged it out over the ocean and submerged it, where it exploded. (Or did it?....)

recover or revive ancient Lemurian weapons that lie dead in ruins hidden around the world. A few Lemurians, including the monstrous throwback Leviathan and the sorcerer Zorran the Artificer, have become players in the Superhuman World.

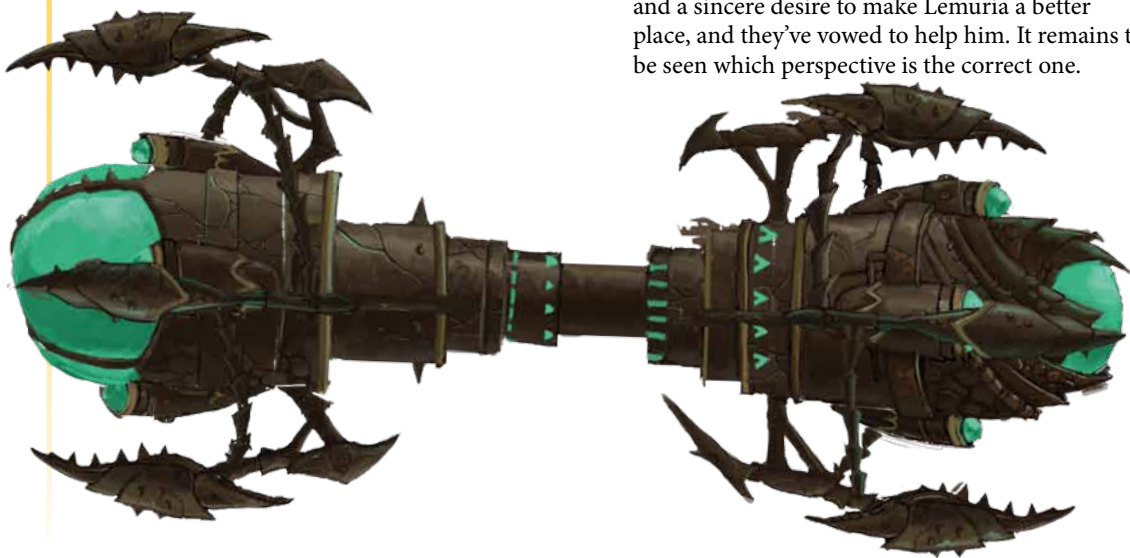
THE REBELLION

Things changed for the Lemurians in recent years. During the twentieth century discontent with Arvad's rule grew among Lemuria's nobles, leading to an interest in, and a desire to re-create, "traditional" Lemurian society. In 2003 this desire fomented full-fledged rebellion. A large group of nobles led by Arvad's advisor, Khusor the Crooked, pledged their full devotion and fealty to the Bleak Ones and cast a great spell that undid Andrith's ritual for them. Now they are reptilian and can change shape... but their lifespans are no longer than that of a human.

Faced with revolt, Arvad and the small number of Lemurians loyal to him who didn't want to return to the old ways tried to activate the remnants of the *Mandraglore* and destroy their fellows entirely. The attempt failed, but the partially re-powered remnants of the ancient super-weapon remain a threat to Lemuria — especially since Arvad left the Bronze King to defend it from his enemies.

Having now fled from Lemuria proper with his followers but still hoping to regain his throne, Arvad is in desperate straits. Over the past two hundred years, as he's become exposed to Lemurian culture and learned more about his subjects, he's slowly but surely come to experience a change of heart — a very strange thing for a being thousands of years old — that the rebellion has now crystallized into resolve. He doesn't want to use the Lemurians as his pawns anymore, he wants to rule them justly and fairly and become a part of the greater world community. He's appealed to the world's superheroes for help to quell the rebellion and restore Lemurian society.

Many heroes who've fought Arvad and his minions in the past remain skeptical, claiming this is just a ploy by a mastermind who wants to regain his throne and then return to his tyrannical ways. But others think they sense true remorse in Arvad and a sincere desire to make Lemuria a better place, and they've vowed to help him. It remains to be seen which perspective is the correct one.



LEMURIAN GEOGRAPHY

Modern Lemuria consists of four domed areas and a seemingly endless warren of underground tunnels on a craggy shelf midway down a sea trench so deep that only super-tech submarines such as UNTIL's *Aegir* can reach it. The largest of the domes, where the Lemurians live, is ten miles across and a mile high at its highest point — this dome is simply referred to as Lemuria. The other three are smaller and serve specific functions in Lemurian society. One is a port for the Lemurian's fleet of pirciremes and is a mile across; it's called the Dock. The second dome, about the same size as the Dock, is a farm where Mole-Men cultivate and gather food for their masters; it's called the Pasturage. The third dome, two miles in diameter, is the King's Preserve, where Lemurians can hunt the magiconstructs that are the place's fauna. Other domes nearby are ruined or abandoned.

MONSTER ISLAND

On a remote island about a hundred miles off the eastern coast of Japan lies a volcanic atoll dubbed by the Tokyo press "Monster Island." This rocky, mountainous island, approximately six miles in diameter at its widest point, is the home of a government base designed to study xenofoms, or "monsters." Monster Island is nothing less than a game preserve and habitat for unique or alien creatures too dangerous to hold captive or study anywhere else. Among its permanent inhabitants are such famous monsters as:

- the gigantic, bat-winged serpent Ganika;
- the robotic tyrannosaur Mega-Terak;
- the fiery, gargantuan gorilla Qwyjibo;
- Teleiosaurus, a gigantic tyrannosaur-like dinosaur created by Teleios;
- the immense, eagle-like Vakulon; and
- the "enormous atomic mutant lizard" Zorgatha.

All the monsters on Monster Island share a few attributes. First, they heal quickly from injuries, a trait no doubt bred or bioengineered into them by the Qularr (see below) to make them more efficient weapons. Second, they don't have to eat very much for creatures of their size, another helpful logistical feature. Third, they tend to be aggressive, territorial, and confrontational. Monster Island often rings with the roars and cries of two monsters locked in battle. Eventually one or the other establishes dominance and the other slinks away to lick its wounds and prepare for the next fight.

BUREAU 17

The island came to world attention in 1965, when the Qularr invaded Earth for the first time and created it as a base of operations for their horde of alien and bio-engineered monsters. When the defeated Qularr left the monsters behind, humanity decided to confine them on

the island. By the terms of a UN treaty, primary responsibility for monitoring the island and keeping the monsters on it was given to Japan.

Japan assigned Bureau 17, its quasi-military organization for dealing with paranormal and supernatural threats, to oversee the island. The Bureau built a base at the foot of the currently dormant volcano; it has one level above ground protruding from a rock wall, and the remaining four levels below ground. The base is serviced by an undersea tunnel that passes under the force-field and out onto the ocean floor, where a pressurized portal can dock a submarine for supply and staff rotation. The entire structure is protected by a powerful force-field generated by equipment "liberated" from the Qularr. A similar force-field surrounds the entire island to keep the monsters from escaping (though at times one or another has found a way to smash through it, usually leading to an attack on Tokyo).

The dozens of Bureau 17 personnel who live on Monster Island are led by Commander Ishimaki Yoshihisa. Most of them are scientists, researchers, and technicians (including famed super-scientist Takashi Toru, who retired from adventuring to devote his time to studying both the monsters and Qularr technology). But a few are soldiers belonging to the prestigious *Rapid Response Force Sakura* and are specially trained and equipped to fight giant monsters. The young Japanese hero *Shōnen no Kufū* ("Gadget Boy") also spends a lot of time on the island assisting Takashi and conducting his own experiments. Additionally, the Bureau works closely with American officials, UNTIL, and various superheroes to help keep the various menaces on the island under control.

MONSTER ISLAND TODAY

And they've got their work cut out for them. Beginning in the Eighties, various criminal organizations and villains have shown a great deal of interest in Monster Island and its potentially exploitable resources. VIPER maintains a Nest there; ARGENT has established a "hunting preserve" where well-heeled clients can hunt teleiosaurs, the small-sized spawn of Teleiosaurus. (A loophole in international law prevents the authorities from simply arresting and removing the ARGENT personnel; the Island's legal status is in flux.) Since the early Nineties groups of Lemurians have investigated Monster Island in search of Lemurian artifacts, and a few years ago the Elder Worm also showed up to hunt for their own long-lost treasures. In another part of the Island, VIPER ally Dr. Phillippe Moreau maintains a lab where he conducts his hideous biological experiments; a small army of his "manimals" guards him (others have escaped to try to make a better life for themselves, either peacefully or violently). The Qularr hit the Island hard during their 2009 invasion, and the authorities believe they may still have hidden soldiers or resources there. Today Monster Island is a volatile and dangerous place, one that's beginning to strain the resources of the "good guys" to monitor and control.

PROPERTIES OF LEMURIA'S DOMES

Unless you want to see Lemuria removed from the face of the Earth, you should consider the domes, especially the one protecting Lemuria proper, indestructible. Even a single small breach in a dome would bring the ocean crashing in to pulp the inhabitants. For game purposes, each dome has the following properties:

- Provides Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: Intense Cold, High Pressure).
- Lemuria's dome is PD 30/ED 30, BODY 30, Hardened (x3). The other three are PD 25/ED 25, BODY 25, Hardened (x2).
- Each dome has 15 points Power Defense, and everyone inside the dome has 15 points of Mental Defense against Mental Powers used against them by people outside the dome.
- Attempts to detect the domes suffer a -10 penalty to PER Rolls (in addition to any Range Modifiers or conditional penalties)

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BEYOND EARTH: OUTER SPACE AND ALIEN LIFE

The Champions Universe extends beyond Earth... far beyond.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Nearly half a century after the space program began, mankind finally established a permanent foothold in space. Completed in 1996, UNTIL's space station GATEWAY, parked in geosynchronous orbit over the Pacific Ocean, is a self-sustaining facility with a crew of 200 led by Commander Rodney Currie of Canada. It consists of four modules (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta) arranged in a columnar fashion that makes the station somewhat resemble a child's spinning top. Personnel typically reach the station via UNTIL's space shuttle, the *Gimlé*, but an experimental teleportation system, ADIS, is also available. GATEWAY's main mission is to remain alert for signs of alien visitors (especially invaders), but on a daily basis its personnel primarily perform scientific research. Since the station and their work is funded by the United Nations, all data gathered becomes public domain property, freely usable by any scientist who wants it. GATEWAY staff members have already made significant discoveries in the fields of medicine, manufacturing, and of course astronomy. In 2006 the United States joined UNTIL in space with the United States Space Station (see page 48). UNTIL has plans for three more stations — AVALON, ASGARD, and SKYGUARD — with work on AVALON slated to begin in 2011.

THE MOON

Humanity's had permanent residents on the Moon since UNTIL established Moonbase Serenity in 2000. UNTIL's learned many things up there, but has so far kept most of it secret from the public.

SELENUS

Selenus, a small, hidden city on the moon, is home to the *Selenites*, three-foot-tall insect-like siliconoids with long, narrow faces, beetle-like, purple-gray chitinous shells, and ten limbs. The Selenites can withstand the cold and vacuum of space unharmed and "eat" by absorbing

sunlight or similar energies (though they are not plant creatures).

As near as the few Humans who've visited and studied the place can determine, the city and Selenites are apparently all that's left behind of an ancient observatory built by an unknown alien species approximately 1 million years ago — the remainder of the base is now nothing but ruins long buried in lunar dust. A number of Earth archaeologists have expressed the desire to investigate these ruins, but so far no one's come up with the funding for such an expedition... assuming the Selenites would even permit one, since they have reason to distrust Humanity.

For a brief period in the Sixties the Selenites were ruled by the mad scientist supervillain Revenger, who treated them as his slaves and used them in a scheme to conquer Earth. The Fabulous Five defeated Revenger and freed them in 1970, then negotiated a non-interference treaty that requires mankind to leave them be.

The Selenites have lived there in peace except for one brief period in 1984 when a Selenite rebel, inspired by Revenger's actions, took over the city in a coup and tried to launch some of the evil scientist's leftover nuclear missiles at the Earth. This plan was thwarted by MeteorMan, and since then the Selenites have kept to themselves. Part of Moonbase Serenity's mission is to make sure both that no human tries to exploit them as Revenger did, and that no more renegade Selenites cause problems. However, UNTIL sensors have detected an unusual level of activity coming from the Selenite lands since 2008, and they've ceased their periodic radio contact with the Sentinels. But due to the non-interference treaty humans can't get close enough to find out any specifics.

BEYOND SOL: ALIEN LIFE

The Selenites aren't the only alien species known to Humans. For decades the public's been aware of the existence of sentient species living on other worlds. While mankind hasn't yet established significant formal relations with any of those species, everyone realizes it's only a matter of time before Humans become part of the galactic community.

As of 2010, Humans know of at least a dozen other alien species native to the Milky Way Galaxy. They include:

THE GADROON

In 1977, a greenish-skinned humanoid species called the Gadroon, possibly attracted by the first Mandaarian visit, arrived in Earth's solar system. Their intention: conquest. The batrachioid Gadroon had long ago destroyed their swampy homeworld, and sought a planet they could terraform and colonize, with a plentiful supply of natives for slaves. Numerous battles, both in cislunar space and on Earth and the Moon, followed as Human superheroes tried to drive off the invaders, who had powerful weapons and ships based on gravitic technology. Numerous supervillains, including Dr. Destroyer, assisted with the war effort. After two months of desperate battles, a group of powerful superhumans specially assembled for the purpose made it through the Gadroon defense perimeter and destroyed the enemy's flagship. With the force of their invasion thrust blunted, and their resources depleted, the Gadroon retreated, leaving Earth in peace. A second attempt at conquest, in 1984, was defeated much more quickly by Earth's heroes, as was a 1994 invasion that landed in Canada.

Having learned that full-force invasions wouldn't work, the Gadroon got smart. In 2008 they sent a covert force of elite troops to establish a beachhead in the Canadian wilderness, and they succeeded before any heroes could stop them. Having dug themselves in, the Gadroon have resisted all attempts to remove them. Some authorities suspect they've got spies in major cities, or other ways to find out what Humanity's plans are to defeat them.

THE MALVANS

The supervillain Firewing claims to be an alien native to a planet he calls Malva, and genetic tests performed on him during his (rare) periods of incarceration confirm that he's not Human. According to Firewing, Malva once possessed a vast interstellar empire, but has since withdrawn to Malva itself, which is defended by incredibly powerful and sophisticated automated weapons systems. Ruled by an all-powerful autocrat called the Phazor, the Malvans entertain themselves by watching super-powered gladiator matches (a sport in which Firewing once participated). Two other aliens who once fought in the Malvan arenas, Ironclad and Herculan, have confirmed Firewing's statements and provided Humans with samples of the Malvan language.

THE QULARR

In 1965, a strange alien species called the Qularr tried to invade and conquer Earth. Instead of relying entirely on using powerful electronic and mechanical weapons like the Sirians had, the Qularr also brought several gigantic monsters, presumably bred by them on their homeworld or in their ships, to attack the planet from an island they secretly created. After the superheroes of

Earth defeated the monsters (and, eventually, contained them on the island), the Qularr fled, leaving behind much of their bizarre technology. (See *Monster Island*, above, for more information.)

That was all Humanity ever heard from the Qularr... until 2009. In August of that year, after someone on Earth set off some beacons from the 1965 invasion stored in Homestead, the insecto-crustaceoid aliens returned with a vengeance, once again attempting to invade Earth but this time relying on their more conventional weapons instead of giant monsters. Days of fighting followed, but eventually humanity's militaries and superhumans got the better of the aliens, who fled the solar system. However, authorities believe that hidden pockets of Qularr soldiers and/or Qularr technology remain in various parts of the world, possibly posing a threat for years to come.

Thanks to studies of Qularr corpses and technology from the 1965 invasion, Humans know more about the Qularr than any other alien species (though much of their technology remains frustratingly unworkable).

BIOLOGY

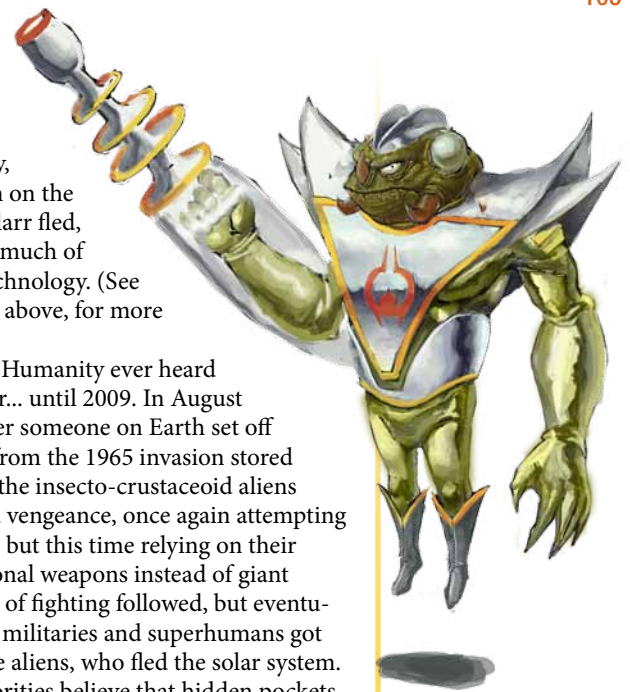
Biologically the Qularr are unlike anything terrestrial. They have some characteristics in common with both Earth insects and Earth crustaceans. Their "skin" is tough and inflexible enough to be considered an exoskeleton, though they also have some cartilaginous structures analogous to bones.

The Qularr have all five senses Humans do, but at different levels of effectiveness. Qularr hearing is much more advanced than Human, and their voices capable of a much greater range of expression; they can communicate in infrasonic and ultrasonic levels inaudible to Humans. Their sense of touch is also much more sensitive than Humans'. On the other hand, their eyesight and olfactory senses aren't quite as good as Humans', particularly when it comes to seeing precise gradations of color.

Qularr "skin" (chitin) color is usually a reddish or pinkish shade, ranging from relatively light to quite dark. To a Human, the average Qularr's skin color tends to suggest a slightly faded boiled lobster or a badly sunburned Caucasian.

TECHNOLOGY

As a species, the Qularr seem to possess much more advanced technology than Humans do. They used faster-than-light vehicles to travel to Earth from their homeworld (location unknown), and during their attempted invasion revealed high-powered force-field technology, personal blaster weapons, hovercraft, and a variety of other devices that only Earth superhumans have. Their



ALIEN SUPERPOWERS

Humans aren't the only sentient species in the Galaxy that can manifest superpowers (though superpowers do seem to occur much more frequently among Humans than most other species). Humanity knows that the Perseids, the Malvans, and the Fassai can all become superpowered, and of course some species (such as the Mandaarians) have innate abilities that are the equivalent of superpowers to Humans. Humanity also believes the Qularr can have superpowers, though as yet no superpowered Qularr has ever been encountered. On the other hand, the Sirians, Selenites, and Gadroon do not seem to be capable of possessing superhuman abilities.

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abilities as bioengineers seem especially advanced; they either bred, altered from native stock, or bioengineered the giant monsters that were a crucial part of their 1965 military force. Why they didn't simply use biological warfare to wipe out Humanity quickly and cleanly remains unknown (in fact, it's the biggest single question many military strategists have about the Qularr).

SOCIETY

Humanity knows almost nothing about Qularr society or culture, and making educated guesses isn't even easy since the Qularr language remains untranslated. (And the spoken form seems to involve reproducing sounds Humans can't make without technology.) However, a few solid deductions based on the existing evidence have been made.

First, Qularr society seems to be rigidly stratified. During the 1965 invasion, several types of Qularr were observed, with different types distinguished by specific clothing and gear (and to a vague extent by minor differences in skin coloration or size). The various "castes" rarely mingled with one another, and some gave orders to others. Human scientists believe this isn't just an "officers and enlisted men" sort of separation, and that some sort of "caste system" extends throughout Qularr society.

Second, the Qularr also seem to assign specific jobs to specific genders. Not a single Qularr female corpse was ever retrieved, nor was any Qularr with recognizable female traits of any sort observed (though some scientists argue that female Qularr wouldn't necessarily have visible gender characteristics). Military activity must be limited only to male Qularr, so it stands to reason that other jobs are limited to only men or only women.

OTHER ALIEN SPECIES

Other species Humanity's aware of include:

THE MANDAARIANS

Another known alien species is the Mandaarians, a very Human-appearing psionic species who came to Earth in 1973. The first alien species with which non-violent contact is confirmed and definite, the Mandaarians claimed to be peaceful explorers and demonstrated some advanced technology, including starships with faster-than-light drives. Other Mandaarian "exploration parties" visited Earth in 1979, 1984, 1991, and 1999, each time simply observing cultures and daily life for about a month and then leaving. Some commentators claim the Mandaarians are simply sizing Earth up for invasion, but so far there's been no indication of any hostile intent.

THE PERSEIDS

Ironclad is a Dorvalan, or in more Human-centric terms, a Perseid. His people are native to a planet orbiting the star Phi Cassiopeia in the Perseus Arm of the galaxy, and have primitive FTL drives as of the Earth year 2010. The Perseids control a small interstellar empire.

THE SIRIANS

The Sirians (originally thought to be Martians) are the first alien species to attack Earth. In 1938, using Mars as a staging area, they invaded Humanity's homeworld. Their attack, involving several gigantic tripods armed with heat-rays and poisonous gas, was thwarted on October 30 by the collection of heroes who wound up forming the Defenders of Justice. In 1967 the Fabulous Five encountered these aliens again and discovered they were actually from a planet orbiting the star Sirius, not from Mars.

Based on snippets of information he learned during his career as a super-gladiator, Ironclad has stated the Sirians went to war with the Malvan Empire in what Earth would call the Seventies and were defeated and largely obliterated. He believes they're now a minor species in what was once Malvan territory.

OTHERS

Herculan says he comes from a species called the Fassai, one of several belonging to a political unit called the Velarian Confederation. Located on the other side of the galactic core, about 55,000 light-years from Earth, the Velarian Confederation is apparently plagued by numerous civil wars and much political infighting. It has FTL capability.

Between them, Firewing, Herculan, and Ironclad have mentioned, and in some cases briefly described, several other alien species: the reptilian Mondabi; the insectoid Seëcra; the enigmatic Thorgons; and others. Humanity knows very little about them but remains on the lookout for any potential visitors... or invaders.

Humanity also knows that at least one other galaxy also has sentient life. Two superhumans on Earth — the supervillain Vibron, and the heroine Nebula — both come from planets in the Andromeda Galaxy, the one nearest the Milky Way.

REALMS BEYOND: OTHER DIMENSIONS



Outer space doesn't define the limits of the Champions Universe — or perhaps one should say Champions *Multiverse*. Although the average inhabitant of Earth remains completely unaware of the fact, many superhumans know that Earth's plane of existence is by no means the only reality. In fact, Earth's home dimension is but one of uncounted trillions of dimensions, ranging from ones virtually indistinguishable from Earth's to planes so bizarre and strange that they share not a single physical or mystical law with Earth.

THE FOUR WORLDS

The arrangement and geometries of the multiverse are so convoluted — so simultaneously logical and illogical, contradictory and complementary, probable and impossible — that no attempt to map or diagram them (at least by

humans) is ever likely to succeed. However, a few human scholars of the subject, almost all of them powerful mystics, have developed a framework for describing the multiverse that seems to resonate with the human mind. Using the language and concepts of kabbalism, these scholars arrange the dimensions of the multiverse into four categories — the Four Worlds — each “higher” than the last.

At the lowest level is *Assiah*, the Material World. Assiatic planes include Earth, the uncounted number of alternate Earths superhumans have learned about (see below), and other such planes. In these realms, natural laws control reality; though magic may exist, it does not run Assiatic dimensions or act as one of their true fundamental forces.

Above *Assiah* is *Yetzirah*, the Formative or Astral World. Yetziratic dimensions *do* run by magic; here, symbol, will, and thought can exert as much power as the laws of physics (if not

4



KNOWN DIMENSIONS

Besides alternate Earths, here are a few dimensions Earth's heroes have visited, or with which they're somehow associated:

The Dreamtime, an Aboriginal phantasmagoria dimension accessed through Ayers Rock in Australia, said to be the source of all creation

Duress, the prison dimension to which Nebula transports criminals

The Frost Tomb, where the fallen god Kigatilik is imprisoned

The Higher Lands, the part of Faerie where the Chippewa gods live, and where the demon Baykok comes from

Lythrum, a plane suffused with dark mystical energies that the superheroine Black Rose can call on

The Shadow Realm, the part of Faerie ruled by Brangomar, the Shadow Queen

The Sixth Dimension, an unidentified dimension from which the supervillains Tesseract and Teikei claim to have gotten her powers

Xloptun, a subworld of Faerie connected to Russian folklore, from where the semi-demonic being Eretsun comes.

more). A special plane, the Astral Plane, links all the Yetziratic realms, which include: Faerie (or "the Land Of Legends"), wherein faeries, spirits, monsters, and the gods of myth dwell; the Netherworld, home of demons, devils, and eternal torment; Elysium, or "Heaven"; and Babylon, the City Of Man, a neverending metropolis of wonder and Art.

Above Yetzirah is *Briah*, the Creative or Mental World. A barrier called the Veil of the Temple divides the highest Astral realms from Briah; only the most wise and powerful mystics can pass through it to the dimensions beyond. Brialic realms are totally spiritual — they embody concepts, states of mind, and the like; they're not made of matter as humans understand the term. Powerful cosmic entities, including the four Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art, and Nature, live in many of these planes.

The highest of the Four Worlds is *Atziluth*, the Archetypal World. It lies across the Abyss, a barrier even stronger and deadlier than the Veil. Its planes contain infinite power, the archetypes of all forms and concepts, and much more that most sentients have difficulty fully conceiving of.

ALTERNATE EARTHS

One of the most common types of dimensions visited by non-mystic superheroes are *alternate Earths* — dimensions just like Earth's but where some thing or things are very different. Alternate Earths tend to be "close" to Earth's dimension, multiversally speaking, making them relatively "easy" to reach. Known examples include:

- several alternate Earths where major historical events did not occur, or occurred differently. Some of them include: "Britworld" (in which the American Revolution didn't happen and a vibrant British Empire rules nearly half the world in 2010); the alternate Earth that the supervillain the Cahokian comes from (where the United States doesn't exist and North America's a patchwork of small nations); "Walkingworld" (in which almost no large, tameable draft animals evolved, depriving humans of riding animals and beasts of burden and thus limiting the size and scope of many societies); the Earth the supervillainess Lancer comes from (where there's a tyrannical world government that persecutes and hunts people with psionic powers); Laurentia (where French Canada rules the world); and "Popeworld" (in which the Catholic Church rules Earth); and
- a few dimensions in which everything is exactly the same except for one significant detail (such as "Scaleworld," where humanity is reptilian rather than mammalian).

THE COSMIC AXIS

The "Cosmic Axis" is a term used by some scholars to refer to a series of dimensions (some alternate Earths, some not) that, according to some mapping schemes, form an "axis" running through Earth's dimension. For reasons not understood, the infamous Janus Key (see page 16) allows its possessor to travel to any of these planes.

THE QLIPTHOTHIC WORLD

According to some mystics, lying "behind" or "to the side" of the Four Worlds is a fifth, the *Qliphothic World*, a realm of ancient and horrifying dimensions whose energies have decayed into forms inimical to normal life and existence. The... *beings*... which reside in the Qliphothic dimensions are largely unknowable, and always dangerous, to humans. The whispered Kings of Edom are just one of the many terrors residing in the Qliphothic realms.

DIMENSIONAL DANGERS

In addition to the demons of the Netherworld, the angry gods and malevolent faeries of the Land Of Legends, and Qliphothic horrors, the multiverse holds many dangers that, from time to time, threaten Earth or her inhabitants. Of these, the greatest encountered so far is Istvatha V'han, the self-styled "Empress of a Billion Dimensions." One of the rare dimensional conquerors who relies on science rather than sorcery to breach the barriers between planes, V'han apparently rules at least several million dimensions, giving her a vast amount of resources to call on to perform further conquests. Earth's dimension first attracted her attention in 1998, though an attempt by her army of "D-Soldiers" to bring it into her empire was thwarted by the concerted efforts of Earth's superheroes (and more than a few supervillains). V'han even claims to be able to travel through time, though if so, she seems oddly reluctant to use that ability to her tactical advantage. One thing's for certain — a defeat or two are not enough to dispel her desire to conquer Earth. She'll return, sooner or later, and next time Earth's heroes may not be able to hold her off.

A similar, if slightly less powerful, threat is Skarn the Shaper, lord of a multifaceted dimension called the Congeries. Skarn, a sorcerer of immense mystic might, conquers other planes and absorbs them into the Congeries. He hasn't yet tried to subsume Earth into his realm, but Earth's mystics know of him, and know he'll make the attempt eventually.

Unfortunately, given the infinite nature of the Multiverse, the dangers it contains are infinite as well. Earth's protectors must keep careful watch, lest they be taken unawares by something they are not prepared to fend off.



CHAPTER
FIVE

WHO'S WHO
IN THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE



SIGNIFICANT SUPERHUMAN THREATS

While governments, militaries, and corporations may hold most of the political and economic power on Earth, they're not the only forces to be reckoned with in the Champions Universe. In a world where superhumans exist, the threats they pose and opportunities they offer change the landscape of power across the planet. Leaders have to take into account the possible actions of supervillains, machinations of villainous organizations, and assistance of superheroes when setting budgets, planning military or paramilitary actions, or setting law enforcement priorities.

Although organizations like VIPER make the news more frequently than any single villain, and take up more page space in government reports and analyses, "solo" supercriminals of considerable power remain as great a threat, if not greater. While a single supervillain may lack the resources of a full-fledged organization, he has a unity of purpose and flexibility of action-and-response that no organization, even one ruled by a dictatorial leader, can ever hope to match. According to the *Department Of Defense Superhuman Survey 2010*, UNTIL's annual series of *Threat Assessment Reports* on various villains, intelligence gathered by the United States and other governments, and information obtained from superheroes who've fought them, the following are the most dangerous known supervillains on Earth today.

DARK SERAPH AND THE CROWNS OF KRIM

Dark Seraph — formerly the British baronet Sir Dennis of South Mallon — is a quasi-demonic being of great mystic power. Although able to assume human form if he wishes, Dark Seraph normally favors the "fallen angel" body from which his name comes. His soul, long since sold to the Dark Powers, is utterly corrupt; no human sympathy or kindness remains within him, and

there's no evil so foul or perverse that it's beyond him. While he lacks the flexibility of a true sorcerer, he more than makes up for it with overall might; his devastatingly powerful arcane blasts and other abilities enable him to stand against the strongest superheroes.

Dark Seraph's powers derive from the Iron Crown, an ancient mystic artifact of great power said to have been forged by the demon-god Krim. The Iron Crown is but the greatest of Krim's works; he also created five other Crowns — the Blood, Golden, Shadow, Shining, and Stone Crowns — which have likewise survived to the modern day. Each of them has been discovered, and granted its darkling power to he who found it. But somehow the Iron Crown exerts a subtle hold on its lesser brethren, allowing Dark Seraph to summon the wearers of the other Crowns and forge them into a group called the Crowns of Krim. Together they have enough power to ravage the world or oppose the most experienced superhero teams. For example, in 2000, an attempt by the Crowns of Krim to steal an incunabulum from a Paris museum resulted in the deaths of 43 UNTIL agents and the French superhero *Dragonciel* ("Skydragon").

Dark Seraph typically works alone or with only the Crowns; he rarely allies himself with other villains (and almost never with non-mystic villains). He has, on one or two occasions, teamed up with DEMON, but inevitably the two seem to have a falling out that causes their schemes to unravel. He and Black Paladin have hatched a few plots together; despite the fact that the Paladin is markedly less powerful, Dark Seraph seems to have a healthy degree of respect for him (insofar as he can "respect" anyone). Dark Seraph and the Crowns are implacably opposed to Takofanes, for reasons unknown; rumor even has it they secretly helped superheroes stop the Undying Lord's plots once or twice.

DOCTOR DESTROYER

The Dr. Destroyer who now besets the world is a far different man from the one who initiated the Battle of Detroit. Prior to his death in that catastrophic conflict, Destroyer was the most technologically advanced supervillain in the world, with weapons and resources rivalling those of many medium-sized nations. But since his return from the dead in 2002, he seems to have foresworn technology in favor of magic (a force he formerly scorned as unpredictable and unreliable). Dark energies surround him, ready to lash out at superheroes on his command, and his spells are among the mightiest of the Mystic World. In place of his former powered armor he wears a suit of enchanted armor made of bone and mystic metals; in place of his robots he commands his fearsome Shadow Colossi, invoked demons, and other terrifying servitors.

But one thing has *not* changed: the level of threat Dr. Destroyer presents to the world. In the nearly ten years since his resurrection, he's fought the Indian military and superheroes to a standstill in a two-month war, attacked the island of Java (presumably, as with the India incident, to obtain mystic artifacts or some other arcane resource), and battled the Peacekeepers in Chicago in an attempt to kidnap noted occult author Ken Haight. Worst of all he launched a second artificial island, this one a thing of mysticism rather than mechanics, as part of a plot to mentally control the Earth's population in a scheme that was only barely prevented by the combined might of the American and Australian militaries and several superhero teams. Destroyer remains at the top of the world's "most wanted" list, and is likely to stay there for the foreseeable future.

FIREWING

An alien super-gladiator who came to Earth in 2001 for the challenges its superhumans (particularly his old adversaries Ironclad and Herculan) provide, Firewing possesses as much raw power as many world-threatening supervillains. However, he represents less of a threat, since he seems to have no interest whatsoever in ruling the world. What he wants is to test himself in combat against the best Earth has to offer, be they heroes or villains. The threat thus lies in his sheer destructive potential. When he issues his challenges, and fights his battles, Firewing tends to destroy huge swaths of major urban areas. The collateral damage from his fire-based powers alone has already soared into the billions of dollars and thousands of deaths, and the direct damage isn't far behind that. No one knows where he'll next appear, or when, or who he'll call to battle him, but his arrival will undoubtedly cause mass panic.



Firewing has no formal relations with any organization. On a few occasions, other villains or organizations, such as VIPER, have manipulated him into doing things for them, but that tactic tends to backfire as often as it works, since he's no fool. The world is terrified of the possibility Dr. Destroyer might try this, though it's likely Firewing would look on Destroyer as a foe to defeat more than an ally whose "suggestions" he should take.

GRAVITAR

Mistress of gravity, able to hold the strongest heroes motionless off the ground or selectively crush parts of their bodies until they're too injured to stop her, Gravitator possesses even more personal power than Firewing. Unlike Firewing, she *does* want to rule the world, but doesn't pursue the prize with the fanatical intensity of Dr. Destroyer or Istvatha V'han. She seems to have no plan beyond achieving whatever individual goal catches her fancy at the moment, with the idea that if she causes enough problems and defeats enough superheroes, the world will eventually realize the pointlessness of opposing her and simply accede to her whims. If insulted or angered, she can become petulantly destructive, casually tossing around battleships, ripping up buildings, and wrecking cities in an effort to punish her tormentors.

Gravitator works with other villains and organizations if it suits her intentions at any given time, but she doesn't make a habit of it. She's known to be openly contemptuous of both Destroyer and Mechanon; she's fought the latter to a standstill twice, no mean feat considering the resources it has to draw upon.

GROND

Like Firewing, Grond — the mutated victim of a horrible chain of unfortunate circumstances combined into one massive radiation accident — is dangerous mainly because of his destructiveness. When on a rampage, Grond can level entire urban districts and beat pretty much any superhero into a bloody pulp. He's widely considered the strongest being on Earth. (Only the VIPER supervillain Ripper when augmented by his so-called Omicron technology, Gargantua when fully grown, and a few extraterrestrial threats like Valak the World-Ravager are stronger than Grond, but even then they may not be able to maintain that state permanently.) But unlike Firewing, whose motivations and conduct are fairly predictable, Grond is driven by rage and other undiscernable impulses, which makes it hard to determine what he might do in any given situation.

Grond isn't exactly the sharpest tool in the shed, making it easy for smarter villains and groups like VIPER to trick him into doing what they want. If Grond discovers what's going on, he'll turn on the people who are using him, but most of them get away with it. Prior to the 2009 breakout Grond had spent several years incarcerated in a hot sleep chamber in Stronghold following one such scheme, in which VIPER convinced him to destroy the PRIMUS headquarters in Los Angeles to distract the authorities while it committed a major technology theft across town. Since then he's been on the loose, though he's been seen several times in the Burning Sands area.

PROJECT GREENSKIN

In 1995, scientists working for the United States Army developed a series of "neuro-electrodes" which they claimed would, if implanted in Grond's brain, allow them to control Grond's thoughts and actions. Although initially skeptical, the Pentagon brass and DOSPA personnel were swayed by the scientists' enthusiastic presentation, and allocated funding for "Project Greenskin."

After building an appropriate facility in the Burning Sands area, the scientists set out to capture Grond in an Army helicopter equipped with a hot sleep chamber. After the man-monster was sighted in Minnesota, they flew there and brought him down with a combination of high-strength tangleweb and tranquilizer darts loaded with enough knockout juice to drop a tyrannosaur dead in his tracks.

After bringing Grond to New Mexico, the scientists performed a delicate operation to install the neuro-electrodes. When Grond awakened, it appeared the procedure was a success. Initial trials allowed the scientists to control the gigantic supervillain's motions and actions, and to keep him calm when necessary. But after several hours, something went wrong. One of the electrodes malfunctioned, inflicting intense pain in Grond's head. That was enough for him to overcome the control. Within another hour, all but one of the scientists, and all of their support personnel, were dead and their base was almost totally destroyed. Grond disappeared into the desert.

The surviving scientist, Dr. Nelson Dupree, now confined to a wheelchair, remains convinced the neuro-electrode procedure, if sufficiently refined, will live up to its promised potential. The US Army has rebuilt Project Greenskin's base to make it stronger than ever.

ISTVATHA V'HAN

Known, and apparently not without some justification, as the Empress of a Billion Dimensions, Istvatha V'han is a native of some plane of existence unknown to mankind. Thanks to what she describes as “my innate ability to travel between dimensions and through the portals of time,” V'han conquered several dimensions, built up an army, and used that army to conquer dozens more dimensions. Dozens became thousands, and thousands eventually millions or billions. Her powers seem entirely scientific and/or technological in origin, rather than mystical, and her conquests appear mostly (though not entirely) restricted to Asiatic dimensions.

In 1998, V'han's path of conquest at long last brought her to Earth's dimension. After breaching the dimensional barrier in outer space between Earth and Mars, she traveled with her army of D-Soldiers to Earth, where she demanded that the planet (whose naturally high levels of superhuman and mystic energies had apparently attracted her attention) submit to her rulership or be destroyed. Uniting in the face of a common threat, Earth's superhumans and governments fended off her attack and drove her back into other dimensions. She tried again in 2007, and again was defeated only by the narrowest of margins. No one doubts she intends to try again when the time is right.

The Empress is one of the greatest threats to Earth not just because of her personal power (which is not inconsiderable) but because of her resources, which dwarf those of Dr. Destroyer or any nation on the planet. She commands the unswerving loyalty of thousands or millions of dimensions' worth of soldiers (and perhaps superhumans), all equipped with advanced vehicles and weapons. Her and her armies' dimension-shifting powers give them an enormous tactical advantage in any battle. Earth's barely defeated her two times; the next time she may be unstoppable.

Istvatha V'han makes no alliances with the people of Earth's dimension. Her only interest is in bringing this plane of existence into her empire.

KINEMATIK

Considered by some the most powerful mutant on the planet (though other analysts favor Gravitar for that distinction), Kinematik is also the self-proclaimed leader of “mutantkind.” He believes that mutants are the next step in human evolution, and that ordinary humans should acknowledge them as their overlords. Naturally he, with his matchless powers of control over kinetic energy, inertia, and friction, will in turn command the mutant overlords and become the ruler of the world.

Kinematik's origins are unknown. He first appeared in 2004, when he attacked the Guardhouse and freed four mutant supervillains (two of whom, Blindside and Overdrive, became fanatic followers of his cause). He's also responsible for a major attack on Washington DC in October, 2007

(to, as he put it, “protest the anti-mutant policies of the United States and show this country's rulers that mutants are their betters!”). He killed nearly a hundred people and damaged several national monuments before the Capital Patrol and the All-American weakened him enough that he fled. And not surprisingly, he often attacks the Institute for Human Advancement's offices and events; the IHA's rated him at #1 on its *Mutant Threat Report* every year since 2006.

Kinematik considers other mutants his “brothers and sisters.” If they're villains, he's willing to work with them to further mutual goals; if they're heroes he prefers to fight them using the minimum force necessary while trying to convert them to his cause. Non-mutant superhumans he regards as “mere humans” and thus worthy of neither his help, his concern, nor his mercy. He regards as an implacable enemy anyone who discriminates against or “exploits” mutants; this includes the IHA and VIPER. He also despises Teleios, since he regards bio-engineering mutations in the laboratory as a foul perversion of science and destiny.

KING COBRA

The reptilian mastermind who calls himself King Cobra is, like Teleios or Dr. Phillippe Moreau, a threat to humanity because of his skills as a geneticist. But unlike Teleios (who looks on humanity as one vast collection of experimental material) or Moreau (who simply wants to be left alone to create manimals and pursue other projects free from legal interference), King Cobra seems to have a specific goal in mind: he wants to rule the world, preferably by transforming mankind into reptile-men obedient to his every command.

King Cobra revealed himself (and his organization, COIL) in 2004 as part of his “Ophidian Plague” scheme, which the Champions and other superheroes narrowly thwarted. Based on analysis of VIPER files captured since then and other data, UNTIL believes that King Cobra was formerly Dr. Timothy Blank, an unscrupulous VIPER scientist. If so, the fact that Blank seems to have voluntarily transformed himself from mammal to reptile is a stark indication of the extent of both his skills and his madness.

Since suffering defeat in the Ophidian Plague incident, King Cobra has remained relatively quiet. His “Inner Circle” of supervillain followers were incarcerated in Stronghold until the 2009 breakout, when four of them escaped (Firedrake remains in prison there), significantly weakening COIL. But now that they've returned to him, no doubt whatever plans he's been making while lurking in the shadows for the past few years will begin to unfold.

King Cobra rarely allies himself with, or works with, other supervillains; he seems to despise humanity in general. He particularly hates both VIPER and Dr. Moreau, and regards Teleios with a strange mix of contempt and scientific respect.

MECHANON

Unlike Destroyer, who should more properly be named Dr. Conqueror, Mechanon threatens the Earth because it does, in fact, wish to destroy the planet — or, more accurately, all of its organic life. The evil robot wants to “cleanse” the planet of the “organic bacteria” which infest it, and since its first appearance in 1985 has instituted one scheme after another to achieve that goal. Its past plans have involved attempts to use the world’s arsenals to trigger a planetary nuclear holocaust, trying to convert all plant life to inedible metallic substances via a “technovirus,” and efforts to melt the polar icecaps and drown all land-dwelling life.



Mechanon has honed its survival to a fine art. As a robotic being, it keeps multiple “backups” of himself at bases hidden across the planet. When one of its selves is totally defeated and destroyed (a rare occurrence), a backup activates, analyzes what happened, and builds improvements into itself to prevent a similar defeat in the future. According to Department of Defense analysts, thanks to this process the Mechanon who nearly took over the United States in 1985 was less than half as powerful and capable as the Mechanon who threatens the world today.

Mechanon possesses the most advanced technology on Earth. The undisputed master of robotics, it can build mechanical men and creatures distinguishable from the real thing only by careful scientific analysis, or devastating war-robots that make no pretense of being anything but killing machines. Although it has multiple tiny bases throughout the world (mostly just to hold its “backups”), it’s suspected of having major facilities on the Pacific seabed, in the Sahara, in the Caucasus, and perhaps even on the dark side of the Moon. Unlike other master villains, it doesn’t have to worry about its own comfort, or the comfort of minions, allowing it to situate a headquarters in places no one else would consider.

On rare occasions Mechanon has worked with other supervillains, but to it such relationships represent nothing more than the chance to get some use out of a “foolish organic” before destroying him. Mechanon’s programming doesn’t allow for sympathy, compassion, feelings of friendship, or the ability to extend mercy; its sole, overwhelming drive is to eradicate all organic life in the most impressive manner possible. If it were ever to succeed, it would probably move on to another inhabited planet and start over.

MENTON

In some ways, Menton frightens the leaders and people of Earth more than Destroyer, Mechanon, or even Istvatha V’han. Conquest or destruction are easily understood, easily detected, and easily opposed activities. The thought of a master villain able to take control of someone’s mind from miles, even continents, away — and who can make them do whatever he wants without their even realizing they’re not acting of their own free will — terrifies even the most confident official. Thanks almost entirely to Menton’s existence, the size and earnings of the anti-psionic defenses industry has quintupled in the past two decades.

Menton wants to rule the world, but he prefers to approach the problem subtly, without the overblown schemes and rampant destruction others bring to the task. A mental nudge here, a telepathic command there, and he can direct the course of world events to suit his whims and desires. When the time is right, he plans for the governments of the world to turn the reins of authority over to him in one fell swoop. His 2005

attempt to become President of Guamanga is a good example of how he works.

Few supervillains are willing to work with Menton for fear they're not really his allies but his puppets. (On the other hand, as Brainchild once observed, "He can make me his puppet *anyway* — I might as well try to work with him and at least *hope* I'm acting of my own free will.") Several members of PSI, including Mind Slayer, went to work for him, but that lasted only until his incarceration in Stronghold. The original Dr. Destroyer and Menton hated each other, an animosity dating from the late Eighties and early Nineties when Menton was one of Destroyer's followers; what Menton thinks of the resurrected Destroyer is unknown, but likely the hatred remains. Menton has occasionally assisted Eurostar, a group his sister Mentalla belongs to, but seems to regard their behavior and goals as somehow petty.

THE SLUG

In the ranks of master villains of the Champions Universe, the Slug is not only one of the most powerful, he's certainly the most disgusting-looking and possibly the most terrifying (though most people would place Takofanes ahead of him on the latter quality). Leader of the Elder Worm, a foul alien (or extra-dimensional) annelidoid species that apparently subjugated proto-humanity and ruled Earth for a time tens of thousands of years ago, his goal is nothing less than a return to that state of existence. If he had his way, all of humanity would be transformed into Elder Worms to follow him, and Earth's climate would become hotter and more humid.

Since his first appearance in 1979, the Slug has cut a swath of horror across the world. On several occasions he's attacked a major city — New York, London, or Millennium City, to name the three biggest — and tried to transform the inhabitants into Elder Worms. Each time his bizarre alien sorceries have been disrupted by superheroes, but only by the slimmest of margins. He scours the world looking for artifacts of the Elder Worm to augment his (and his followers') powers, and will attack anyone he believes has, or might have, such relics so he can seize them for himself.

The Slug doesn't ally himself with "hhhhuumanz" (as he would say it in his telepathic "voice"). He regards all of humanity — villain, hero, or civilian — as but future Elder Worms.

SUNBURST

In 2002 a powerful new master villain appeared on the scene. Calling himself *Sunburst*, he wielded vast energy powers that some experts claim put him on par with Firewing. Backed by several followers who also had various energy powers (a group he dubbed "Project Sunburst" after the secret government project that created them all; see page 43), he declared that he was going to make the world a better place... whether the world wanted it or not.

It's true that Sunburst is far more "friendly" than most villains. He's earned a lot of public acclaim for fighting the Qularr, Istvatha V'han, and other menaces to all of humanity, for preventing natural disasters (or helping to relieve their effects), and for destroying industrial facilities that pollute the environment. But the truth is that his actions have resulted in billions of dollars of property damage and the deaths of hundreds (if not thousands), and that he often seems to profit from his "selfless" crimes.

Sunburst has proven himself willing to work with other villains (and even heroes) when doing so promotes his public agenda or is for "the betterment of humankind," as he likes to say. The one villain group he definitely does *not* get along with is the Ultimates; he lured their member Radium away to his own group in 2008 and they've sworn revenge.

TAKOFANES, THE UNDYING LORD

Considered by most authorities, including the Trismegistus Council and the majority of mystic superheroes, to be the greatest occult threat native to Earth, Takofanes the Undying Lord, known also as the Archlich and the King of the Throne of Human Ivory, is of obscure origin. Some seers claim he was once a human being who sold his soul for power; others that he's a demon from the Netherworld who has taken permanent form on this plane; others that he comes from another time; and still others that he's an avatar of Death.

Wherever he comes from and whatever he is, no one denies his power. Resembling a human skeleton, garbed in macabre, ornate clothing, wearing on his head a crown of golden dragons, borne in a litter carried by his undead servants or the sheer force of his magic, Takofanes (tuh-KOFF-uh-nee-z) commands great magical might, particularly in the arcana of Necromancy. Where he passes, corpses rise from their graves to serve him and ghosts wreak harm on the living. Everyone who stands against him and is slain comes back to unlife to do as he commands.

Takofanes first appeared in 1987. His manifestation was initially noted in Oklahoma (why there, no one knows), where he destroyed the entire town of Tahlequah and turned its residents into zombies. From there he proceeded eastward, leaving death, devastation, and madness in his wake as he crossed the United States. A combined effort by several superteams to stop him from crossing the Mississippi River failed, resulting in the deaths of Archangel, Hardball, Delphi, the Hyperkinetic Man, Tightwire, Flechette I, and Goldfire. A second effort to stop him in eastern Kentucky, by a larger group of superheroes (and not a few villains) succeeded, with no further loss of superhuman life, but the Archlich vanished from the battlefield before anyone could lay hands on him. It was not until this final battle that anyone saw him so much as lift a bony finger or even acknowledge the existence of those opposing him.

THE CROWN OF TAKOFANES

Takofanes wears on his head (or, more accurately, skull) an ornate golden crown. No hero's ever gotten near enough to him to examine it closely, but it seems to be made of seven interwoven golden dragons. The largest of the dragons rears up in front and holds a large emerald in its jaws.

Mystics who fight Takofanes have no difficulty sensing the evil magics imbued in the crown. The exact nature of the magic remains unclear, though it does seem to protect the Undying Lord from certain mind-affecting spells. On some occasions, the emerald seems to glitter particularly brightly when Takofanes casts spells himself.

Some mystics, including Dr. Ka, claim the artifact is actually the fabled Dragon Crown, seventh and greatest of the Crowns of Krim, dwarfing in power even the Iron Crown worn by Dark Seraph. If so, that might give Takofanes the ability to summon Dark Seraph (and his followers) and make them all do his bidding — a truly terrifying prospect.

Since then, Takofanes has returned several times, most notably his attack on Vibora Bay in 1994 (resulting in the death of Dr. Scarab, among others), battling the Champions on Halloween of 2001, and the infamous “Blood Moon” event of 2009 (see page 17). Where he goes, death and destruction inevitably follow. His exact goals and intentions remain obscure, since he rarely speaks, though most mystics believe he wants to take over the world by killing everyone in it and turning them into undead servants. He’s never worked with other villains, and presumably regards all living beings as servitors-to-be, whatever their powers in life. In fact, other villains sometimes help to oppose him, and at least one group — the Crowns of Krim — seems to actively oppose him.

TELEIOS

Teleios is a threat not so much on his own, but because of the assistance he can provide other villains or organizations. A master of the biological sciences, the self-proclaimed “Perfect Man” can create cloned armies (or armies of cloned superhumans!), interfere with the biological processes of his enemies, create biological weapons of terrifying destructiveness, induce superpowers in ordinary persons, and warp and mold flesh and bone to suit his whims. He himself seems to have no particular interest in conquest or rulership — though if he did, his ability to grow armies in his lab would make him extraordinarily dangerous. Instead, he regards the world as a vast laboratory, and all the people in it as his experimental subjects. Out of sheer perversity, and general loathing for humanity, he’s perfectly willing to work for organizations like VIPER and ARGENT, or to help supervillains in various ways (his expertise as a doctor used to dealing with bizarre biologies is highly sought-after in some circles). However, many villains are reluctant to accept his help, since it’s widely believed that

his creations are genetically programmed to obey him, and not his “clients,” if necessary. Teleios doesn’t get along with Mechanon, whom he considers to have insulted him in years past by denigrating his chosen fields of expertise in favor of computers and robotics.

Teleios goes to great lengths to conceal his presence, preferring not to have to disrupt delicate experiments to flee from encroaching authorities. Analysts working for the United States Department of Defense believe his chief laboratories are in Canada (northern Ontario) and Central America, with lesser facilities in several places throughout the world. In 2000 he was linked to a number of genetic monstrosities, including

what seemed to be lab-grown and mutated dinosaurs, wandering in the Canadian Shield. But Teleios was too smart to leave many

“footprints” near his home base; while the authorities found three of his lairs, all were minor facilities long since abandoned. He remains at large and is considered one of the most dangerous superhuman threats in the world.



THE WARLORD

The Warlord is something of a mystery. Ostensibly he's simply an arms merchant — an incredibly powerful arms merchant, with one of the world's mightiest powered armor suits, a gigantic aerial headquarters called the Flying Fortress, and a small private army at his beck and call — but just an arms merchant nonetheless. His goal seems to be the acquisition of wealth through the sale of military technology, and the fomenting of world conflicts as a way of maintaining a vibrant marketplace for his wares.

More than a few security analysts question this viewpoint, however. The Warlord seems far too high-profile for his own good, and there are better ways to make money given the kind of resources he obviously commands. These observers opine that he's out to conquer the world, but taking a different approach from the likes of most master villains. That, in turn, leads to speculation about what his overall plans *really* are, and how all the arms dealing fits into them.

Superheroes who've encountered the Warlord — or his bodyguards, a team of supervillains called the War Machine — haven't been able to shed much light on the matter. Unlike most villains of his caliber, the Warlord doesn't pontificate about his "master plan" or posture in front of his foes. He fights ruthlessly, with supreme tactical efficiency and with his mind focused entirely on the elimination of the enemy. The Warlord has killed more superheroes (28) than almost any other known supervillain.

The Warlord is not known to have made any alliances with other supervillains, or villainous organizations. If he saw strategic value in an alliance, undoubtedly he'd pursue it; otherwise he apparently prefers to operate on his own.

DR. YIN WU

This Chinese sorcerer, of indeterminate age, is barely known outside of his native China, where he lives in a castle in a valley the Chinese government hasn't been able to enter in over 60 years. Several attempts by the Tiger Squad to penetrate the castle or tempt "the Dragon Mandarin" into battle have met with either utter failure, or a sound defeat at the Doctor's hands. Gossamer Storm, one of the leaders of the Squad and a powerful mystic in her own right, has described him as "a devil of gold and poison who dwells in safety where no one else can go." She refuses to explain what her statement means.

Despite the fact that he's supposedly been bottled up in his castle since 1949, Dr. Wu's name alone is enough to make brave men in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and the Chinatowns of the world pale with fear. Rumor has it that he maintains homes in many places besides China, traveling to and fro by walking the dragon lines that underlie the world.

No one knows what his ultimate goals are — or no one's willing to talk about them — leaving the superheroes of the world to watch carefully and be prepared for anything.

Doctor Wu lives in isolation in his castle (and perhaps other homes), seeking the aid or counsel of no other man. Some superhumans do believe, however, that he secretly lent magical assistance to the forces opposing Takofanes in 1987, Dr. Destroyer in 2006, and Istvatha V'han in 1998 and 2007.

OTHER MAJOR THREATS

While typically not as dangerous as the major villains listed above, the following villains also present some sort of significant threat to Earth or humanity.

BOREALIS

A powerful master of light, this Canadian villain is determined to conquer Canada and then lead Canada to conquest over the world. Operating on both political and physical levels, Borealis inspired the *Canada Destiny* party of radical nationalists. After a five year campaign of terror, he was captured by the Vancouver superteam SUNDER and shuffled from prison to prison until the government finished building Stronghold North. Since escaping from Stronghold North in 2005, he's become even harsher and more dangerous. He sometimes projects a noble facade and engages in "charitable" acts (much like Sunburst), but ultimately obtaining power is his true goal. While he's rarely been a threat outside of Canada (and the northern US) in the past, there's no telling when one of his schemes might take him abroad. He remains a major threat to national and world security; his activities in recent years have included a series of attacks against American lumber interests.

When Borealis escaped in 2005, Canada Destiny welcomed him with open arms. It includes his two superhuman lieutenants: *the Landsman* (a young strongman with a mysterious bond to the Land); and *Augury*, a former member of the Northern Guard.

BRANGOMAR, THE SHADOW QUEEN

The ruler of the *Shadow Realm*, a part of the dimension of Faerie, Brangomar the Shadow Queen is actually a fearsome dragon who usually takes the form of a woman. She's fought the Sentinels several times due to her connection with Bravo, who's also from Faerie. Known for her slyness and vengefulness, she's never attempted to conquer Earth... but certainly has the mystic power to do so, if she wanted.

THE WAR MACHINE

The Warlord's corps of superpowered bodyguards, christened the War Machine, has five members:

Warbird: An aerial recon and combat specialist with a super-tech wings-and-jetpack combination that allows for fast, maneuverable flight, and wrist-rocket launchers for potent offense. Warbird is the team's commander.

Warcry: Possessing sonic powers strong enough to shatter walls, Warcry can also use more focused sonic blasts to accomplish several effects.

Warhead: A master of demolitions, explosives, and missiles, with a well-armed powered armor suit.

Warmonger: A psionic with the ability to inflict and enhance feelings of rage and tendencies toward violence.

Warpath: An American Indian woman who's an expert archer equipped with a high-tech bow and quiver of gimmicked arrows.

Although perhaps not as powerful as some supervillain teams, the War Machine makes up for its lack of raw power with its extensive combat expertise. The members have worked together for years, developing tactics and practices that greatly enhance their combat effectiveness. Superheroes who don't take them seriously are in for a rude surprise.

CAPTAIN CHRONOS

This gaudily-garbed hero/villain is a mystery — but a dangerous one. He seems to have the power to manipulate time, and even travel through it, and claims to be present “in this time-frame” to prevent some possible catastrophe that will alter the timestream forever. Whether or not that’s true, what’s certain is that no one can figure out exactly what he’s up to. Sometimes he helps heroes (or asks for their assistance); at other times he commits crimes or works with villains. But one thing’s certain: anyone who can effortlessly travel back and forth through time is a very, very dangerous person.

ECLIPSTAR

Eclipsar, mistress of darkness, first appeared in 2000, when she blacked out the Sun over all of South and Central America and killed thousands before being stopped by several hero teams and UNTIL. The Tribunal incarcerated her in the Guardhouse, but she escaped during Obelisque’s 2004 breakout. She hasn’t attacked anyone or any part of Earth since then, but given that her expressed goal is to destroy the Sun, every super-team and UNTIL agent on (and off) the planet keeps an eye out for her.

GARGANTUA

Gargantua is a mercenary villain with growth powers. Ordinarily villains-for-hire don’t pose much threat to world security — but Gargantua can become two hundred feet tall, and at maximum height is stronger than Grond! With his powers at full strength he’s virtually invulnerable and can knock over buildings, so superheroes and organizations like PRIMUS take it very, very seriously when he’s said to be involved in some scheme.

HOLOCAUST

Holocaust is a powerful energy projector (he typically fires energy bolts from his eyes), sometimes with power rivalling Firewing’s, and also has the ability to absorb energy. While he’s never quite mustered the resources to come close to conquering the world, he’s made no secret of his arrogant desire to rule humanity. A mutant, he’s sometimes teamed with Kinematik, though their megalomaniacs prevent them from working well together for very long.

INTERFACE

A cyborg master villain with electricity powers and gadgets who first appeared in 2003, Interface was captured after an elaborate scheme to destroy the Champions failed. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in hot sleep in Stronghold, but escaped during the 2009 breakout. He’s lain low since, as far as anyone can tell. The truth is that his schemes are so drawn-out and subtle, usually involving multiple attempts to study and analyze his foes so he can easily defeat them, that he could be in the middle of one right now without anyone being the wiser.

KANROK THE ACQUISITIONER

Unlike his fellow Malvan Firewing, Kanrok remains loyal to the Phazor (ruler of Malva) and serves him in an unusual way. After augmenting himself with Malvan science, he set out to capture superhumans and monsters for the Malvan arena. Dubbed “the Acquisitioner,” he’s since become a steady supplier of gladiatorial amusements for the Malvans... and Earth, with its dense population of powerful superhumans, is one of his chief hunting grounds. Once he sets his sights on a particular target, his energy and mental powers make it hard to avoid him.

5



KIGATILIK

A fallen Inuit god known as the “slayer of shamans,” Kigatilik is a being of ice and cold who hates life, and *especially* hates those who protect and preserve it. In the modern day, that includes superheroes.

Eons ago the other Inuit gods imprisoned Kigatilik in a slab of basalt. The Golden Age villain Vultok, himself some sort of extradimensional being, worshipped the slab as a god. During one of his schemes an atomic explosion was set off near the slab, creating cracks in it. Those cracks weakened the prison so that Kigatilik was able to escape in 1964. Four heroes, the Mighty Canadians, battled him and his fearsome minions for years. In 1975 they were finally able to trap him in a dimension called the Frost Tomb (which intersects with Earth’s dimension at a cave in the Canadian wilderness), though all of them except Celestar had to seal themselves into the Tomb with him to do it.

Since then Kigatilik has been greatly weakened... but not entirely powerless. With the life-forces of the three heroes to play with and draw on, the Slayer of Shamans has been able to attack Earth indirectly. The deadliest of his efforts was summoning the demon Tilingkoot in 1987. Some mystics now believe the Frost Tomb is weakening and Kigatilik’s powers and influence over Earth’s realm are growing. If so, dark dies may lie ahead for Canada... and the world.

LI CHUN THE DESTROYER

In 1995 a powerful being wielding demonic powers and calling itself “Li Chun the Destroyer” appeared suddenly in eastern China and began destroying everything it could see. The Tiger Squad responded and battled the indefatigable villain for two days. Then, perhaps sensing that it was weakening, Li Chun simply disappeared. It has never returned, but the Chinese authorities remain wary, for any being who can hold three dozen trained superheroes at bay for two days is a being who could destroy the Earth if left unchecked.

MASQUERADE

A master shapechanger able to assume any human form and effortlessly duplicate the appearance of others, Masquerade utterly terrifies most governments and intelligence agencies. He/She’s demonstrated his/her ability to penetrate top-level security and steal valuable secrets and devices time and time again. Anyone who brings him/her, or incontrovertible proof of his/her death, to the right people will earn himself a lot of money, favors, and friends.

THE MONSTER

Since his first appearance on a storm-wracked night in 1989, when he murdered the St. Louis superheroine Briquette, the Monster has been a mysterious force for death and evil. He appears at seemingly random times and places to commit his killings (often, though not exclusively, of superhumans), then vanishes into the night just as enigmatically. He’s never been captured, much less imprisoned, and until he is the mysteries surrounding him will continue to go unsolved.

DR. PHILLIPPE MOREAU

Although some superheroes scoff at him as “a junior-grade Teleios,” Doctor Phillippe Moreau is more of a threat than many people believe. A super-scientist responsible for the creation of the hero Dr. Silverback and countless “manimals,” Dr. Moreau has shown that he has no scruples about doing *anything* he feels necessary in pursuit of his scientific goals, including kidnapping test subjects and committing robberies to fund his work. Fortunately for the world, since VIPER helped set him up with a private laboratory on Monster Island, where he has the isolation and protection he prefers, he hasn’t been any sort of a threat to humanity... but that could easily change.

MORPH

Masquerade is dangerous enough when it comes to shapechanging, but Morph is even worse. Not only can she do anything Masquerade could do powers-wise, she can also shape her hands into weapons, transform into animals or objects, give her flesh the properties of metal, and even stretch and contort her body for many meters. Greedy and amoral, she has no compunctions about using her powers to steal and harm — and if she were ever shown more clever ways to use her powers she’d become truly dangerous.



NECRULL

For decades the fiendish Necrull has fought the heroes of Canada, and the world, as they seek to prevent him from fulfilling his twisted mad science schemes. Filled with “necrullitic energy” that allows him to fire energy bolts and use the superpowers of any hero he kills and harvests organs from, he’s a living horror who’s killed thousands over the course of his career. Assisted by “Necrullticians” who do much of his dirty work, he’s an emotionless killing machine who’s high on many law enforcement agencies’ “most wanted” lists. Having recently absorbed the powers of several members of the short-lived Vancouver superhero team Vanguard, he’s become more dangerous than ever.

JOSEPH OTANGA

If VIPER has any competition for criminal dominance in Africa, it’s Joseph Otanga, the strongman currently ruling the West African nation of Lugendu as President-For-Life. Lugendu has suffered several violent revolutions in the decades since it achieved independence from France. In 1995, another such rebellion brought Joseph Otanga, then a general of the army, to power. He’s ruled ever since, in part thanks to the support of several major international oil companies (Lugendu’s blessed with large offshore petroleum deposits). In the inland jungles several tribes remain opposed to his rule.

Otanga controls Lugendu with an iron fist, and persistent rumors claim he wields a dark, voodoo-like sorcery against his enemies. The fact that many people who speak out against or oppose him simply “disappear” without leaving a single clue as to what happened to them only fuels these whispers. Some Lugendans even believe he has superhuman powers. Most of Otanga’s subjects are deathly afraid of him and wouldn’t think of turning against him.

From his capital at Nahambane, Otanga has worked for the past several years to extend his power. According to Interpol and UNTIL, he’s established networks of criminal gangs and spies throughout western Africa. He uses them to funnel drugs, conflict diamonds, slaves, and anything else of value through Lugendu. Between this and his methodical looting of the Lugendan treasury, Otanga is thought to be a billionaire already, and his fortune is still growing.

PROFESSOR PARADIGM

One of the newest superhuman threats confronting the world is Professor Paradigm and his followers, the Paradigm Pirates. Seemingly obsessed with metaphysical and ontological questions — such “What is the true nature of Reality?,” “What’s the difference between Reality and Illusion?,” “What is the nature of the Multiverse?,” and “Where does Reality end and Art begin?” — his crimes and schemes are bizarre in the extreme. The Malevolent Metaphysician (as Dr. Silverback nicknamed him) doesn’t typically steal things, kidnap people, or threaten to blow up the city. He’s more inclined to try to drive people mad to see how that affects their perception of Reality, put on absurd (and highly dangerous) “pageants” to make people question their senses and beliefs, or try to merge Earth’s dimension with another. Some authorities, including several super-mages, are concerned his activities may weaken the fundamental foundations of Reality.

SKARN THE SHAPER

Although few even among the Superhuman World know of him, many mystics are aware of a dimensional threat called Skarn the Shaper. Skarn rules a Yetziratic realm called the Congeries, which he’s created by conquering dimensions, shaping them to suit his will, and “merging” them with his own. The result is a nightmare realm where geography and even reality can change radically over even short distances. Skarn’s people are the same, a vast, diverse horde of beings who are often very, very different from one another, or who’ve been shaped by their master’s power. Some of Earth’s mystics believe Skarn has now turned his eyes to Earth’s dimension in the hopes of adding it to the Congeries.

SLUN (THE BISHOP)

As of 2010, much of the organized crime in Russia and parts of Europe is controlled by an underworld figure who calls himself *Slun* (“the Bishop”). A former seminary student whose personality was warped by the emergence of psionic powers when he was in his early 20s, Slun wears garments that mimic those of a Russian Orthodox bishop. He’s used his mental powers to become the dominant figure in Russian and European crime circles, which has brought him into conflict with superheroes, UNTIL, various police agencies, VIPER, and Eurostar. But he’s survived through it all, thanks in large part to his minions’ (psionically-reinforced) loyalty. It’s also thought that he’s recruited some superpowered “bodyguards,” but there’s no proof of this yet. If he’s not stopped he could soon become the single most wealthy and powerful criminal in the world.

TAIPAN

The identity, background, and history of the man known to the world as Taipan remain a mystery to UNTIL and other authorities despite over a decade of investigation. He first appeared in 1997, killing three superheroes and two civilians in the city of Melbourne. He soon developed a reputation as one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, assassin in the world, with a specialty in killing superhumans. His hyperaccelerated nervous system and highly-developed skills make him a lethal opponent.

In 2000, someone (possibly VIPER) hired him to kill the Peacekeepers. He murdered two of them, the hyper-adrenaline-powered Fury and the “living robot” Transac, but the Chicago heroes ultimately defeated and captured him. After an eight-week trial he was convicted of multiple murders. The government of Australia constructed a special prison (nicknamed “House Taipan”) in the Outback for him and him alone. A squad of highly-paid guards with full UNTIL training and weaponry stand watch over him and the prison’s state of the art security systems. For the past decade he’s remained there, asleep but not dreaming, as his life slowly but surely ticks away.

TEZCATLIPOCA

The earthly avatar (or so the mystics say) of the actual Aztec god, Tezcatlipoca is but the most prominent and active of many threats to humanity from the pagan pantheons of old. Filled with hatred for the modern world, “Europeans” (non-natives in the Americas), and Christianity, the Smoking Mirror seeks a return to the right and proper sort of world where people worship himself and his brethren and offer sacrifices of blood and hearts to ensure the continued existence of the Sun and the Earth.

Fortunately for humanity, Tezcatlipoca can only manifest on Earth when summoned by a sacrifice performed by his *nagual* cultists — the more powerful the sacrifice, the longer he can stay. So the cultists often seek to kidnap and sacrifice superhumans, the best source of energy for their god.

Tezcatlipoca’s deadliest manifestation to date was in 2007, when his cultists called him forth by sacrificing a Mexican supervillain. The Lord of Misfortune began attacking cities and towns in Texas, slaughtering thousands whose blood only fed it further. Eventually the combined might of several superteams and PRIMUS held it at bay long enough for Witchcraft, Rashindar, and the Demonologist (in a rare good act) to sever the spells tying Tezcatlipoca to the world so that he disappeared. Witchcraft and Dweomer have spoken with the beneficent Aztec god Quetzalcoatl and asked him to keep Tezcatlipoca in the Aztec region of the Land of Legends, but there’s only so much even another god can do against the Smoking Mirror.

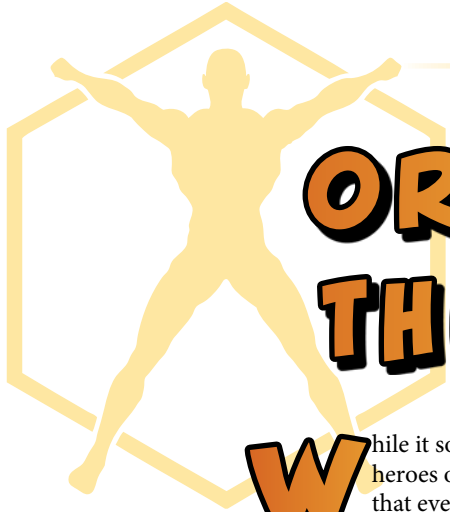
VALAK THE WORLD-RAVAGER

A mutant alien from another galaxy, Valak lives only to fight, conquer, and destroy. He earned his sobriquet, the World-Ravager, after conquering his homeworld and several nearby worlds. He then set out in a crusade of battle and destruction across the stars, but met his match in the Star*Guard of the Milky Way Galaxy. When he escaped from the Guard’s control years later, he began hunting down and killing every Star*Guard he could find. Fortunately, in the Earth year 2006 CONTROL, the Guard’s computer, figured out what was going on and alerted the Star*Guard of Earth, Valak’s next target. With the help of the Sentinels, Star*Guard defeated the alien menace, who was imprisoned in Stronghold in hot sleep.

During the 2009 breakout, Valak escaped from Stronghold. He then attacked the Goodman Institute in Chicago to retrieve his Cosmic Halberd and armor (the Institute was studying them). Then he disappeared. Presumably he still burns with hatred for Star*Guard and the Sentinels and plans to take revenge on them. Some experts speculate that he’s searching for a way to increase his powers, weakened by his imprisonment at the hands of the Star*Guard, to their former levels. If so, and if he succeeds, Earth will be in terrible danger.

VECTOR

Vector is one of the fastest, most versatile speedsters in the world. (He’s actually a flying speedster, but he often just uses his flight to move along the ground as if he’s running so he can race and “duel” other speedsters.) Able to commit robberies and other crimes so fast that no one can see them, much less get there in time to stop him, he’s become a major thorn in the side of the world’s law enforcement agencies and superteams.



ORGANIZATIONS: THE GOOD GUYS

While it sometimes seems to the superheroes of the Champions Universe that everyone's arrayed against them, a few organizations exist to fight the good fight alongside more colorful crusaders for justice.

L'INSTITUT THOTH

In 1954, the United Nations sponsored a systematic study of all aspects of paranormal and superhuman powers. The initial leader of this effort was a respected French scientist named Etienne Ste. Germaine, and he assembled a dedicated staff of biologists, chemists, physicists, sociologists, psychologists, and parapsychologists interested in exploring the nature of superpowers, their effect on society and the world, and related issues. Of course, the main reason the UN wanted to study these subjects was to help member nations capture supervillains and prevent superhuman threats, but many of the scientists were more interested in pure research than "military affairs." Christening their broad field of study "paraphysics," they set out to unravel the mysteries of superhumanity.

When UNTIL was founded in 1965, Ste. Germaine's organization was transferred to it. One year later, Dr. Ste. Germaine retired after arranging for his daughter Yvette, a recent Ph.D graduate, to take his place. The new Dr. Ste. Germaine enjoyed her work immensely, but chafed at the idea of helping the "right-wing militarists" of UNTIL. Six years into the job, she couldn't take it anymore. Deciding the impoverished life of a true scientist was better than helping put oft-misunderstood superhumans in jail, she left the organization in 1972, taking the majority of her staff with her.

Moving to Switzerland, Dr. Ste. Germaine and her staff pooled their own money together with donations from charitable organizations (and, it's rumored, more than a few wealthy superhumans) to establish *L'Institut Thoth*, named for the Egyptian god whose books supposedly contain all wisdom and knowledge. The purpose of the Institut is to study all aspects of paraphysics, both the good and the bad, so as to increase human understanding of a profoundly human subject.

But lofty goals do not pay bills, as Dr. Ste. Germaine and her colleagues realized. To support the Institut, they also established a consulting role for it. Governments interested in exploring paraphysics issues, superhumans looking for insights into their powers (or cures for debilitating conditions), and other such clients pay hefty fees for the Institut's considerable expertise. The fees are always based on ability to pay, rather than a flat-rate scale, but the Institut insists on receiving its money in advance as a retainer (a necessary precaution, given some of the people it deals with). Part research institute, part think tank, part hospital, the Institut plays an intriguing role in the Superhuman World — despite the fact that none of its directors or employees are themselves superhuman.

Additionally, the Institut takes a limited number of students each year, most of them college graduates pursuing Ph.D degrees. The students pay tuition, either on their own or through various scholarships established by governments, businesses, or charities who work closely with the Institut.

The Institut's ethical rules forbid it to actively assist superhuman criminals to commit crimes or evade law enforcement, but not to work with "supervillains" *per se* — anyone with superhuman powers is a subject of interest to the Institut's scientists. On a few occasions the Institut's bent its rules slightly so it could study a particularly interesting superhuman, in the process earning itself some negative publicity, but it's never broken them outright. Despite this, the Institut is generally recognized as being on the side of the angels. Much of the data it gathers is made freely available to law enforcement, and it works for legitimate governments and superheroes far more often than for more... questionable... employers.

Now in her 70s, Dr. Yvette Ste. Germain still serves the Institut as its most influential director, Chief of Operations, and a dedicated scientific investigator. She herself specializes in psychological issues pertaining to superhumans. Any other subject relating to superhumans probably has two or three Institut personnel (at least!) studying it assiduously. Many Institut scientists are recognized as world leaders in their field.

The Institut is still headquartered in Lucerne, Switzerland, but it has established numerous “branch offices” in cities with active superhuman communities. It maintains facilities in, among others, London, Millennium City, New York City, Paris, San Francisco, Tokyo, and Vibora Bay. It competes with both Angelstone Laboratories (page 41) and the Goodman Institute (page 44) to some degree, though it offers some services (like medical care for superhumans) that neither of those organizations do.

THE STAR*GUARD

Approximately one million years ago, on the planet Odrugar far from Earth, an extraordinary being named Gloran was born. Gloran had one of the most powerful minds the Galaxy had ever known, and from a young age he became aware of the insidious nature of evil and the responsibility the strong had to protect the weak. He built a massive computer he called CONTROL, more advanced than any that had ever existed, and with its assistance began to seek out and battle those who would endanger the innocent and cause suffering to other intelligent life forms.

Gloran fought his war on evil for untold centuries, gathering to his side many allies, until at last his body began to fail him. Refusing to give up his crusade, he had his own brain engrams uploaded directly into the circuits of CONTROL. That way he could continue to assist and advise his followers, who by this time had become an army of hundreds known across space as *the Star*Guard*.

The Guard adopted a uniform based on the battlesuit Gloran had worn, and with the aid of CONTROL developed a magnificent weapon known as the Star-Staff, which was feared by evildoers across the Galaxy. The earliest members of the Guard formed a Council of Overseers to manage the group, which by the mid-twentieth century (as Earth accounts Time) had thousands of members patrolling the spaceways. The Council began to assign Star*Guards to specific sectors of space, with support teams (called “Marshals”) and bases full of equipment and ships to carry out their missions. Earth’s sector received its first Star*Guard, a Dendrian named Brin Rei Tarn, in 1968, and he served there until his death in 1990 at the hands of a traitorous former Guardsman named Mordace.

The first (and as of 2010, only) Human Star*Guard — a Spaniard named Andre Almena — replaced Tarn. He was one of hundreds of Guards who fought Mordace and his army of space mercenaries when he attacked Odrugar in 2009. The attack decimated the Guard and the Council. It also damaged the physical quantum matrix containing CONTROL’s memory circuits, greatly weakening the ancient computer.

In and around their standard duties of patrolling the spaceways and fighting evil, Almena and the rest of the Star*Guard are now trying to rebuild the organization, repair CONTROL, re-establish themselves as the Milky Way’s foremost defenders, and hunt down Mordace. It’s a tall order, one they may need the help of superheroes from Earth and other planets to fulfill, but they’re determined not to let this proud, ancient order of warriors for justice pass from the Galaxy.

THE STAR-STAFF

Here’s what a Star*Guard’s Star-Staff can do in *HERO System* terms. It qualifies as an OIF rather than an OAF because a Guard retains a certain degree of mental control over his Staff and can “summon” it back to his hand if it’s taken away from him but still nearby.

Cost Power

- 33 **Star-Staff Energy Reserves:** Endurance Reserve (200 END); OIF (-½)
- 14 **Star-Staff Energy Reserves:** Endurance Reserve (40 REC); OIF (-½); Recovers Only in Direct Starlight (-½)
- 80 **Star-Staff:** Multipower, 120-point reserve; all OIF (-½)
- 13v **1) Starblast I:** Blast 20d6; OIF (-½)
- 13v **2) Starblast II:** Blast 15d6, Armor Piercing (+¼); OIF (-½)
- 12v **3) Starblast III:** RKA 6d6; OIF (-½)
- 12v **4) Starblast IV:** Blast 14d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OIF (-½)
- 9v **5) Energy Field:** Resistant Protection (30 PD/30 ED); OIF (-½), Costs Endurance (-½)
- 10v **6) Energy Wall:** Barrier 15 PD/15 ED, 15 BODY (up to 16m long, 8m tall, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissible; OIF (-½), Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½)
- 13v **7) Energy Manipulation:** Telekinesis (60 STR), Fine Manipulation; OIF (-½)
- 13v **8) Atmospheric Flight:** Flight 80m, x32 Noncombat; OIF (-½)
- 6v **9) Warp Flight:** FTL Travel (1 LY/3 minutes); OIF (-½)
- 1f **10) Staff Strike:** HA +4d6; OIF (-½), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼) plus Reach +2m; OIF (-½) 2

Total cost: 229 points.

MACKENZIE HOUSE

Located in a picturesque glen in the Scottish Highlands, MacKenzie House is the ancestral mansion of the MacKenzie family, one of whom helped found the Trismegistus Council. Having no children to leave the mansion to, Lord Reginald bequeathed it to a trusted Council member. That member in turn left it to other Council members, and so on down to the present day.

MacKenzie House serves as a sort of unofficial "headquarters" for the Trismegistus Council. Protected by potent spells which prevent the Circle of the Scarlet Moon and other enemies from spying on the mansion or inflicting curses on those who occupy it, it's the perfect meeting-place for a group of scholars and mystics

devoted to protecting the world from occult horrors and menaces. The mansion's library is as well-stocked with arcane tomes and reference works as its cellars are with the finest wines.

Any member of the Council is welcome to stay at MacKenzie House as long as he likes, or even to dwell there permanently. To see to the Council members' comfort, the House has a staff of well-trained servants led by an old butler named Swithins. Competent and confident, Swithins has a dry, clever wit that often leaves his employers wondering whether they've been subtly insulted.

THE TRISMEGISTUS COUNCIL

For over two centuries, a cold war — sometimes verging into the hot — has been waged in the shadows of civilization. The participants: mystics and savants, masters of the Arts Arcane, scholars well-versed in the lore of the occult, sorcerers, witches, and wizards. Arrayed on one side are the forces of darkness — black magicians, demon-worshippers, greedy fools seeking power in wizardry, soul-bereft sorcerers revelling in the misery they cause. Arrayed on the other is the Trismegistus Council.

In the 1780s, in the dark days leading up to the French Revolution, certain French nobles sought both dissipation and safety in studies of the occult. Willing to walk the left-hand path to easy power, they were soon corrupted (though magic was, at that time, at one of its lowest ebbs ever). Such were the seeds from which the Circle of the Scarlet Moon (see below) was born.

As the nineteenth century began, wiser occultists and scholars in Europe, England, and America could sense the rise of the Circle, and of the evil it embodied. Unwilling to let black magic work its will in the world unhindered, three of these people — Lord Reginald MacKenzie of Scotland, Eustace Blackmun of Virginia, and Franziska von Hersbruck of what is today Germany — decided to create a counter-force. Taking their name from the fact that there were three of them, and from Hermes the patron of magicians, they called themselves the Trismegistus Council.

Unlike the Circle, which tended to recruit more readily, the Council watched prospective members long and carefully to determine if they had the knowledge, wisdom, and moral fiber to belong. When someone was judged ready, and all members voted in favor of him, an offer of membership was extended. No one offered membership has ever refused it. When the group became too large for unanimous voting to work efficiently, a Leadership Board of five members was chosen to evaluate potential recruits.

The size of the Council, like that of the Circle, increased steadily through the 1800s, especially in the latter half of the century. The battles between them — dark and subtle things, often worked through curse, counter-curse, and seemingly mundane accidents and events — became more frequent, and often more deadly.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Council expanded the scope of its activities, taking on other threats besides the Circle. During the Pulp era, several members were bold adventurers, carrying the fight directly to the Circle in the struggle to obtain lost artifacts, recover ancient texts, and unravel the mystic secrets of the world. It's even said by some that the Raven, famed Hudson City crimefighter of the Twenties and Thirties, was a Trismegistus associate. But the

Council experienced its greatest failure — and greatest triumph — when it failed to stop the Circle from helping the RSvKg to raise the level of the world's magic and usher in the Era of the Superhuman.

Since 1938, the Council's role has shifted away from direct activity and back into the shadows. Now there are superheroes, many of them with mystic powers, to fight the dangers that threaten the world. Though all too often naive, these beings can battle the forces of darkness in ways the Council's members never could. The Council has become more of a body of watchers and advisers, aiding mystic superheroes in their struggles...

...but it still takes a more proactive role from time to time. Generally speaking, the Council's efforts have been devoted to two primary goals. First, in the absence of an Archmage (see page 142), it tries to halt, or at least blunt, mystical threats to Earth and Earth's reality. Usually it does this by directly or indirectly prompting appropriate mystics (superheroes or otherwise) to deal with specific dangers. Only on the rarest of occasions have the Council's members taken a direct hand themselves, and then not always with the best results. The Council's two main enemies in the Mystic World are the Circle of the Scarlet Moon and DEMON.

Second, since 1908 the Council's tried to identify the next Archmage and shepherd him into taking office. Most Council members prefer the role of scholars, advisors, and powers behind the throne... and that means they need an Archmage to take point against their enemies. As of 2010, the Council is almost evenly split between supporting three candidates: Dweomer, the Scottish supermage; the Hindu mystic Rashindar; and Witchcraft of the Champions. (All of them — *all* of them — are terrified that Takofanes the Undying may become the new Archmage, but they don't dare talk about that even among themselves.) Unfortunately, no one knows exactly how to identify an Archmage-to-be — only when someone with enough power meets the qualifications can the next Archmage be anointed. So each faction works to support and advise its candidate... and perhaps, by not throwing its weight behind the correct candidate, only extends Earth's period of defenselessness.

Possessed of great magical lore and wisdom, and in the case of many members potent spell-casting ability as well, the Trismegistus Council could be a welcome ally, or significant hindrance, to any mystic superhero. By and large, the Council regards itself as a body of seasoned professionals, and most superheroes as bumbling amateurs and showoffs. It helps only those it deems worthy, and only in the ways it deems appropriate. It's spent two hundred years concealing its existence through means mundane and magical, so only those heroes whom it wishes to find it succeed in doing so.

UNTIL

In 1963, with superhuman activity on the rise around the world, the United Nations established a commission, the Tribunal on International Law, to study the subject. After extensive discussion and study, the Tribunal concluded that the menace of supercrime was a global, rather than regional or national, one. Not only did many supervillains move from country to country and continent to continent with ease, but more than a few superhuman threats involved attempts to conquer or destroy the entire world. No one nation — not even the United States — had the resources and jurisdiction to cope with this worldwide problem.

The Tribunal had an idea for a solution... one so radical it caused a furor in the General Assembly and nearly led to the entire committee being disbanded. The Tribunal suggested that the UN itself should establish, maintain, and command a global police force for dealing with superhuman crime and related matters of global, regional, or even national security. The proposed police force would have the right to enter the territory of any UN member nation who signed the treaty establishing it, but would have to receive permission from other nations to conduct operations on their soil. The agency would not employ superhumans for the most part, but would instead equip trained human agents with the latest in high-tech law enforcement gear, some specifically designed for combatting supervillains.

Disturbed both by the costs and the implications of this proposal, many member nations were initially skeptical. But the cogent and forceful arguments of the Tribunal's members, including the famed soldier and diplomat Major Juan Martinez of Paraguay, gradually won the members over. Many smaller nations realized this "police force" would provide them with a valuable service they otherwise couldn't afford, and larger nations thought their contribution to the agency's costs would be less than the cost of establishing a similar organization of their own.

On November 27, 1965, a treaty (now called the "Tribunal Treaty") was signed, formally establishing the United Nations Tribunal on International Law — UNTIL. Not every member nation signed the treaty, though; notable exceptions were the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China. Not having the US on board was a particularly egregious blow, since the majority of the world's superhuman activity occurred there, but the leaders of UNTIL — including its Secretary-Marshal, Juan Martinez — had to work with what they were given.

Over the next 25 years, UNTIL established an enviable record for opposing superhuman crime and related threats. Its agents, recruited from all UN member nations, were dedicated, brave, and intelligent, and by working together so well represented the epitome of everything the UN



stood for. UNTIL developed and refined its equipment, becoming one of the most technologically advanced organizations in the world. In 1980, with some help from the United States, UNTIL established its own Stronghold-like superprison, the International Superhuman Correctional Facility (ISCF, nicknamed "the Guardhouse") on an isolated island in the North Atlantic.

"Major" Martinez retired in 1990, and was replaced as Secretary-Marshal by Wilhelm Carl Eckhardt of Germany, who's still in charge as of 2010. Eckhardt faced his first major crisis in 1992 when Dr. Destroyer launched his latest scheme for world conquest in the United States. Still barred from operating in the United States without permission, UNTIL was unable to reach the scene of the conflict in Detroit with new equipment that probably could have stopped Destroyer, or at least protected much of the city. When this fact became public knowledge in America, the resulting outcry finally forced the United States to sign the Tribunal Treaty and allow UNTIL to operate, unhindered, in American territory. (Similarly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, UNTIL gained the right to conduct operations in Russia, but it remains barred from China to this day.)

As of 2010, UNTIL is recognized around the world as one of Earth's most powerful, competent, and successful law enforcement organizations. Devoted exclusively to stopping superhuman and paranormal crime and related dangerous phenomena, it has saved millions (if not billions)

of lives and helped keep the world safe for nearly half a century. And in 1996 it established the first truly permanent human presence in space, its station GATEWAY, to remain alert for potential alien visitors or invasions. No one knows what the future holds for humanity, but whatever may come, UNTIL stands ready to protect the world.

ORGANIZATION

A *High Command*, consisting of the Secretary-Marshal, his assistant the Undersecretary, and the Field Marshal (commander of UNTIL's field agents), leads UNTIL. They're all based at UNTIL World Headquarters in New York City. Below the High Command, UNTIL organizes itself into regional commands, such as the North American Regional Command, European Regional Command, or Western Asia Regional Command. Leaders of special UNTIL projects, like Project Snakecharmer or Project Hermes, have equal rank with regional commanders; so do the commanders of important facilities like GATEWAY.

Below the regional commands are base commands, each headquartered at a specific facility. UNTIL has offices in most major cities of the world, with each office having an appropriate complement of field agents. Each base's commander has several field commanders (officers commanding squads of UNTIL agents) serving under him; most field commanders hold the rank of Captain, Lieutenant (1st or 2nd), Sergeant-Major, or Sergeant, depending on the squad or situation. Below these ranks are the "non-commissioned" agents — Corporal, Lance Corporal, and Private. Most UNTIL agents are Privates or Lance Corporals. UNTIL also has a Diplomatic and Administrative Corps, a Technical Corps, and other specialized branches.

Most UNTIL field squads include agents from more than one "branch" of UNTIL. The branches are defined by the type of environment the agent is trained to operate in, or the type of work he primarily does. Thus, UNTIL has Urban agents, Oceanic/Arctic agents, an Intelligence Corps, and so forth. Each squad contains what the commander feels is the right mix of agents to get the job done. UNTIL also has an official super-team, UNITY.

UNITY

In 1988, UNTIL decided, after more than a decade of discussion and debate, to found its own superhero team, the better to carry out its mission of protecting the world from super-powered dangers. As of 2010, UNITY, as the team is called, has six members:

Quasar: An energy projector and manipulator who once worked as a physicist for Dr. Destroyer before defecting to the side of truth and justice. Quasar leads the team.

Dr. White and Dr. Black: A married couple from the United States, both versed in the practice of the Arts Arcane.

Myrmidon: A superhumanly strong warrior from Greece.

Psiclops: A blind mentalist from England.

El Pícaro: A teleporting swordsman from Mexico with a flair for the dramatic.

Additionally, a former member, Mentiac, the so-called "Human Computer" and possibly the most intelligent man in the world, remains available to the team for consultation.

UNTIL is always on the lookout for other superhumans of heroic bent who would be worthy to join the ranks of UNITY.

ORGANIZATIONS: THE BAD GUYS



Unfortunately, for every organization founded to help superheroes fight crime and combat super-menaces, there seem to be two devoted to crime and similar pursuits. Some seek wealth, some power, some both; they use various means, from science to sorcery and beyond, to achieve their aims.

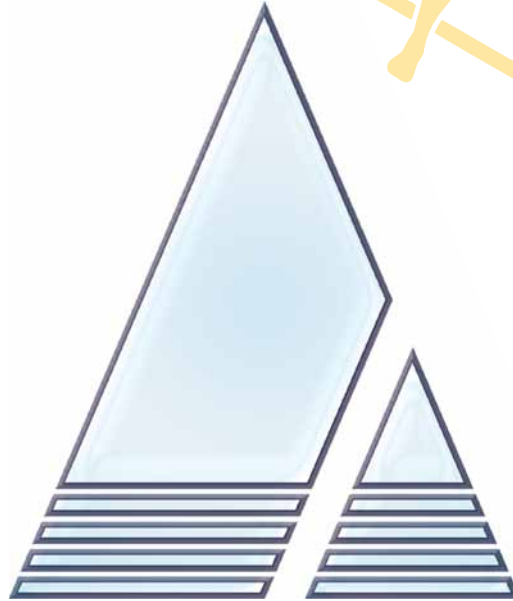
ARGENT

Founded in 1974 as an American corporation devoted to cutting-edge technological research and development, the Advanced Research Group quickly established a reputation for its scientists' skills and inventiveness. Throughout the Seventies and into the early Eighties, the company was a major United States defense contractor. In 1980, it changed its name to the Advanced Research Group Enterprises, or ARGENT, as a marketing ploy.

ARGENT's long string of successes came to an end in 1983, when investigative reporters from the *Washington Post* revealed to the world that ARGENT had secretly been passing United States defense technology secrets to a number of enemies, including the Soviet Union, China, VIPER, and Dr. Destroyer. ARGENT had also built several secret factories to manufacture high-tech equipment for numerous criminal and terrorist organizations. Unwilling to spend the rest of their lives in jail, the executives and chief scientists of ARGENT fled the United States, taking with them as much of their data and equipment as possible. They found a new home in Awad, whose rulers were more than happy to offer ARGENT safe haven in exchange for a slice of the profits from their lucrative business.

Since moving to Awad, ARGENT has become a major player in the global underworld. While it still makes most of its money providing high-tech services and support to other criminals, it's also launched numerous criminal schemes of its own. For many years it worked primarily with mercenaries, having few agents of its own (unlike VIPER), but that became too big a drain on the bottom line so it shifted to more of an agent-based strategy in the mid-2000s.

ARGENT suffered a major blow in 2003 when the Champions captured the master villain Inter-face. He'd been working closely with ARGENT



and had so much information about them that the authorities were able to make significant inroads against the organization (and once nearly captured the Board of Directors). It spent several years in damage control/rebuilding mode and only as of 2010 is it approaching the former extent of its operations and profitability.

ARGENT typically focuses on two types of activity. The first is more or less ordinary business operations, conducted through a maze of shell companies and subsidiaries, and made extremely profitable by its willingness to utterly ignore local laws and regulations. Second, it commits more traditional crimes, usually either focused on high technology or somehow involving a high-tech approach. ARGENT's technology is among the most advanced in the world, giving it a real edge over most law enforcement groups and not a few superheroes. Some officials fear that now that ARGENT's recovered its footing it's likely to become more ambitious and embark on even greater schemes.

ARGENT has established numerous bases — public ones in places like North Korea and Awad that allow it to function as a legitimate corporation, and disguised or hidden ones in major cities around the world. In 1994, it spearheaded a coup in Guamanga in the hopes of acquiring an entire country of its own, but this plot was thwarted by the Justice Squadron.

THE BRAIN TRUST

One of the most unusual supervillain teams in the Champions Universe is the so-called **Brain Trust**, sometimes described as “a collection of dangerous misfits.” Led by the Overbrain, a living brain with mental powers who resides in a tank of nutrient fluid, its members include: Ape-Plus, an ape given sentience and skills by the Overbrain in an attempt to create an “improved” version of Dr. Silverback; Black Mist, a ninja; Lynx, a “cat-woman” with enhanced reflexes, claws, and short gold fur; and Mr. Zombie, who seems to be some sort of sentient, walking corpse.

The Brain Trust commits a wide variety of crimes, operating with efficiency and skill thanks to the Overbrain's ability to link their minds. He's stated that he intends to conquer the world someday, but he seems to be just as interested in his twisted scientific experiments and acquiring wealth as he is in ruling the Earth.

THE CIRCLE OF THE SCARLET MOON

For all things, there must be a balance — any competent mystic will tell you so. Just as the forces of Light have the Trismegistus Council to aid them, the forces of Darkness know the cold comforts of alliance with the Circle of the Scarlet Moon.

Though in truth, it was the Circle that came first, not the Council. Some in the Circle are said to trace the organization's roots back as far as certain blasphemous witch-covens in medieval Germany, but the only thing anyone can say for sure is that a French noble, Viscomte Gildas de Valenois, founded the Circle as a formal coven in 1783. The Viscomte recruited other dissolute members of the French aristocracy, eager for both power and perverse pleasures, to study black magic with him. Though their “powers” didn't save most of them from the guillotine during the French Revolution, enough escaped to continue the Circle. Some say the ghost of de Valenois, carrying his severed head in his left hand, escorted most of the survivors to safety in the new land of America.

Settling in the former British colonies, the members of the Circle resumed their practice of the Dark Arts, only to find they had acquired an enemy — the Trismegistus Council, which sought to thwart their diabolic schemes. Aided, the Circle believes, by other forces of the Light, the Council defeated the Circle far more often than the Circle triumphed over it.

Rumor in the Mystic World has it that shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the Circle worked a mighty spell to overcome its greatest enemy once and for all, but the spell failed, leaving the Circle badly weakened. Since then the organization has remained in the shadows, carefully hoarding its strength and hatching only the most secretive of plots and schemes. Today, strengthened by many new and powerful members, it's once again poised to resume its quest for occult power.

DEMON

The origins of DEMON are obscure, even to superheroic mystics. It arose in 1925 as a Satanic cult in the United States, but under whose direction no one knows for sure. It remained mostly quiet through the Second World War, though cult members are said to have been involved in some bizarre crimes in New York City during the Thirties.

In the Fifties, DEMON revealed its true colors, adopting garb and methods similar to other villainous organizations and attempting to conquer the world — but with mystic power instead of technology. No one really took the group seriously until the 1968 theft of the Basilisk

Orb, an ancient artifact of vast, but poorly understood, arcane power. With the Orb in hand, the leaders of DEMON, a group apparently called the Inner Circle, nearly did take over the world. Only concerted action by several superheroes and a young UNTIL stopped them, and in the process the Orb was lost again and has never re-appeared.

Its defeat in the Orb incident hit DEMON hard, costing it many members and much prestige in the underworld and Mystic World. For over a decade it struggled, often suffering additional losses at the hands of costumed do-gooders and the likes of UNTIL. But a major victory in 1981, when it lured several high-ranking UNTIL agents and four superheroes into a trap in Lagos, Nigeria and slew them all in a bloody sacrifice to the gods of the underworld, brought DEMON a flood of new recruits and vaulted it into the Department of Defense's Superhuman Survey as a “Top Ten Most Dangerous Organization” — a ranking from which it has never fallen since.

DEMON ORGANIZATION

Repeated encounters with DEMON have given the world's superheroes some insight into the workings of the organization, though much about it remains unknown. DEMON apparently has four ranks: Brother (or Sister); Initiate of the Mysteries; Morbane; and at the very top, the Inner Circle.

Brothers (and Sisters) are the rank-and-file of the organization, the vast majority of members who participate in rituals (sometimes as the sacrifices!), serve as shock troops in battles against superheroes and PRIMUS, and the like. They carry Brazen Wands that can fire mystic bolts. They're led by *Initiates*, who serve DEMON as both priests and field commanders. They intercede with the Lower Powers on DEMON's behalf, command Brothers in battle, and perform similar tasks of importance. As a badge of office, each Initiate carries a Tarnished Wand that possesses significant mystical power.

Initiates who show true talent, power, skill, and guile may eventually learn enough to be inducted into the ranks of the *Morbans*. Every Morbane is a sorcerer of great power and dark wisdom, able to cast many spells and stand against the average superhero in a one-on-one confrontation. Morbanes usually work by themselves, presumably according to the dictates of the Inner Circle; two or more of them together in one place at one time is cause for concern. In addition to his arsenal of spells, each one carries an Enchanted Mace and a Soul Gem, both quite useful in battle.

At the pinnacle of DEMON is the *Inner Circle*, about which outsiders (and even Brothers and Initiates) know almost nothing. Depending on which expert you ask, it ranges in size from three to two dozen, works together at all times or spends far too much energy on infighting, and exerts great magical power or simply commands the Morbanes through their Soul Gems. Given its undoubted cleverness, abilities, and resources, it's unlikely anyone will discover the truth about the Inner Circle anytime soon.

DEMON FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

DEMON has headquarters, known as *Demonhames*, in many cities and at places of power throughout the world. A typical Demonhame has perhaps four dozen Brothers and Sisters, six to ten Initiates, and one Morbane (sometimes more) as overall leader; some Demonhames are much larger than this, some smaller. Most Demonhames are located underground, but a few may occupy locations above the surface.

DEMON's weapons and methods are entirely magical; the group eschews the firearms, powered armor, and hovercraft favored by its peers, and looks with contempt on the likes of Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon. Instead, it arms its followers with wands of power and travels through enchanted gateways that its enemies cannot use.

Many Morbanes and/or Demonhames possess a few enchanted items of greater power, which they use only in dire emergencies or to accomplish particularly important tasks. The members of the Inner Circle almost certainly have much more extensive arsenals, but are probably even less likely to risk them in personal confrontations.

Although it rarely allies itself with mystic supervillains, whom it finds uncontrollable and possessed of goals contrary to its own, DEMON has occasionally used black magic to create supervillains of its own. Most are helpless victims warped by magic for a time, and forced to serve DEMON through chains of sorcery. Superheroes fighting them have learned to be wary, for if the spell ends, an unwitting energy bolt or punch could kill an innocent.

EUROSTAR

Eurostar, the most dangerous supervillain team in Europe (and, according to some estimates, the world), consists of eight powerful villains: *Fiacho* ("that which is very bad"), the team's leader; *der Westgote* ("the Visigoth"), a German brick; *Durak* ("Bully"), a brutish Russian strongman; *Feuermacher* ("Firemaker"), a German with fire powers; Mentalla, a Spanish psionic who once served Dr. Destroyer; Pantera, a cruel, bestial Italian woman; Scorpio, an Irish terrorist skilled with poisons and blades; and *Ultrasonique* (Ultrasonic), a blind Frenchman who uses soundwaves not only to sense his surroundings, but to attack his enemies. Occasionally they recruit other European villains as temporary allies (or possible candidates for membership), or work with other teams or organizations.

Eurostar is regarded as more powerful and dangerous than most other supervillain teams, such as the Ultimates and the Crimelords, for two reasons. First, it has strong group cohesion, which is rare in most supervillain teams. They've worked together for years (in the case of the core membership, for two decades). They seem to trust each other, and are well aware of how their

GRAB

The complete opposite of Eurostar is the villain group GRAB, a team of superpowered thieves. They don't want to fight, they don't want to hurt anyone, they just want to steal things and get rich, rich, rich. Members include the super-strong Black Diamond, Bluejay (who has a battlesuit with wings that allow her to fly), the teleporter Cheshire Cat, and the shrinker Hummingbird. The authorities suspect there may be more members, or some leader guiding the group's activities, but have no proof.

THE VIPER-EUROSTAR WAR

From 1996 to 1998, VIPER's European Nests engaged in an extended conflict with Eurostar. The precise causes of the conflict remain unknown; most criminologists believe it was either a territorial dispute of some sort, VIPER seeking revenge for a real or imagined insult, or an attempt to eliminate what VIPER sees as an obstacle to its plans for world domination.

The war started with a carefully-planned ambush that, despite VIPER's overwhelming advantage in numbers and firepower, only partly succeeded. Two members of Eurostar — the wind-controller Bora and the weaponmaster known as the Whip — were killed in the initial attack, but Eurostar quickly regrouped and retreated, killing about a dozen agents in the process. Fiacho and his comrades quickly repaid the favor, inflicting serious damage to the Madrid Nest and leaving the remains of its equipment and complement of agents for the authorities to capture.

For nearly two years the battle raged across the cities of Europe, depleting the resources of both sides and resulting in no significant gains by either combatant. More than thirty innocent civilians were killed in the crossfire, and three lesser VIPER Nests were exposed. Finally, seemingly by unspoken mutual agreement, both sides realized it wasn't worth it and agreed to a cease-fire. But enmity still exists between them, and it wouldn't take much to cause the conflict to flare up again.

powers work best in a small-unit tactical situation. Second, they have no scruples about using deadly force. Many supervillains have powerful attacks, but Eurostar routinely "goes for the jugular" in a battle. It pulls no punches and offers no mercy.

Eurostar's agenda is unclear, though Fiacho's stated on numerous occasions that he intends to force all Europe to unite into a single nation ruled by him. The group doesn't seem to desire either conquest (beyond Europe) or profit exclusively. If anything, they seem anarchistic, even nihilistic. They enjoy wreaking havoc, causing excessive damage to property, and disrupting the normal and orderly functioning of society. They also like to humiliate American superheroes and citizens, considering them buffoons and Europe the true center of Western civilization.



THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN ADVANCEMENT

Although the Institute's name makes it sound like a benevolent scientific group or think tank, it's actually a political organization. Its goal isn't "human advancement," it's the advancement of "true humans" as opposed to mutants and other superhumans. Founded in 1982 by Annette Berkelheimer, the Institute is a lobbying group focusing on issues relating to the Superhuman World, primarily mutant superhumans.

While the IHA often objects to and lobbies against superhumans in general, it mainly focuses on mutant superhumans. The Institute regards mutants as "the single most dangerous threat to true humans on this planet today," according to its promotional literature. IHA reports discuss, in lurid detail, the possibilities of mutants supplanting true humans, and then either killing them all or herding them into "camps" to serve mutantkind as slave labor. Most people, both in and out of government, dismiss the Institute as a bunch of crackpots, but there's no denying that their reports and "white papers" are professionally-made and designed to convey the IHA's message skillfully. Every time a superhuman battle or incident causes significant damage to a city, or results in the loss of human life, the Institute is there, railing against the "abomination" of mutant-kind and the "severe hazard mutant superhumans post to all true humans."

The Institute's founder died in 1994 and was replaced by a man named Archer Samuels, who if anything is even more rabidly anti-mutant than Berkelheimer was. Under Samuels, a skilled businessman and public relations flack, the IHA has obtained a higher, better profile in American

society, and significantly increased its fundraising revenue. The vocal support of Senator Phillip Glassman of Wyoming has given the Institute and its message a new legitimacy that has more than a few mutants (on both sides of the law) worried.

Although the IHA got started in the United States, and has its largest, strongest following there, it's opened several branch offices in major European cities. Rumors persist that some governments, including Iraq and Awad, have consulted with IHA leaders regarding "the mutant problem" and even offered covert support to the organization.

PSI

Formed in 1986 by Dr. Sebastian Poe, a world-renowned expert on superhumans in general and psychic powers in particular, the Parapsychological Studies Institute was allegedly devoted to the study of superhuman phenomena and the training of young supers. It maintained that facade until 1994, when a bungled operation revealed it for what it was: a criminal conspiracy made up of supervillains with mental powers. Its cover blown, PSI went on the lam, becoming a somewhat nomadic supervillain group with a few minor bases scattered throughout the United States. Sebastian Poe was sent to prison and became *persona non grata* to the organization.

PSI earned a reputation as a powerful and deadly, if at times somewhat limited, supervillain team over the next decade. Its most successful scheme was the creation of Mind, Inc., a self-help group based in Millennium City. In reality Mind, Inc. simply allowed PSI to accumulate profit, power, influence, and potential recruits. But the whole thing unravelled in 2005 when PSI's core leadership — the telepath and telekinetic Psimon,

his sometime companion Medusa (Sebastian Poe's ex-wife), his other sometime companion Mind Slayer, and their chief lackeys — came under two-pronged attack. From the outside they were attacked by Kevin Poe, son of Sebastian Poe and leader of Millennium City's infamous New Purple Gang. Poe hungered for revenge against the people who "betrayed" his father and control of the organization itself. From within, PSI member Lancer and others loyal to her attempted to take over PSI to turn it into an "army" to use against the "anti-metahuman forces" she perceived were rising to power on Earth (as they had in her home dimension).

The resulting three-sided conflict ripped PSI apart, resulting in the deaths of several members. Mind, Inc. was exposed, and several survivors of the fighting (including Psimon) were captured by the authorities. The rest of the members scattered, often becoming freelance supercriminals or going to work for master villains.

When Psimon escaped from Stronghold during the 2009 breakout, he got Medusa, Mind Slayer, and some of the others to join him once more, and PSI lived again. It continues to struggle against Kevin Poe and the New Purple Gang in Millennium City. Lancer and her followers have disappeared; some authorities suspect they accompanied her to her homeworld somehow, there to continue her fight for metahuman freedom.

METHODS

Today as in the past, PSI's methods and crimes rely heavily on its members' mental powers. They use Telepathy to steal valuable data, passwords, and the like, Telekinesis to open locked doors, Mind Control to make helpless innocents do what the group wants, and so forth. Although no one member has anywhere close to the raw power of Menton, PSI's ability to use group tactics and multiple attacks when engaging a foe makes it nearly as frightening an opponent — and every bit as terrifying to politicians, policemen, and the tycoons of industry.

Because its members can use their powers to erase memories of them from the minds of others, tracking or pursuing PSI is difficult at best. Superhero teams have had the most success against PSI in two circumstances: when the heroes just happen to stumble onto a PSI operation in mid-caper (allowing them to engage PSI in open battle, which it prefers to avoid); and situations where PSI has to remain in one location for an extended period of time to complete a job (thus giving the heroes more opportunities to find PSI's lair).

PSI makes some use of super-technology, including high-tech vans for traveling, but prefers to rely on its members' powers as much as possible. The group's rumored to have worked with ARGENT to try to develop psionic enhancement technology, but if so, they haven't succeeded (or not yet revealed their successes to the world).



VIPER

By far the most powerful and dangerous villainous agency in the world today, VIPER first appeared in 1962, sending its green and yellow-garbed agents to plunder weak societies and slay any who would oppose it. Its activities prior to that time (if any), and its precise origins, remain unknown to the authorities, since no superhero or police officer has ever captured a VIPER leader of high enough rank to possess those secrets.

VIPER's goal, stated on more than one occasion to superheroes or through bombastic press releases, is nothing less than the conquest of the world. Although it functions more like a criminal cartel or terrorist organization than a military, in truth VIPER is a private army assembled for the purpose of bringing the rest of the world under the sway of VIPER's leaders.

VIPER prefers to work on its own, knowing that eventually it must defeat the underworld to assert rulership over the Earth. But unusual circumstances sometimes throw it together with other groups or supervillains. In the past it's occasionally worked with ARGENT, Gravitar, and the Warlord. It does not get along well with DEMON (whom it has fought on several occasions), Dr. Destroyer (whom it regards as the chief obstacle to its plans), or Mechanon (who wants to exterminate all VIPER members).

VIPER ORGANIZATION

Recovered VIPER records, and confessions made by captured VIPER agents, have revealed something of the inner workings of the organization.

As of 2010, the once-monolithic and hierarchical VIPER has evolved a structure resembling a network of terrorist cells — or even a franchised business. It divides the world into "territories," each containing a headquarters referred to as a "Nest." In less populated areas, a Nest may be responsible for all VIPER activity in a large region, but a major urban area like London, Millennium City, or Tokyo often contains multiple Nests.

THE ULTIMATES

One of the Champions Universe's longest-lived and most successful supervillain teams is **the Ultimates**, a group that formed when Binder (its leader, who uses a high-tech "glue gun") and Blackstar (a density-controlling brick) met as they both tried to rob the same jewelry store. Over the next couple years they recruited several other members: the power armor-wearing Cyclone; the radiation-controlling Radium; the friction manipulator Slick; and Thunderbolt, an electricity projector.

Although their career hasn't been without its defeats and setbacks, over the years the Ultimates have been remarkably successful with their crimes and schemes. Several of the members are scientists, so the group tends to plan well and often uses technology to commit its crimes.

In 2008 the group suffered a lineup change when Radium defected to Project Sunburst for reasons that remain unclear to the authorities (this has led to animosity between the two teams). Binder replaced him in 2009 with Orion, a villain with energy projection/manipulation powers deriving from a set of strange bracers he wears.

Usually Nests operate independently, but they may team up to perform jobs or confront opponents too big or powerful for a single Nest to take on. All Nests are linked to each other via a sophisticated computer network known as Serpentine.

A Nest Leader commands each VIPER base, and in turn reports to so-called High Serpents who oversee all VIPER activity within a region or continent. Many agents and records have made reference to a Supreme Serpent who controls the High Serpents, and thus all of VIPER, but no firm evidence of this person's existence (or his location) has ever been obtained. Some experts suspect the "Supreme Serpent" is just a smokescreen created by the High Serpents, who govern the organization as an oligarchic council. The High Serpents as a group are sometimes referred to as "VIPER Central Command," though that implies a greater unity of purpose than often exists.

VIPER's lower ranks are organized into several groups. The basic VIPER agent, lightly trained and relatively inexpensively equipped, makes up the bulk of the rank-and-file, and is the type of agent most frequently encountered (and captured!) by superheroes, PRIMUS, and UNTIL. But there are also VIPER "Elite Agents," as well-trained and supplied as any special forces soldier. Many Elite Agents are specialized — VIPER has Air Cavalry equipped with jetpacks, heavy infantry sporting light powered armor and heavy weapons, intelligence-gathering agents, hacker agents, and many, many more. Indeed, it's the organization's versatility and adaptability that make it so dangerous.

VIPER FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

In addition to its many Nests, VIPER supposedly has a World Headquarters somewhere on Earth. If so, its location and capabilities are a well-kept secret; the authorities have no idea where to begin looking for it.

VIPER relies on high technology, often verging into the realm of super-technology, to accomplish its goals. Its agents carry blaster pistols and rifles, ride in sophisticated hovercraft, and often use even more advanced devices. Some analysts claim the organization even has a lunar base.

VIPER also employs superhumans, though its record in this regard is somewhat mixed. In its early decades it frequently attempted to create its own supervillains, only to have the rare success defect from the organization to become an independent operative. It also hired mercenary villains, but on occasion they turned on the organization as well, betraying it to its enemies in the underworld for more money. So VIPER learned from its mistakes. Beginning in 1991, it created *Dragon Branch*, its own large corps of loyal, powerful supervillains. As of 2010, it has an estimated three dozen members, but rarely do more than four or five work together at a time (since VIPER doesn't want to put all of its superpowered eggs into one basket). Some, such as Adder, the super-strong Boa Constrictor, the poison-spitting Diamondback, and the speedster Sidewinder, draw on the serpent motif of which VIPER's so fond. Others, including the immensely strong Ripper, the powerful energy projector Oculon, the ice-controlling Freon, the cyborg Halfjack, and the almost-indefeatable Viperia, don't worry about blending in with their green-garbed underlings.

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THE COTTONMOUTH INCIDENT

Much of the publicly-known information about VIPER comes from two sources: Nest technology and records recovered by superheroes; and the confessions of a former VIPER supervillain named Cottonmouth.

Captured by superheroes in 1990, Cottonmouth (whose powers derived from a mingling of his DNA with that of the venomous serpent of the same name) proved particularly averse to spending any lengthy time in prison. In exchange for a greatly reduced sentence, he provided extensive information about VIPER's structure, organization, methods, and technology. Thanks to the data he provided, PRIMUS and UNTIL were able to strike some significant blows against VIPER in the early Nineties.

Cottonmouth, unfortunately, didn't live to enjoy the fruits of his betrayal. VIPER takes a dim view of traitors and has only one punishment for them: death. A VIPER assassin, surgically disguised and equipped with highly toxic venom-sacs implanted beneath artificial fingernails, infiltrated the secured facility where Cottonmouth was being housed and poisoned him, silencing him forever.



CHAPTER
SIX

GAMING IN THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE



CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE CAMPAIGNING

Here's some basic information and options about running games in the Champions Universe.

CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

The Champions Universe campaign, as presented in this book, is a Standard Superheroic campaign where starting characters (like the Champions) begin the game with 400 Total Points (including 75 Matching Complications points). Other guidelines and standards for this type of Superheroic campaign generally apply (see 6E1 34-35).

Most characters in the Champions Universe, particularly starting superheroes, have powers with about 60 Active Points (particularly attacks). Exceptions are sometimes made for characters who are otherwise more restricted, for characters' special "shticks," and similar circumstances. Villains, naturally, don't suffer from the general Active Point ceiling nearly as often as heroes. Being less well-rounded than heroes, they often have more powerful attacks, for example. This is particularly true of master villains like Mechanon, Dr. Destroyer, and Gravitator, who scoff at restrictions placed on mere superheroes. After all, an enemy intended to be powerful enough to face down an entire superteam needs to be pretty tough!

CAMPAIGN OPTIONS

Naturally, you can run any sort of Champions campaign you want in the Champions Universe — from typical four-color superheroes in 2010, to an espionage-oriented, Communist-smashing Silver Age game, to a gritty Iron Age "graphic novel" campaign, to anything in between. The history's been left reasonably open so you can insert whatever events and characters you want into the main continuity.

Here are a few suggestions on possible campaigns you could try that are a little out of the ordinary. As always, feel free to tinker with these ideas to create just the right sort of game for you and your players.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: FIRST WAVE

Ignore the established history and background set forth in this book. Instead, the PCs are the very first heroes ever to appear in the setting, circa 2010 (or any other year you choose). As discussed on page 124 of *Champions*, this requires you to make a few decisions and do a little more work than for a regular campaign, but with this book to help you it shouldn't be too difficult. Once you get the characters introduced to the setting, you can start to roll out well-known adversaries, like VIPER and Mechanon, reworking their origins, *modus operandi*, and abilities to suit the campaign. In essence, you use the contents of this book as the building blocks, but you and the players put the blocks together in a different way than was done to create the normal CU.

A *CU: First Wave* campaign should feature characters built as either Low-Powered or Standard Superheroic characters, depending on GM preference. Standard Superheroic usually works best, since it means less work revising established villains to fit the lower point totals of Low-Powered.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: LONG ARM OF THE LAW

In this campaign, the PCs aren't superheroes at all; they're Standard Heroic characters, built on 175 Total Points (including 50 Matching Complications points). They're Millennium City's finest — the policemen and policewomen of the MCPD. As cops in one of the most superhuman-heavy cities in the world, they encounter renegade mutants, powerhungry supervillains, gigantic rampaging beasts that escaped from some ARGENT laboratory, and other such excitement during the course of a typical work-week.

As Heroic characters, the PCs of course get their equipment for free. It's up to the GM whether they're plain old beat cops with .45s and bullet-proof vests, or they belong to the MCPD's world-renowned MARS squad and have blaster rifles and other such super-tech goodies to help them get the job done (see page 61). Either approach can make for a fun campaign.



CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: RAVENSWOOD ACADEMY

A little ways outside Millennium City, near the suburban community of Orchardville, there's an exclusive private school, Ravenswood Academy. Most of the students come from wealthy families, the elite of Millennium City and nearby communities. But a few are special for different reasons.

Located in and beneath Ravenswood is a secret facility, a school-within-a-school. This school specializes in the teaching and training of young superhumans. Given opportunities they'd never have at an ordinary school, with understanding teachers (many of whom are former superheroes themselves) to help them cope with the difficulties of being a teen superhuman, these students learn what it means to be a hero.

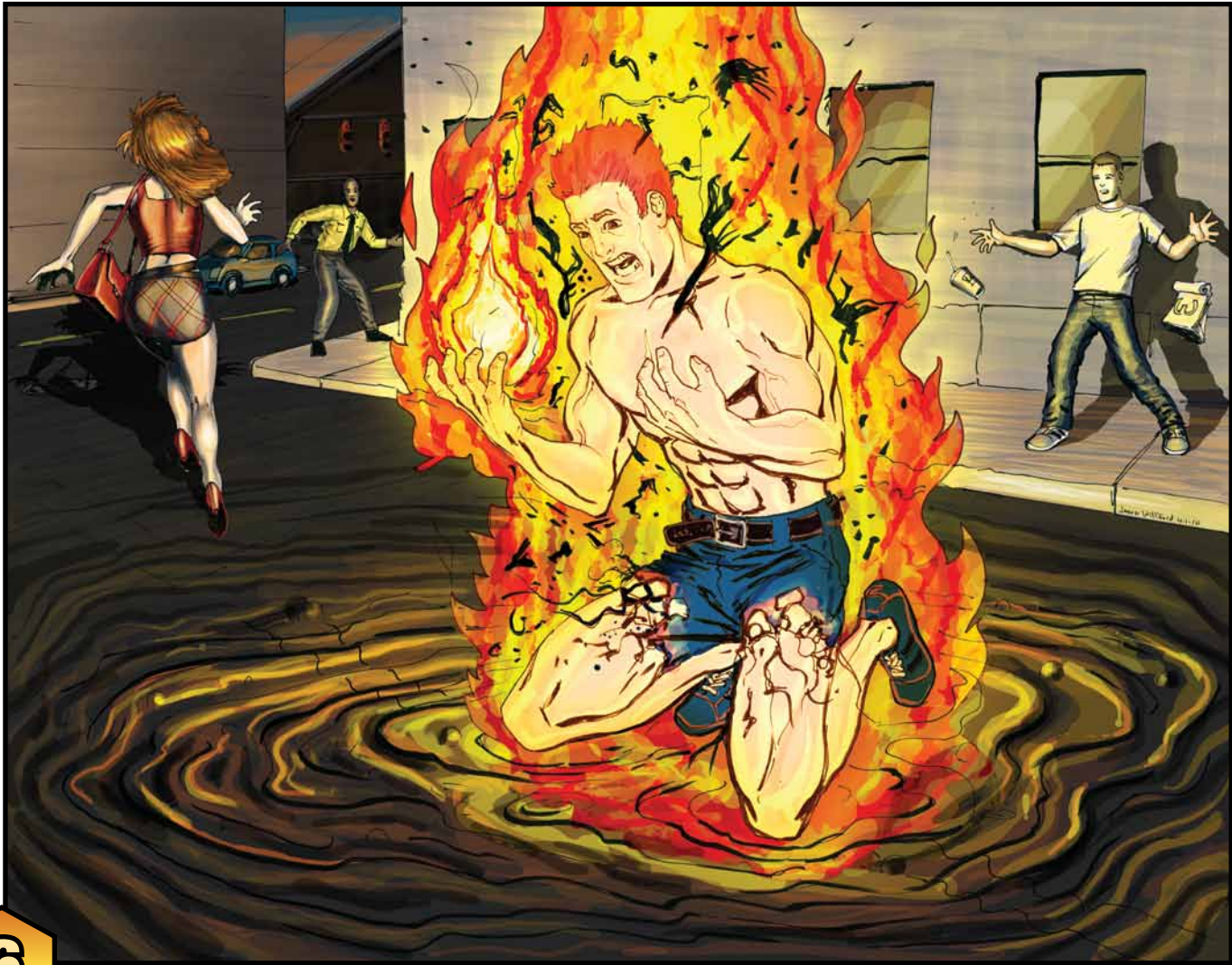
Ravenswood — both parts of it — was founded, and is still run, by Headmaster Kristina Pelvanen, a naturalized Finn. Highly acclaimed as an educator and an academic, unbeknownst to the world Pelvanen was active in the Sixties and Seventies as the superheroine Rowan, whose telekinetic powers often helped save the day against the likes of VIPER, TyrannoMan, or Scorch. After retiring from active superheroing in 1979 (due in part to concern over her failure to save the young superhuman Sunheart from self-destructing), Pelvanen (a professor in her Secret Identity) realized young superhumans needed more guidance than ordinary teens did — she remembered how confused and scared she was when her own powers first manifested. She discussed the idea with some of her superheroic colleagues, who were all highly supportive. After some additional

training, and with financial backing from several of them, she opened Ravenswood in 1989.

On the surface, Ravenswood is an ordinary, if exclusive, private school — the average student's parents make \$200,000 or more per year, the tuition is high, the facilities are the finest available, and the teachers are all eminently qualified. But that's really just a cover. The school's real purpose is to teach teen superhumans how to cope with their powers and, hopefully, become *superheroes* in time. Secret rooms within the school, and elaborate training facilities beneath it, are where the young supers learn how to use their powers. The superhuman teachers recruit new super-students by keeping their ears open for gossip from the Superhuman World about young supers, using their powers to track down potential candidates, and so forth. Super-students attend on a full scholarship.

Naturally, being superhumans and teenagers, the super-students get into a bit of super-powered trouble from time to time. After all, Millennium City, with all its wonders and action, is just a little ways down the road... especially if you can teleport!

A *Ravenswood Academy* campaign features “teen hero” PCs built on 250 Total Points (including 60 Matching Complications points). The campaign should typically start with a low Active Point ceiling — about 40 points, probably — unless a player comes up with a particularly clever and fun power, suitable to the subgenre, that requires more points. Most of the PCs should have only one or two superpowers, often heavily Limited. As the game goes on, they improve their abilities as they learn how to use them. See *Champions*, page 51, for more information on the “Teen Champions” subgenre.



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CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: SUPER-AGENTS

This campaign is a variant on *Long Arm Of The Law*. In this game, instead of being MCPD cops, the characters are agents working for PRIMUS or UNTIL. Armed to the teeth with the latest high-tech anti-superhuman gear, they take on supervillains, VIPER, and anyone else who gets in their way. Also unlike the *Long Arm* campaign, the PCs are likely to do a good bit of traveling — they have national or international jurisdiction, so they can pursue villains other than ones who happen to come to Millennium City.

Super-Agents PCs are usually built as Standard Heroic characters with 175 Total Points (including 50 Matching Complications points). However, some GMs may prefer Powerful Heroic characters instead (225 Total Points) since the PCs are going to spend most of their time taking on superhuman foes.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: WHISPERS OF THE ARCANES

This is an ordinary Champions Universe campaign in terms of point totals and other guidelines, but with a restricted character type: all the PCs have to be mystics. That doesn't necessarily mean supermages; some could be reformed vampires, warriors armed with enchanted weapons, and the like. Each character just needs some strong association with magic and/or the supernatural.

Typically a *Whispers Of The Arcane* campaign starts out with relatively "weak" characters — Heroic or Low-Powered Superheroic. At first, the PCs get caught up in the war between the Trismegistus Council and the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, gradually working their way up to more dangerous foes and greater powers. Eventually they become this dimension's defenders against the likes of Tyrannon, Skarn, and Dark Seraph.

THE GAMEMASTER'S VAULT



This section contains additional and/or secret information about the Champions Universe that's for the GM's eyes alone. *If you're not a GM running a Champions Universe campaign, do not read this section!!!*

The information in the GM's Vault is organized by chapter and page number. If no players are going to read your copy of *Champions Universe*, you can also make notes in the appropriate parts of the main text to remind you that there's GM's Vault information associated with a particular section of the book.

If the GM's Vault doesn't comment on some part of the main text, it's usually safe to take what's written there as accurate — though each GM is free to change anything in this book to suit his own preferences or campaign. (Some subjects, particularly specific villains, are covered in other books like *Champions Villains*, and that information isn't repeated here. And of course, there are questions, mysteries, and hints in the main text that this section doesn't address because they're left open for you, and possibly future Hero Games products, to explore on your own....)

CHAPTER ONE

PAGE 16: THE JANUS KEY

The Janus Key is at least semi-intelligent, if not fully so (a difficult question for humans to resolve, since its sentience is decidedly inhuman). It “gave” itself to Cirque Sinister, since its mystic senses perceived how cleverly and destructively the Cirque would use it and it wanted to “stretch its muscles” after being unused for so long. It remained buried in the San Sebastien Swamp, an inviting target for mystical villains able to detect its reality-altering power, until early 2010, when it was found by a man who's adopted the identity of Dr. Macabre and now plans to unleash the Key's powers upon the world.

Until he does so, those hungry for the Key's power continue to search for it. Carlota Sylvestri is the most persistent of these hunters, but just about any mystical villain — other Sylvestris, Valerian Scarlet, Talisman, Black Paladin, Zorran the Artificer, one of the Vandaleurs, or many others — might decide to look for it. An entire “mystic underground war” could break out as various

villains and factions try to obtain the Key, unaware that it's already been found.

The Swamp itself (see page 146) has only a limited awareness of the potential danger of the Janus Key, but feels a powerful urge to keep it hidden from humans. Therefore, anyone searching for it also has to deal with the full force of the Swamp and its natural protectors. Perhaps the arcane energies of the Key will begin to twist and warp the Swamp's collective intelligence, turning it into a menace. Or perhaps the Key is, or could become, a vital ingredient to Therakiel's plans (see page 145), which means the Final Battle is close at hand....

PAGE 17: THE GULARR INVASION

The “person” who snuck into Homestead and activated the beacon was a Destroid robot sent by Shadow Destroyer using control codes stolen from the real Dr. Destroyer by magic (see page 153). He wanted to test the current state of Earth's defenses and further the world's mistaken impression that he's the real Dr. Destroyer returned to life.

CHAPTER TWO

PAGE 38: SUPERHERO SOCIALIZING

One of the hidden clubs where superheroes socialize in Millennium City is *Heavy Metal*, located on the west side of the city in a building that's disguised as an ordinary all-night grocery store. Heroes can enter via concealed roof or underground entrances, or if they're in civilian garb can come through the front door as if they have shopping to do. Run by a former UNTIL agent named Harry McRorie, Heavy Metal features several different dance areas (each with its own style of music), great drinks, delicious food, and a chance for heroes to unwind with their colleagues after a hard night's patrol.

CHAPTER THREE

PAGE 41: DOSPA PERSONNEL

As the main text notes, not everyone working for DOSPA is as sympathetic toward superhumans as Andrew Rochester. Of particular note is Assistant Undersecretary for Mystic Affairs Brenda Tagwell, who's in the pay of Sunburst. Thanks to her, Sunburst gets his hands on much of the information available to DOSPA. Tagwell, a greedy and unprincipled person, would gladly sell the same information to VIPER and other organizations if she could make contact with them.

PAGE 42: THE HAYNESVILLE PROJECT

Most people believe the Haynesville Project was shut down in 1946, just like President Truman said. This isn't true — Department 17, as the Project is now called, never completely ceased operations. Today it's alive and well at McLaughlin Air Force Base and is still a center of the United States military's efforts to create and control superhumans. A top-secret division of the the Department of Defense, functioning in conjunction with and under the oversight of DOSPA, Department 17 has made some intriguing breakthroughs during its sixty-year existence, as discussed in the main text, but has never discovered a safe, consistent method either for creating superhumans or controlling them once they're created.

As of 2010, the head of Department 17 is General Clarence Smith. Under his leadership, the program is focusing most of its current efforts on trying to develop an improvement to the Cyberline procedure used by PRIMUS — a procedure that would create stronger, but also more easily controlled, superhumans. To that end Department 17 scientists have experimented with all sorts of genetic engineering, unusual chemicals, strange radiations, and the like. They're always interested in information about any new manifestation of superhuman or paranormal abilities.

General Smith has to engage in a bit of creative accounting to keep his secret project alive — if his DOSPA superiors or Congress were to learn of this, they'd be very unhappy. Smith might go to great lengths to keep his project a secret, though not all of his employees would approve.

PAGE 42: AMERIFORCE ONE

Many of the members of the current incarnation of Ameriforce One have been involved, to some degree, in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, as well as in other key military operations around the world. Additionally, many superheroes contribute their knowledge, skills, or technical resources to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) on an occasional basis. Typically the United States keeps these activities as secret as possible, since it doesn't want the world to think that America has an arsenal of superhuman soldiers... but when a battle destroys five

buildings in downtown Kabul, there's not much the government can do to keep the incident out of the news.

The statement in the main text that all the members of the original Ameriforce One were killed in the 1983 Soviet sub explosion is incorrect. One member, Russell Watkins, survived, though he was badly injured. He washed ashore in Finland, without any memory of who he was or what had happened. A farmer's family found him and nursed him back to health, though he never regained his memory. He's spent the years since then as a homeless person in Europe, tormented by occasional flashes of recollection. It may be that one day a supervillain will dupe him and recruit him to help commit crimes, or that his memory will return and, bitter over being "abandoned" by his country, he'll launch a scheme to get revenge on the United States....

PAGE 45: PRIMUS

Although the public in general, and even many superhumans, considers Cyberline a drug/biofeedback process of some sort, in truth it's a form of advanced genetic engineering. It introduces low-powered superhuman DNA, obtained from several superhumans by Dr. Alexander during his researches, into the Avengers' bodies via an RNA retrovirus. Avengers periodically go in for new doses of the virus to "update" their superhuman genes or correct any minor problems that may have arisen.

This method gives PRIMUS some built-in security. Since Cyberline isn't a drug that could affect anyone, but a genetic engineering process that only works on a few people with compatible genes, a theft of Cyberline materials or data isn't as damaging as it might be, and a theft of the "update" viri even less so. PRIMUS still takes any such incidents *very* seriously (since analysis of stolen materials could reveal its secrets and methods, or allow the thief to find a way to "counteract" Cyberline), but they don't pose the threat the public thinks.

PAGE 48: THE UNITED STATES SPACE STATION

In addition to its research and anti-alien invader monitoring functions, the USSS also serves a military purpose. Though its weapons and tactical systems are well-concealed, it's fully equipped to fight off alien invaders or other enemies of America.

PAGE 54: CASSIDY'S SUPERSPORTS NETWORK

The rumors about Thomas Cassidy trying to create enough superhumans to launch a Super-Sports Network are just that — rumors. Cassidy would love to create "SSN," but he has no desire, and has taken no steps, to mass-manufacture superhumans for it.

PAGE 56: THE ARENA

The Arena is real; it exists mainly in New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Millennium City, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee as of 2010. As the main text notes, most of the fighters are low-powered superhumans — people stronger and faster than normal humans, but not strong, fast, or motivated enough to make it as superheroes or villains. Deaths on the circuit are rare, but do occur, especially when fierce rivals meet for a match.

PAGE 56: SUPER_TALK.COM

Super_Talk.Com's success is due in large part to Sheila Swinson, who possesses minor superpowers herself. She's got low-level precognitive abilities, and these allow her to learn news before established reporters and even predict certain business trends. So far she hasn't caused any trouble doing this, but it's possible her actions might at some point disrupt the time-stream, or attract the attention of a supervillain who wants to exploit her powers for his own gain....

PAGE 59: TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY

The main text is incorrect that Mechanon is the most technologically-advanced supervillain. That honor actually belongs to Dr. Destroyer, who's spent the past two decades in isolation refining his weapons and other systems even further. See page 153 for more on Dr. Destroyer and Shadow Destroyer.

PAGE 60: FRANKLIN STONE

The description in the main text of Stone is accurate, though it doesn't go far enough. He is indeed ruthless, ambitious, greedy, powerhungry, and more than willing to ignore the law if he can get away with it. But beyond that, he has ties (carefully concealed) to VIPER and some organized crime groups, and has various parts of his corporate empire engaging in all sorts of practices (like attempts to genetically engineer superhumans) that are both blatantly illegal and extremely dangerous. He is, in short, the perfect antagonist for superheroes who are already involved in the corporate world in some way.

Stone is both intrigued and repelled by superhumans. On the one hand, he recognizes their value as advertising pitchmen, sources of new technology, and the like, and he never overlooks or ignores potential sources of profit (or hirelings and patsies he can use against his enemies). On the other hand, superheroes have on more than one occasion interfered (knowingly or unknowingly) with ACI affairs, and to rile Franklin Stone is to make an enemy for life. Moreover, something about superhumans subtly offends him; it's as if, with their gaudy costumes and flashy powers, they're deliberately flaunting their "superiority." It irks him to no end that he doesn't have that kind of personal power himself (though he'd *never* risk his health trying to gain his own powers; he's no fool).

Stone is currently in his mid-50s and in extremely good health. He stands 6'3" tall, with dark hair and eyes and the build of a man his age who exercises regularly. He's serious-minded and disciplined, almost always focused on business to the exclusion of everything else. He has no children and is married to his fourth wife, Angela, a beautiful 28-year-old who's perfectly willing to put up with the fact that he also keeps two mistresses in their house as long as she has access to his money.

PAGE 61: THE ESPIONAGE WORLD

Rumors of the continued involvement of superhumans in espionage are true; both the United States and China, in particular, still have super-spies in their employ. Leaving aside the Air Force's use of Victory for aerial reconnaissance, the United States has at least two superhumans — a clairvoyant psionic named Frederick Wilson, and the light-manipulating heroine Brightmoon — working for its intelligence services. China's superhuman spies include Glorious Mind (a superhuman with low-level psionic powers and Eidetic Memory), Dark Cloud (who possesses powers of intangibility), and a robotic shapeshifter designated Agent 57.

PAGE 62: THE TOURNAMENT OF THE DRAGON

The Tournament of the Dragon is real, and extremely important. It's held every sixty years because that's when *Szé Lóng*, the Death Dragon, an evil that was ancient when mankind was young, strains his bonds and threatens to break free to ravage the world. The Champion earns the honor, and responsibility, of fighting this terrifyingly powerful creature and keeping the world safe... with the fate of the world hanging on whether he succeeds or fails.

PAGE 63: YENGTAO TEMPLE

The precise origins of the Yengtao Temple are lost in the mists of time, although knowledgeable martial arts scholars have several different theories. Some date its origin to China's Epoch of the Warring States (403-221 B.C.), while others associate it with the better-known Shaolin Temple. Various early martial artists, cults, secret societies, and wizards have all been named as among its founders, but the true facts remain unconfirmed.

According to the most common stories, Yengtao's purpose was to preserve and pass on all martial knowledge and wisdom to those deemed worthy. Its masters — many of whom supposedly lived far longer than average men do — knew and could teach any martial arts style ever created, plus many wondrous and amazing abilities developed only at the Temple.

Yengtao Temple existed, concealed from the outside world and its concerns, until the Nineties. While almost all martial artists regarded (and still regard) Yengtao as a myth, a few discovered the truth behind the legends and entered the Temple to train. As they had since the Temple's founding, the masters gave each student a nickname or title reflecting his or her personality and goals.



In 1994, two new students arrived at Yengtao: a brash Chinese youth named Cong Feng, and an eager Westerner called Stephen J. Chase. Because he was skilled, but often burned with anger, Cong was named Jade Phoenix; Chase was called Wind of the Night because of his skill at stealthy movement. Cong studied kung fu, seeking ultimate mastery of that style; Chase studied a variety of styles and soon progressed to learning unique Yengtao techniques (much to the anger of Cong, who was slow to learn those advanced abilities). The two became rivals. Cong's envy and anger were frequently expressed in the form of anti-Western epithets and vicious beatings when he could take Chase by surprise.

The Yengtao masters knew Cong was troubled, but in truth his heart was far more evil than they realized. In 1996, Cong decided he would be the greatest kung fu warrior in the world if he destroyed the Temple and its masters, thus leaving himself alone as a repository of their knowledge. One night he poisoned the evening meal, making all who ate it sick and weak. Next, he attacked Chase and Chase's mentor, Zhu Hsaio, knocked them out, and tied them to a pole in the main temple area. Then he set the Temple on fire and fled. Chase woke up in time to save himself and Zhu Hsaio, but all the other masters and students died a horrible, fiery death.

Chase returned to America, bringing the aged and weak Zhu Hsaio with him, and soon put his Yengtao knowledge to good use by becoming the Millennium City crimefighter Nightwind. Cong eventually made his way to America as well, where he renewed his rivalry with Chase and began a criminal career under the name Jade Phoenix (*Qí Fèng*). Cong seeks to kill both Chase and anyone else who still possesses knowledge of Yengtao techniques so that he'll be the only one in the world who knows them.

PAGE 63: SHAMBALLAH

The residents of Shamballah cannot teach Yengtao Temple abilities, though it is true that they can teach pretty much any other martial arts style the GM wants them to. See page 147 for more information about Shamballah.

PAGE 64: BASTION ALPHA SECURITY

The publicly-known history of Bastion Alpha Security leaves out many important details.

The key to Bastion's success is, of course, the Bastion Process that augments ordinary humans to low superhuman levels of strength, toughness, and swiftness (STR 15-35, defenses 5-17, DEX 12-20, SPD 3-4, depending on the level of augmentation). But Anderson Powell is no scientist; he didn't invent the Process. His company's savior is a mysterious man he knows as Dr. Ivan Fortus.

In late 2000 Powell was struggling to keep Bastion Alpha alive. He had few contracts and was drowning in debt. One day a waspish little man who introduced himself as "Dr. Ivan Fortus" showed up unannounced at his office. Thinking he might be a prospective client, Powell agreed to see him, but he soon learned Fortus wasn't interested in hiring Bastion Alpha, but working for it. "In this business, you need an edge," Fortus said, "and I can provide that edge." He explained that he'd invented a secret process through which he could use mutant DNA to augment the capabilities of non-mutant humans. It didn't necessarily work with all mutant powers, but Powell's DNA — which gave him greater strength and toughness (and when necessary size) than normal — would be perfect for his purposes. Using tissue samples from Powell, Fortus could create legions of guards that would be much stronger, tougher, and faster than even the best-trained humans.

Sensing an idea that could make his company a major player in the security field, Powell agreed... and less than a year later he had his first corps of Gold Bastion guards. Soon business was booming, and it wasn't long before Bastion Alpha Security opened new offices around the country. In 2003, a few "discrete inquiries" from certain foreign persons gave Powell the idea of expanding into mercenary work. The result was the opening of the London and Paris offices (which, although they do provide standard security services, exist primarily to recruit new personnel and meet with potential employers from the Third World) and the Nairobi "office" (really more of a military compound at that point). The Tashkent office followed two years later when the company's mercenary business in Central Asia grew enough to require it.

DOCTOR FORTUS AND THE BASTION PROCESS

Anderson Powell has no idea where Dr. Fortus came from or got his training, and to be honest he doesn't really care. The two men have formed a solid, extremely profitable business partnership and trust one another not to "rock the boat" by poking into each other's private lives.

But the truth is that "Doctor" Fortus isn't really a doctor at all. Although he has a biochemistry degree from Tufts and a medical degree from Indiana University School of Medicine, his process wasn't invented in a lab. Ivan Fortus is a mutant with the unusual power to induce mutations in other people by using mutant DNA. Fortus "absorbs" a sample of mutant DNA and then "injects" it into a subject, who receives powers similar to (but usually much weaker than) those possessed by the source of the mutant DNA.

Fortus can't predict exactly what will happen when he grants someone superpowers — it depends in part on his power, and in part on the subject's genetics. His ability to augment a subject improves the more he works with a given sample of DNA, though he may never be able to "unlock" all the abilities in that DNA. That's why the early Bronze and Gold Bastion guards aren't as powerful as the later Iron, Steel, and Questionite guards — Fortus "understands" Powell's DNA well enough now to get better results (but will never "understand" it well enough to grant anyone Powell's ability to grow). Still, the most important factor in the equation is the subject's own DNA; many people aren't susceptible to it at all, and some can never be better than Bronze or Gold level.

Fortus keeps the nature of his work secret from everyone, including Powell. He has an elaborate lab at the New York facility (and lesser ones at Bastion Alpha's other offices) where he takes the subjects to undergo the Bastion Process... but most of the equipment basically goes unused. Fortus has it merely for show, to disguise the fact that he's a mutant.

Powell and Fortus keep many other things about the Bastion Process secret, particularly the fact that the process "burns out" anyone subjected to it, killing him in no more than a decade. The Bronze Bastion process shortens the subject's life

to about 10 years after the augmentation takes place; Gold Bastion, to about eight years; Iron Bastion, to about six years; Steel Bastion, to about four years; and Questionite Bastion, to about two years (the record-holder in the latter case lived for a full 29 months before succumbing to the effects). As the deadline approaches the subject feels increasingly achy and tired, though he doesn't weaken or become less strong. Eventually his body "overloads" and his heart shuts down.

Keeping this secret even from his employees is one of the key factors in Powell's success, so he goes to great lengths to maintain the facade. Guards approaching their "deadlines" (which Fortus can track through the twice yearly medical check-ups all Bastion Alpha personnel undergo) are sent on more dangerous missions so they'll get killed before death-by-Process can overtake them, and in more than one case Powell has lured a guard to an isolated location, murdered him, and then claimed he went "missing in action."

RECRUITMENT

Bastion Alpha gets its recruits mostly from advertisements in "soldier of fortune"-type magazines, word of mouth in the Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World, and so forth. (In recent years it's also gotten a lot of recruits in the Third World, though any such recruits must speak fluent English.) Before subjecting anyone to the Process it puts that person through a battery of tests designed to evaluate his physical and psychological fitness for the treatment. Recruits deemed acceptable have to sign a ten-year contract... and a waiver releasing the company from any liability in the event the Process goes wrong.

PAGE 64: THE MYSTIC WORLD

The main text leaves out or deliberately misstates several facts, based on the "common knowledge" of the average member of the Mystic World.

TYRANNON

The first, and most important, is the existence of the extradimensional entity known as Tyrannon the Conqueror. Unquestioned overlord of millions of dimensions, Tyrannon is an extraordinarily powerful being who splits his self into hundreds, even thousands, of "avatars" of varying form and power. So far Tyrannon has only been mentioned on Earth in the softest of whispers and the rarest of dark tomes, for fear of his power and what it might do to this world. At long last he seems to have taken notice of Earth, thanks to two things: first, its risen level of magical power, which makes it potentially valuable to him; second, the attempts of his archrival Istvatha V'han (see page 113) to conquer it (anything she wants, he wants so she cannot have it to use against him). Skarn the Shaper (page 120) is another rival of his, though arguably a weaker one than V'han.



THE ARCHMAGE

Unfortunately, Earth at present lacks what would normally be its chief defense against Tyrannon and similar mystic threats: *the Archmage*.

Historically Earth has had an Archmage, greatest of its heroic spellcasters and mystics, who received special relics and powers to help him defend this reality. But the last Archmage, a gifted Russian wizard and mystic named Bohdan Stanislavski, was killed in 1908 by the Circle of the Scarlet Moon (see page 158). The Trismegistus Council has filled the Archmage's shoes as much as it could for the past century, but its ability to fend off an attacker with the power of Tyrannon or Skarn is limited (to put it mildly). Though the Council remains unaware of Tyrannon's turn toward Earth, it continues its long quest to find and "ordain" the next Archmage (see page 124 for more information).

The Archmage's chief power is an effortless facility with spells. An Archmage doesn't need the chants, talismans, potions, magic circles, or other paraphernalia used by most sorcerers. He casts spells by will alone. He also gains a lifespan of centuries, wields tremendous authority over the spirit world, and possesses many of Earth's greatest mystic artifacts and relics (or did, until the Scarlet Moon's attack destroyed most of them).

Unfortunately, no one knows exactly how to determine who the new Archmage is — or to put it another way, how one qualifies to be Archmage. What is known is the following:

- An Archmage shows great mystic mastery even before attaining the office.
- There are no requirements as to magical style or beliefs (past Archmages have included Hermetic magicians, Taoist sorcerers, shamans, and others), except that an Archmage's skills cannot depend primarily or entirely on mystical objects or the like (for example, an alchemist wouldn't qualify).
- Nor is there any moral requirement — in short, the Archmage doesn't have to be a hero, or of heroic or "good" bent. This is why so many mystics are terrified that Takofanes might be the next Archmage.
- A prospective Archmage must learn he *Quaternion Banishment*, a spell that curses invaders from the Outer Planes (and thus allows the Archmage to protect Earth's plane). To learn the spell a mystic must first receive gifts of power from the gods of Faerie, Babylon, Elysium, and the Netherworld.
- On the other hand, a nascent Archmage may not bind himself to any single god or spirit. The Archmage speaks for all humanity in the quarrels and councils of the gods. To do this, he must remain neutral — receiving power from gods, but not becoming beholden to them.

Besides the three prospective candidates favored by the Trismegistus Council — Witchcraft, Rashindar, and Dweomer — other possible Archmagi include Robert Caliburn, the Demonologist, and Takofanes. Doctor Yin Wu, who's already outlived three Archmagi and is probably pledged to the Taoist gods, isn't considered a serious candidate by most mystics.

DEMON

As the main text notes, DEMON conducts itself much like other villainous organizations — it simply uses magic in place of technology, robed followers in place of costumed agents, and focuses its activities on things mystical (e.g., stealing ancient relics from museums or long-lost grimoires from libraries, trying to take over places of mystic power and tap them, and so forth). But DEMON is not entirely what it seems. See page 159 for more information.

CHAPTER FOUR

PAGE 70: NOVA

The gossip that Decibelle has some association with Howler is completely untrue. Decibelle is a mutant.

PAGE 72: THE FREEDOM PATROL

Rumors about the Patrol trying to become a West Coast "auxiliary" of the Champions are true. However, the Champions haven't yet decided if they want to "franchise" the team this way.

PAGE 73: VILLAINOUS AGENCIES IN AMERICA

ARGENT does indeed have some ties to some of the companies that helped fund Millennium City, but they're not as strong as many law enforcement officials fear. Nevertheless, they may cause significant problems for the Champions and other local heroes in the future.

See page 159 regarding DEMON and what it's up to.

The IHA is doing more with its money than lobbying. It's also been building several secret bases and producing Minuteman combat robots (see page 160). The Institute's leaders are trying to think of a way to lure most of the nation's prominent mutants to a single location so the Minutemen can obliterate them at a single stroke.

PAGE 75: MEXICO

DEMON maintains several Demonhames in Mexico, including ones in Mexico City and Acapulco, because of the magical energies prominent in that part of the world. Among their many objectives is to obtain the legendary Jade Mask of Tzitzlanahuac, which is said to grant immense mystic powers to anyone who wears it.

Both VIPER and ARGENT have taken advantage of Mexico's high degree of corruption and nearness to the United States to establish secret bases and laboratories there.



They have the protection of local and national officials, and could easily become a major thorn in the side of any American superheroes (particularly in cities like Los Angeles, Houston, or Phoenix which are near the border).

PAGE 77: CHÍQUADOR

President For Life Garrastazu e Silva poses an even greater threat to the rest of South America than anyone realizes. He's been building up his military with the aim of eventually launching wars of conquest, but he knows he can't hope to compete with the likes of the Brazilian Army using conventional weapons alone. Instead, he's recruited teams of unscrupulous scientists to develop a crash program to create superhuman soldiers obedient to his will. His researchers haven't had much success yet, but their latest "test case" — a crazed, superhumanly strong man whom they released in the *favelas* (slums) of Rio de Janeiro to go on a rampage — showed signs of promise. If they can simply figure out how to make the superhuman soldiers more controllable, Garrastazu e Silva can destabilize, and perhaps conquer, much of South America. And it's doubtful his ambition would stop there.

PAGE 78: GREAT BRITAIN

Albion is just what he claims to be — a manifestation of the heroic qualities of the British people. Possessing enormous strength and resilience, the ability to fly, and several other powers in addition to boundless courage and tenacity, he only appears when some danger threatens all of Britain.

Dweomer, the Irish supermage, is considered by some members of the Trismegistus Circle to be an ideal candidate to become Archmage. They watch him as closely as they do Witchcraft, though he's never studied with them or met any of them (that he knows about).

PAGE 79: FRANCE

The public at large doesn't realize that the Seine isn't Tricolor's daughter — she's a clone made from his genetic material. Sterile, and desperate for a child of his own, Tricolor made a devil's deal with the master of the biological sciences, Teleios, and had him create Seine. Now he not only owes Teleios a favor, but Teleios has samples of his DNA. Seine is unaware of the true nature of her existence thanks to Teleios's memory-implantation technology.

The rumors about DEMON's activities in France are accurate. One of the Morbanes in America came into possession of an ancient tome that described what sounded to him like a cave painting depicting proto-human worship of the Kings of Edom. Thinking that this painting, if real, might help DEMON realize its true goals (see page 159), the members of the Inner Circle ordered a mission team to find the painting. All they know right now is that it's somewhere in the southern part of France — but with every passing week, they get closer and closer to finding it...

PAGE 79: GERMANY

Zeitgeist's powers of time manipulation have been increasing in strength — slowly, but definitely — since Captain Chronos first appeared in the modern Earth timeframe in 2002. Unfortunately, as his powers improve, Zeitgeist's mind becomes weaker; psychologically, he can't handle some of the implications of what he can do (or might be able to). Without some help from the Captain (and maybe even with it), Zeitgeist could implode, going on a mad, destructive rampage that would warp the time-stream across decades or centuries.

PAGE 79: LARISAGRAD

During the Cold War era Larisagrad was a city where numerous top-secret Soviet research projects were conducted. The foremost of these was Directorate Black-12, the Soviet superhuman-soldier research program. This project was about as successful as most of the similar American programs — which is to say that it produced a handful of superhumans in exchange for killing, crippling, or driving insane hundreds of "volunteer" test subjects. *Spartanyets* ("the Spartan," a low-level speedster-brick with enhanced senses and military training), *Nyepobyedimiy* ("Invincible," a brick), and some members of Red Winter were its best-known "graduates"; its most embarrassing failure became the supervillain *Gorbun* ("the Hunchback," a matter transformer and biomanipulator), who's still semi-active in the Russian underworld despite his advancing age.

When the Soviet Union crumbled and funding for Larisagrad's expensive research dried up, the scientists there were faced with a choice. They could become legitimate researchers, competing in the world of commercial scientific research and profiting from it... or they could offer their services to the highest bidder, regardless of purpose or morality. Unwilling to give up their high-class (by Russian standards, anyway) lifestyle, they opted for the latter path. A few scientists who couldn't stomach the decision fled the city, often ending up with European or American research firms.

It didn't take long for Larisagrad to develop a reputation for the quality of its work... not to mention the blind eye it turned to what was done with its technology. VIPER soon became a frequent customer, as did the Warlord, the Ultimates, the Crimelords, Utility, and various powered armor-wearing supervillains who needed occasional maintenance, upgrades, resupply, or spare parts for their equipment. Thanks to the influx of cash from these clients, most Larisagradians enjoy a standard of life far higher than that of other Russians.

As Larisagrad's reputation waxed, ARGENT looked on with concern. It didn't need any more competitors than it already had. But rather than destroy Larisagrad, the organization's board of directors decided it was a valuable resource they needed to acquire.



VILLAINY UNLIMITED

Since 1998, supervillains in need of a helping hand have had someone to turn to: the secret firm **Villainy Unlimited**.

Owned and operated by Thomas Franchetti, an attorney well-known for defending superhuman criminals, Villainy Unlimited provides legal services, insurance, bail bonds, costume creation and repair, mediation, money management, and legitimate (legal) equipment and

goods to supervillains who'd otherwise have trouble obtaining

these things. It can also arrange for medical care if a client's injured, though VU's not in a position to provide medical services itself. However, VU won't obtain illegal equipment for a villain (including false identification documents), directly help him break the law, or hide him from the authorities.

To that end, ARGENT infiltrated operatives into Larisagrad, established commercial ties with the city, kept its most important citizens under surveillance, and started a corporate espionage campaign against it.

As usual, ARGENT's tactics bore fruit. Through a combination of business manipulation, cutthroat competition, Maskbot replacement of key personnel, and blackmail, ARGENT took effective control of Larisagrad in late 2003. The current "mayor" of the city, a physicist named Stepan Dolovsky, is an ARGENT puppet; the group keeps him supplied with the drugs, women, and scientific resources he wants, and he does what it tells him to. The power behind the throne is Group Leader Gregory Attenborough, who reports directly to ARGENT's leaders and conveys their orders to Dolovsky.

A "client" who wants to contract Larisagrad's services contacts Dolovsky or any other member of the city's governing council, the *Komitet Upravleniya Issledovaniyami* ("Research Steering Committee," or KUI). The Committee looks into the request, determines what it can do for the client, and quotes a price. There's no dickering — a client either accepts the price or walks away (though on occasion the Committee has agreed to be paid in trade or services rather than cash). After a client deposits the nonrefundable full amount into a secret account, the Committee puts Larisagrad's scientists and factories to work on his behalf. The finished goods are delivered at a time and place specified in the original contract.

Besides Dolovsky, other prominent Larisagradians include:

Lavro Aksenov: An expert on weapon systems design, Dr. Aksenov has been responsible for upgrading the weapons in several suits of powered armor, including Armadillo's, and for supplying blaster technology to several Third World dictators. A fussy, precise little man, he has difficulty maintaining a steady research team due to his constant carping and criticizing.

Filipa Larionovskaya: Formerly a researcher on rocketry and space travel, Dr. Larionovskaya has mostly turned her attention to designing propulsion systems for hovercraft and other cutting-edge super-vehicles. She's also consulted with some Larisagrad clients on the design of space stations and orbital bases.

Timofei Omelchenko: Though he's no Teleios, Dr. Omelchenko is a genius at bio-engineering and related subjects. He's worked on several "human augmentation" and superhuman-soldier projects for various governments, and while he's never made an Earth-shattering breakthrough, he's done a lot to make the world a less safe place.

Shturm ("Onslaught"): Larisagrad would make a rich prize for many villains, not to mention the Russian and Ukrainian governments, so it has plenty of defenses to keep unwanted "visitors" away. The most prominent of these is a

corps of power armor-wearing soldiers called the "Larisagrad Division" (or simply, "the Division"). The leader of the Division is *Shturm*, or "Onslaught," a superhuman created by Directorate Black-12. Gifted with energy projection and teleportation powers in addition to the powerful suit of battle armor he wears, Shturm has earned the gratitude of the Larisagradians — as well as millions of dollars — keeping their pleasant little home in the Urals safe and secure.

PAGE 80: AFRICA

The rumors about Pridemaster and Ogun are true; they exist and have the powers described in the main text.

Stories have persisted for centuries about a mysterious "Kingdom of the Apes" hidden deep within the jungles of the Congo. Tales whispered in dingy bars in Lagos, Kinshasa, and Nairobi say the apes who live in this land are not only intelligent and able to speak, but inimical to human beings, whom they regard as destructive despoilers of the land. These stories are, for the most part, true. Should any of your PCs stumble across the gorilla kingdom, use the Guardian Ape from *The HERO System Bestiary* for the average resident's game statistics.

See page 156 for more information on Joseph Otanga.

PAGE 81: AWAD

Western suspicions about Awad's connection to supercriminal groups are well-founded. For years Awad's worked closely with both ARGENT and VIPER, providing a haven from extradition for some of their personnel in exchange for cash and technology, allowing them to build special labs and facilities there, and so forth. Recently relationships with VIPER have been strained since the Awadis suspect (correctly) that VIPER took advantage of the chaos during the Iraq War to steal some Awadi technological secrets. As a result, the alliance with ARGENT has become even stronger.

The vague reports about an Iraqi-Awadi program to create superhumans are true. Using a secret lab built in Awad (to avoid U.N. observers in Iraq), Hussein and Sultan Tamar el-Hiri of Awad had hoped to custom-build enough superhuman soldiers to avenge Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, take over the Middle East, and establish a chokehold on much of the world's oil supplies. Unfortunately for them (but fortunately for the world), Turs al-Sh'ab was the program's only true success; many failures were dropped in the deep desert to die. The program has been suspended due to the overthrow of Hussein's regime and the presence of American military personnel in the region, but it's possible Awad may try to resurrect it with help from ARGENT.

The sultan has a few other hired superhumans on his payroll. They include *Khafir Hadidi* ("Iron Sentinel," a powered armor wearer), *al-Musabbaq* ("Racer," a speedster), and *al-A'mlaq* ("the Gigantic One," a growing brick).

PAGE 82: CHINA

The main text doesn't mention one of the greatest supervillain threats to China — the *Cult of the Red Banner*, a mysterious ancient sect that worships Lung Wang, the “Dragon King” (actually the Death Dragon itself; see page 139). With its members (including high-ranking priests able to cast spells) scattered throughout China and the Far East, ties to DEMON, and superhuman resources such as the brother-and-sister martial artist team of Iron and Gold and the low-powered brick Sodeptan to call on, the Cult is far more than the simple crackpot religious group the government thinks it is. When the time is right, it will arise, to spread its evil first over China, then the world....

For more on Dr. Yin Wu, see page 156.

PAGE 83: JAPAN

Tsunami, one of Japan's World War II-era superheroes, is still alive and every bit as healthy as he was back then, thanks to his mystic powers — he simply chooses to remain in self-imposed exile in the ocean, revealing himself only to stop anything that threatens the tranquility and safety of the seas.

PAGE 83: OCEANIA

The lack of superheroes in this part of the world makes it ideally suited for ARGENT, which prefers to conduct its experiments away from the prying eyes of “costumed do-gooders.” It recently bought an entire island in an isolated part of French Polynesia and has established a base there to work on many illicit projects.

PAGE 83: ANTARCTICA

The main text is accurate — there's nothing down there but a lot of penguins (and, of course, the *Empyreans*). Though who knows what eons-old ruins or other surprises the largely-unexplored interior might hold....

PAGE 90: VIBORA BAY

There's a *lot* more going on in Vibora Bay than meets the eye.

THE WAR BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL

For millennia a war's been brewing between the forces of Heaven and Hell — a war that will be fought in Vibora Bay thanks to the presence of a being called Therakiel. Therakiel was an angel who sided with neither God nor Satan when Satan rebelled. When the rebellious angels were cast into Hell, Therakiel was thrown out of Heaven to crash to Earth on the spot where Vibora Bay would one day be built. Since then, with his right side broken and scarred from his landing and his left still angelic and pure, he's plotted to bring about the War so that he can rise above it and rule all, greater than either Jehovah or Lucifer. To that end he's subtly shaped the land around where he fell to attract arcane energies and prepare it as a battleground.



But ultimately the Halfway Angel's plan will succeed or fail because one man has to Choose — to decide which side to favor in the War, and thus which side is likely to emerge victorious. And that man is...

ROBERT CALIBURN

Caliburn is a strange and mysterious figure. Other members of the Mystic World know him by the nickname “the Magnum Mage,” since he often uses his magic in unorthodox, militaristic ways. For example, he carries a .45 semiautomatic he claims Azrael, the angel of death, has blessed, and a submachine gun supposedly consecrated to the god Shiva... and he doesn't hesitate to use either if necessary. “Why waste magic when bullets get the job done?”

Caliburn's magic is mostly Hermetic theurgy — the calling-on of angels and other Powers for mystic ability — and kabbalism, though he's been trained in many other arcane disciplines. Besides his guns, he often carries other temporarily or permanently enchanted items, rather than trying to cast spells on the battlefield, since his most potent magics typically take time to cast. Among these is the Flame Gem, one of a set of magical gemstones, which grants him greater than usual command of fire magic (see *The Elemental Gems*, page 92).

Reports that Caliburn has “a large lizard” with him are true, though somewhat mistaken. The “lizard” is his familiar, a miniature dragon named Nicotine, whom he claims to have conjured while studying with mystics in India.

Caliburn is unaware of his pivotal role in the War, though any mystic worth his salt can sense that a storm is coming, and that the Magnum Mage somehow has something to do with it.

THE SAN SEBASTIEN SWAMP AND THE SKUNK APE

Therakiel is also responsible for imbuing the San Sebastian Swamp north of the city with a vague sentience. It's a sort of "collective mind" connected by mystical means to every single living creature within the bounds of the swamp, yet somehow separate from them as well. The intelligence can manifest itself anywhere within the swamp it chooses, and when necessary "take control" of living creatures within it. This allows it to see and communicate through animals, insects, or even plants (though when it chooses to actually speak with a non-mystic it uses a creature with some sort of vocal apparatus). It can also animate non-motile matter, like plants or mud. For example, it can wrap a threatening intruder in vines or cause "quicksand" to form beneath the feet of people who try to harm it. (In game terms, treat this as an Entangle with 3-5 dice of effect and corresponding PD/ED.) The animals that make up part of the collective are in all other ways normal examples of their respective species; use the write-ups in *The HERO System Bestiary* for them if necessary.

If the swamp wants to interact with the world outside its boundaries, it creates a humanoid creature known to locals as *the Skunk Ape*. The "Ape" is a mobile humanoid mass composed of plant matter. Most Viborans regard it as a mythical creature. It may also send out individual creatures from its own population when the Skunk Ape manifestation would attract too much attention or be too slow to be useful. It usually uses ordinary birds or fish for this purpose.

Among the human inhabitants of Vibora Bay, Dr. Ka and Sister Rain are both familiar with the swamp's nature, and Black Mask has spoken with it once during a case she worked with Ka (though she isn't clear on the exact details, she understands the swamp houses a powerful mystical being). Robert Caliburn is aware that "something's up" with the Swamp, but has never had reason or opportunity to learn more.

AL THE ALLIGATOR MAN

Another unusual resident of the Swamp is Al, the Alligator Man, the victim of an unscrupulous ARGENT experiment to create superhuman soldiers by mingling the DNA of humans and animals (in his case, an alligator). After escaping from ARGENT's clutches, the super-strong alligator-man, now with the mental capacity of an eight year-old, ended up living in San Sebastian Swamp (which can "speak" to him and understand him). Basically it just wants to be left alone... but sometimes it gets the urge for human companionship and sneaks into Vibora Bay via the sewers. Inevitably things go wrong and he has to flee back to the Swamp again... but at heart he's neither evil nor harmful.

THE HIGH APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The hints in the sidebar text — that the High Apostolic Church remains true to its voodoo roots — are entirely accurate. All but the most casual members of the church participate in voodoo rituals to some degree, and a few are involved in dark magical practices (and have ties to DEMON). Though it's not readily apparent to a casual visitor to Vibora Bay (except in terms of cheesy tourist souvenirs), voodoo charms, hexes, and more are available for sale in certain parts of the city... though the price is not always one that can be paid in money.

PAGE 93: SHARNA-GORAK

The entities to whom Dalsith sacrificed his soul were the Kings of Edom, horrific beings from the Qliphothic Realms (see page 108). Their Qliphothic energies changed him into Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer. Although he's been dead now for over thirty thousand years, such power as that never truly dies. It may be that one day Sharna-Gorak will revive to threaten both Atlantis and the surface lands with his world-shattering might.

PAGE 97: OGUERN

Ogurn is not dead, as the Emphyreans believe. He lives still, trapped in a cavern beneath the deepest pits of the Lemurians, plotting both his eventual escape and the destruction of the surface world.

PAGE 98: THE PROGENITORS

The Progenitors remain a mystery, even to those few humans who know so much as the name. They apparently disappeared from the Galaxy many centuries ago. Most of the starfaring races have some awareness of them, but none claim to know what eventually became of them, or for what purpose they apparently manipulated the creatures of several primitive planets.

PAGE 103: QWIJYBO

Most of the monsters on Monster Island are just what they appear to be — gigantic, bestial monsters. Not so Qwijybo. He started life as an ordinary gorilla... but then ran afoul of Dr. Philippe Moreau, who experimented on him and turned him into an animal-man. Possessed of a strange nobility of spirit, Qwijybo broke away from Moreau at the same time as Dr. Silverback. He joined Father Elk when he moved to Monster Island to join the free manimals there struggling to stop Moreau. Unfortunately, during an incident on Monster Island involving Teleios, Qwijybo nobly sacrificed himself to stop the evil geneticist, in the process getting injected with a serum that turned him into a ravening, fiery monster. Unfortunately modern super-science has found no way to reverse the transformation and save him; it may be that only Teleios can do that.



OTHER MYSTERIOUS PLACES

BEAST MOUNTAIN

In a remote part of a Ukrainian forest stands a small mountain known to the natives as *Gornyj Zver*, or Beast Mountain. In a small village at the top of this mountain stands the former laboratory of Phillippe Moreau, grandson of the mad scientist H.G. Wells wrote of (and whom the world widely but falsely considers to be fictional). Moreau continued where his grandfather's studies left off, creating a large number of hybrid animal-men to serve as his personal army (most notable of these was Dr. Silverback, who helped several British heroes defeat him in 1985). The lab has largely been dismantled, and the facility itself was left in the hands of the hybrids after Moreau was defeated and taken to justice, as the heroes involved decided to respect the privacy of the remaining beast-men.

From 1985 until 2008, Beast Mountain was ruled by Father Elk, generally acclaimed as the wisest of the hybrids. In 2008 he received word that Dr. Moreau had established a new lab on Monster Island and was once again creating and enslaving "manimals." Unwilling to let this stand, he and some of his closest friends went to Monster Island to try to liberate the beast-men and stop Moreau. As of 2010 they're still there, fighting the good fight.

Aside from Dr. Silverback and Father Elk, only a small handful of animal-men have ever left Beast Mountain to try to make their way in the outside world — for the most part, the villagers enjoy a peaceful, idyllic existence, far from the prying eyes of the world, and its residents prefer to stay there. Two who felt differently are the supervillain Snake; and Ram, the bouncer at the notorious Vibora Bay nightclub Minefield.

SHAMBALLAH AND AGHARTI

Beneath the Tibetan Himalayas, only a few miles from Mount Everest, a small tributary of the Brahmaputra River flows through a fantastic set of caves deep inside the mountains themselves. Only the strongest-willed of men can pass through these caverns, because their shadows play tricks upon the minds of the unwary, and fearsome shades can become all too real and deadly if one lacks the mental strength to disbelieve them. At the end of these passages, whose layout is known to some of the holy orders of monks who live in lamaseries in these mountains, is the legendary city of Shamballah.

The repository of much of the magical knowledge of the ancient Chinese and Tibetan warrior-mages of centuries past, Shamballah is ruled by a council of nine Immortal Monks who never show their true faces to anyone. Powerful mystics like Dr. Yin Wu and the mystic martial artist superhero Lo Han have traveled there to study among the monks, and it's believed by some that the principles of fighting taught at the storied Yengtao Temple have their roots here somehow (though the Immortal Monks do not know the Yengtao techniques). Some legends claim the monks of

Shamballah have mastered the secrets of immortality, but only for as long as they remain within the city — if they were to depart, they would suddenly show their true ages, becoming crumbling skeletons as soon as they left the city's grounds.

Elsewhere in the same set of caverns, but many miles distant, is a similar city, Shamballah's shadowy twin, Agharti. Legends say that Agharti is the home of evil sorcerers, equal in power to the monks of Shamballah. The two cities are apparently locked in a mystical war that's raged for countless centuries.

SUNDAY POND, MAINE

Among the most mysterious of the mystical presences of the Champions Universe is a strange being known only as The Witness. Even the wisest of powers on Earth know little of his history, and he shows no interest in enlightening anyone as to his origins. It's known that he's extremely old, at least as old as the second generation of Empyreans, and that he's somehow drawn to locations where powerful magics are used or where terrible tragedies are likely to occur. At times he seems to be a force for good, providing information to heroes and occasionally, in moments of cosmic crisis, battling at their sides against the forces of darkness; at other times he seems to act as an impartial observer, solemnly watching events without interfering or attempting to affect them in any way. His powers are apparently vast, yet he seems hesitant to use them, preferring to employ only the most subtle applications of magic or to find others to act on his behalf.

Though the Witness has appeared in all corners of the globe at one time or another, he regularly returns to the one place he calls home: the woods of central Maine. According to several mystically-inclined supers who have visited him there, he lives in an abandoned church near the town of Oxford; the church is protected by powerful wards and guarded by mysterious wild spirits. This particular part of Maine, by coincidence or not, is also plagued by far more than its share of vampires, lake monsters, and other manifestations of the supernatural.

What is unknown even to most mystics is that the area around Oxford, and Sunday Pond in particular, is the location of a dimensional convergence — a nexus point linking several different continua and a "weak point" in the fabric of the multiverse. In such an area, portals to other worlds commonly appear and then vanish suddenly, either taking with them some unlucky local or, alternatively, depositing an inhabitant of another dimension here on Earth. The area around such a convergence is magically "charged," rich with eldritch energy that can give spellcasters a bit of extra energy or allow them to create effects normally beyond their ability. The Witness himself is aware of the convergence, of course, and spends a great deal of time assisting accidental travelers as well as helping defend Earth from the machinations of evil creatures who recognize the convergence as a "weak spot" through which to attack Earth's dimension.



THE VALLEY OF NIGHT

In a small valley in northwest Peru, not far from the Colombian border where the great rain forests are at their deepest and thickest, is a valley where an amazing group of natives live. Descendants of Incas who escaped the destruction of their empire by Spanish invaders in the fifteenth century, the inhabitants of the Valley of Night have been separated from the rest of humanity for hundreds of years. A small order of Jaguar Priests, lycanthropes who wield dark magics and draw their powers from human sacrifices, rules them.

In recent years the Jaguar Priests have become aware of the existence of modern civilization encroaching on their valley due to large sections of the rain forest being torn down for industrial uses. So far they've kept their people in the dark, but this situation cannot last forever. Also, one of the most notorious of the Colombian drug cartel leaders has discovered the existence of the Jaguar Priests and is attempting to bring them under his sway so he can use their magics to enrich himself.

THE WELL OF WORLDS

Deep in the Australian outback stands a natural monolith called Ayers Rock by the Australian government, and Uluru by the Aborigines. More than eight kilometers in circumference, and rising over 300 meters from the desert floor, the massive, colorful sandstone column exists both in Earth's dimension (called the "Shadow World") and in another world, called *Tjukurpa*, or "the Dreamtime," of which Earth's dimension is said to be a poor imitation. The Dreamtime is inhabited by talking animals, some of which have non-intelligent counterparts in our world, some of which are extinct, and even more that probably never existed here — and some of which are quite dangerous. Beings in the Dreamtime have limited powers to affect our world, which they find mysterious and frightening (though some, such as the strange insect-creating Marmoo, can claw their way through to our world to wreak havoc). However, some supermages, like Walkabout (see page 48) can draw upon the powerful magical energies of the Dreamtime.

A labyrinth of caves permeates Uluru, which is part of the Kata Tjuta National Park and owned and run by the Aborigines. Many of these caves contain beautiful murals and paintings that were created thousands of years ago, with periodic touchups and additions. Unbeknownst to almost everyone, deep inside one of these caves is a pit that is apparently truly bottomless. Known as the Well of Worlds, it's a dimensional portal that connects *Tjukurpa* to an infinity of other mystical dimensions. Only the most puissant of mages can use it to access a specific other world — for most people a trip into the Well leads to a random location anywhere in the Asiatic dimensions of the multiverse.

The keeper of the Well is an ancient Aborigine mystic, the Wanambi Man, who's known to a few mystics as a powerful force for good. According to legend, the Wanambi Man and a Western mage

teamed together many centuries ago to defeat an invasion of our dimension by Poisonous Snake Men, who apparently used the Well of Worlds as their point of entry to Earth's dimension. Exactly who the white mage might have been remains unclear. Nevertheless, defending the world against such invasions appears to be the responsibility of the Wanambi Man to this day, and he's been known to call on some of the other heroes of Australia for assistance from time to time.

PAGE 104: THE MOON

The Moon is far from the lifeless satellite most humans think it is. There's actually a lot going on there, though not even everyone in the Superhuman World knows about it.

REVENGER'S HAVEN

Revenger, a power armor-wearing super-scientist of megalomaniacal bent, did not die in a lunar cave collapse during his defeat by the Fabulous Five in 1970, as the Five and the Selenites believe. He was grievously injured and took years to recover, but eventually returned to more or less full health... though the situation didn't exactly do anything to improve his unbalanced, albeit genius, mind.

Revenger spent much of the time since then designing a haven for himself in a large lunar cave only he knows about. Using some alien seeds he found, probably the remnants of a comet collision or the beings who created Selenus, Revenger created a strange fungal jungle filled with gigantic mushrooms and other weird plant life, and lit by an oddly calming blue phosphorescence. Serving his every whim there are a race of seven foot tall, blue-skinned "Lunar Amazons" that he bio-engineered in his laboratories. He has continued to work on many other experiments and projects as well — and as time has passed, the old desire to conquer and rule, to show mankind that he is its superior in every way, has been growing and growing....

REVENGER'S LABORATORY

One of Revenger's other facilities on the Moon was a small underground lab which he's long since forgotten (a lot of his resources fell by the wayside during the long years of his convalescence). During their 2009 invasion the Qularr happened to detect it and investigated. There they found a dormant Revenger clone now decades old. Hoping to develop a weapon to defeat their Gadroon rivals with, they fused the clone with Gadroon genetic material. The resulting monstrosity, once awakened, went berserk, killing dozens of Qularr. It remains there today, unable to leave, becoming more and more unbalanced and fierce.

THE FORUM MALVANUM

Perhaps the strangest area on the Moon, one carefully shielded from human sensors and prying eyes, is the *Forum Malvanum*, an offshoot of the gladiatorial arenas on Malva. It's run by Tateklys ("the Fashionable One"), a clever Malvan with unusual drive and ambition for one of his long-dissipated species. Aware of Earth's vast population of superhumans, he convinced the Phazor





to allow him to set up a new arena on the Moon. Superhumans are kidnapped and forced to fight in the arena, then returned to Earth with their memories altered so they don't remember what happened. The fights are broadcast to Malva, where they've become a hit; many Malvans have begun journeying to the Moon to see the contests live. Kanrok the Acquisitioner (page 118) is a crucial part of the whole operation, since he's the one who obtains most of the gladiators for Tateklys (though some true Malvan gladiators have come to the Forum to compete, or been brought there by the Malvans).

In honor of the Humans who do so much of the fighting in it, Tateklys designed the gladiatorial arena to resemble a Roman amphitheater. (As "Praetor" of the "Lunar Games," Tateklys sometimes even affects Roman garb.) It's become a popular tourist attraction not just for Malvans, but for other wealthy galactic citizens with the means to get there undetected. Inevitably, crime and corruption have sprung up around all the money — and Tateklys is in charge of all of that as well.

INSTALLATION ALPHA-8

The evil robot Mechanon maintains a base, designated Installation Alpha-8, on the Moon — or *almost* on the Moon. It's not entirely on the lunar surface, nor entirely in orbit. Instead, the main part of the base "orbits" the Moon at a height of approximately 100 meters by being "tethered" to a small surface installation via a super-tech cable. This eliminates the need for positioning jets

and keeps Alpha-8's profile so low that it would be very difficult to pick the base up on radar (unless the radar was precisely focused on the right area).

Alpha-8 serves several of Mechanon's purposes. First, it's used to make certain things. Most of the base is low gravity or zero gravity, which is ideal for manufacturing some types of electronic components and chemicals. Second, it's Mechanon's window into the Milky Way Galaxy, and particularly the existence and prevalence of organic life there. Mechanon is aware that the Malvans have established a secret arena on the Moon to stage some of their gladiatorial fights close enough to Earth that human superheroes can participate (voluntarily or otherwise...), and it monitors the arena as carefully as it can to catalog the various alien species there.

Third, and perhaps most importantly from the PCs' perspective, Alpha-8 is Mechanon's last-ditch tactical/strategic option. It contains the evil robot's most sophisticated teleportation device, one its Mark XII Computational Unit can trigger to rescue it from anywhere on the world in the event it prefers to escape defeat rather than rebuild itself after being destroyed. Beyond that, if necessary the base itself can become a weapon! Upon command from Mechanon or the Mark XII, the cable tethering it to the Moon detaches. Powerful super-tech jets can then accelerate the base toward Earth. By the time it reaches Earth the base's speed will approach that of a meteor — making it a deadly missile Mechanon will aim at New York, London, or some other major target (possibly

THE GALAXARS

The Galaxars are a group of beings of vast cosmic power who often use that power in strange, idiosyncratic ways. No one knows where they came from, or even if they all came from the same place (or obtained their powers in the same way).

The Examiner:

The Examiner uses his power for one primary purpose: to test people, usually people of great power or will (such as superheroes). He's fascinated by how beings of various sorts react to challenges, be those challenges physical, emotional, or spiritual.

Geon: Geon's obsession runs to planets, asteroids, and similar bodies of rock and earth. Their endless shapes and colors fascinate him; he often enjoys molding and shaping them to suit his aesthetic sensibilities.

The Lawbringer:

The Lawbringer is intensely interested in issues pertaining to law, justice, punishment, ethics, and morality. He's one of the most dangerous Galaxars due to his tendency to "judge" individuals, planets, or entire civilizations and mete out what he considers an appropriate punishment.

(continued, next page)

even a geological fault line). The resulting impact will wipe out millions and significantly affect life throughout Earth. Naturally, this is a last-ditch scheme of Mechanon's, since it would rather not sacrifice an entire base for an attack unless it has no other option or is utterly convinced the attack would succeed.

PAGE 104: THE SOLAR SYSTEM

The asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter was once a planet, though how it was destroyed, and by whom, remains a mystery. Unbeknownst to the superhumans of Earth, over two million years ago this former world was once the home of a race of plant creatures whom the Progenitors nurtured and protected. Within the asteroids themselves can be found hidden repositories of Progenitor knowledge and technology, which would be invaluable to individuals powerful and wise enough to understand them.

The asteroid belt holds another threat: Dr. Destroyer. As mentioned on page 154, the true Dr. Destroyer has remained in seclusion in *Zuflucht*, his ultra-secret asteroid base, since the appearance of Shadow Destroyer. He's never heard of the Progenitors and has no inkling that he might be very near some of their technology.

Europa, one of the moons of Jupiter, is the location of Earth Sector's Star*Guard base (see page 123 for more information on the Star*Guard).

PAGES 104-06: ALIENS AND THE GREATER GALAXY

The information presented in the main text is accurate, and represents the extent of the public's knowledge of alien life. Some of Earth's governments, primarily the United States, know considerably more details gleaned from information that hasn't been publicly released, but no one on Earth knows the full extent of the galactic community. More importantly, no one on Earth is aware of several potential alien threats to Earth's security.

THE GADROON AND PROJECT INCUBATOR

The authorities' suspicions are correct: Gadroon spies camouflaged with holo-devices that make them look like ordinary humans have infiltrated several major Earth cities, including New York, London, and Millennium City. If someone doesn't stop them they may find ways to weaken humanity for another all-out invasion attempt.

During the 1977 Gadroon invasion, VIPER fought on the side of Humanity. The Nest in Portland, Oregon captured a Gadroon mothership, and though none of the adult Gadroon survived the fighting, the agents did secure a clutch of fetuses in stasis. Since then, these fetuses have passed from Nest to Nest, mostly being used for testing and never once freed from stasis. Recently they've been assigned to Generation VIPER, the organization's team of young, up-and-coming villains. The Duchess (one of VIPER's leaders) has ordered that one fetus be allowed to mature. With over five hundred fetuses at her disposal, she hopes the alien child proves tractable... and if so,

she plans to create a faction of alien soldiers loyal to her and her alone.

THE MALVANS

The Malvans' loss of the will to achieve and gradual descent into dissipation isn't entirely natural. It results in part from a terrible curse cast upon them by the Elder Worm (see below), a species with whom they warred hundreds of thousands of years ago for control of the Galaxy. (Most Malvans, caring nothing about their own history, don't even know about this war.) A few Malvans (such as Firewing, Kanrok, and Tateklys) "shake off" the curse somehow, but most remain in its thrall. Despite the waning of magic in the years leading up to 1938, the effects of the curse have probably gone too far to reverse... even if a wizard of sufficient power existed to attempt such a spell. And given that the Malvans possess the most powerful technology in the Galaxy, one wonders if it would be prudent to awaken them from their decadence, since conquering the Milky Way would be child's play for them if they desired it.

THE QULARR

Much of Humanity's knowledge of, and suppositions about, the Qularr are accurate... but there's a lot mankind doesn't know.

The Qularr come from a planet they call *Reqqat*. (They also control a small empire of several systems surrounding their own, one of which has a pre-spaceflight civilization that the Qularr rule with an iron hand.) It's a largely tropical, swampy world dotted with archipelagos and large islands rather than major continents. It's located spinward of Perseid space in a region that, centuries after the Qularr invasion of Earth, Humanity will know as "Drago's Reach." However, by that time *Reqqat* no longer exists. Aggressive, confrontational, and a general menace to the Galaxy, the Qularr and their homeworld are destroyed by the Lawbringer, one of the ultra-powerful Galaxars (see sidebar), in the early 2200s.

The Qularr learned about, and became interested in, Earth after an incident in 1963 in which the Fabulous Five were transported into deep space and fought a group of renegade silicon beings who threatened to destroy the entire Galaxy with a super-weapon. Some Qularr had an opportunity to observe the Fabulous Five in action, and to obtain biological samples from them (*i.e.*, blood spilled during the battle). Intrigued by the samples, Qularr scientists believed that if they had more, they might be able to find a way to bio-engineer more frequent, more powerful superpowers in the Qularr themselves (see below). Unfortunately for them, superhumans were even more common in Human society than they expected; the Qularr invasion force simply wasn't able to cope with them. After several decades of technological development, the Qularr have at last returned to Earth because they think they can succeed with another invasion if they properly scout the planet and study its inhabitants first. (The signal beacon from *Homestead* started



the invasion, but only because the Qularr were ready; had they not been they'd have ignored it.) Additionally, they want to recover some of the technology they had to leave behind the first time.

The Qularr didn't use biological warfare against Humanity for two reasons. First, since they wanted samples of superhuman genetic material, and if possible captive superhumans, to study, using an indiscriminate biowarfare agent that could potentially wipe out Humanity wouldn't be a good idea. Second, and more importantly, the Qularr have a deeply-ingrained societal taboo against biological warfare. Decades before their first attempt to invade Earth, when Reqqat was still a balkanized world, three times the Qularr came within a hair's-breadth of killing themselves off with diseases bred as weapons. Eventually they realized they weren't going to escape that fate a fourth time, and agreements were forged forbidding the use of biowarfare. This attitude has become so ingrained in Qularr society that even today, when they're a united species that only fights species from other worlds, they don't use their skills at bio-engineering to create bioweapons.

Qularr society is highly organized along caste and gender lines. Male Qularr don't do female jobs, and vice-versa; Qularr from high-ranking castes run things while their low-caste brethren do the hard labor. But it goes deeper than that — it's not just a social thing, it's part of Qularr biology at the genetic level. A low-caste Qularr wouldn't think of trying to better himself or associate with higher-caste Qularr; the concept would never occur to him.

The Qularr of each caste may have enhanced capabilities or special abilities that have been bred into them over the millennia. For example, Qularr Shock Troopers are stronger and tougher than the Qularr average; Qularr Scholars are smarter

and more insightful. These abilities don't really rise to the level of superpowers, but they do help distinguish one type of Qularr from another in some instances.

The Qularr don't even have personal names. Instead, they're referred to simply as what they are or what they do. For example, the commander of the current Qularr force on Monster Island is named "Qularr Invasion Leader." His second-in-command is named "Leader's Chief Assistant," and every single one of his shock troopers is named "Qularr Shock Trooper." Ordinarily this would cause constant confusion when a group of Qularr tries to work together, but the Qularr have a sort of "instinctual telepathy" that eliminates the problem. They cannot communicate mentally any more than Humans can, but if Qularr Invasion Leader says to a group of Shock Troopers, "Shock Trooper, go patrol that perimeter," all the Qularr involved know exactly which Shock Trooper he's talking to. This actually leads to a preciseness of communication and discipline that many Human military commanders would envy.

The Qularr language not only relies on this instinctual telepathy, but also on infra- and ultra-sonic sounds. Thus, Humans can't learn to speak it without the aid of super-tech devices that can produce the right sounds and mental impulses; learning to read their written language would be next to impossible.

The Qularr possess much better technology than Humanity does. They have FTL technology that lets them travel at speeds of up to one light-year per day, blasters and similar energy weapons have replaced ballistic firearms throughout their society, and their other forms of technology are similarly advanced compared to Earth's. Their biological sciences are particularly sophisticated; bio-agents are one of their most common trade items, and they can breed giant monsters for

The Recorder: The Recorder loves to observe unique and interesting events, ranging from stellar phenomena (two galaxies colliding, a star going supernova in an interesting way), to gigantic battles (with or without superhumans), to particularly noteworthy sunsets. He sets up "Recorder Windows" which capture a three-dimensional image of the entire event, then displays the Windows in his Gallery of the Universe.

The Shaper: The Shaper is an artistic, creative soul. He's learned the art forms of a million million cultures, and still he hungers for more. When he's not studying art, he's creating his own, ranging from symphonies so beautiful they make the listener weep to sculptures whose forms are disturbing to the Human mind. Some of his art forms, including the shaping of living flesh or the molding of small sections of Reality, are both bizarre and dangerous to others.

The Warmonger: The Warmonger revels in battle, combat, and strife. He travels the Galaxy to participate in wars, skirmishes, and any other form of conflict he can find. If he can't find a battle that's worth his time, he may use his powers to start an interstellar war so he can have some fun.

various purposes (for example, to assist with agriculture or to fight in wars). They also seem to use a lot of force technology for both offensive and defensive purposes.

The Qularr can manifest super“human” powers, though at only about one-third the rate that Humanity does. The average super-Qularr is about two-thirds as powerful as the average super-Human. About one-fourth of super-Qularr are mentalists, one-fourth are metamorphs of some type, and the rest are more or less evenly divided among the classic superhero archetypes. Since crime is rare on Reqqat, super-Qularr usually work for the government in various capacities, including homeworld defense. They’re rarely allowed off-planet and almost never assigned to military expeditions. The Qularr count as the “Alien” class of minds for purposes of Mental Powers.

The Qularr have come back to Earth with the intention of invading and conquering it to obtain its resources and genetic material. They chose Monster Island (specifically, the Wayfarer Coast area) so they could recover some of their lost technology and put it to use. They’ve also raided the Bureau 17 base to take back some of the devices Humanity “stole” from them.

Once the Qularr feel they’ve learned enough about Humanity by studying Earth broadcasts and the like, they have a three-stage plan. First, they’ll use their technology to create an even stronger force-field around the island so no one can interfere with them. Second, they’ll retake control of all the other giant monsters (they’ve already got Mega-Terak working for them again) and eliminate all other factions on the island. Third, after all that’s done they’ll construct a communications array and summon a waiting invasion fleet from the stars to conquer Earth once and for all.

THE SIRIANS

The Sirians abandoned their base on Mars decades ago. It’s now the home of an Empyrean, Deloss, who’s the only living being on Mars at this time... as far as Earth’s superheroes know.

THE HZEEL

Another serious threat is posed by the Hzeel, a humanoid species with bluish-grey skin, large reddish eyes, and technology significantly more advanced than Earth’s. The Hzeel control an empire rimward and “above” Earth and are expansionistic. The chief threat to their aims as of 2010 is the Perseid Empire (Ironclad’s people), which lies spinward of both them and Earth. In the hope of outflanking the Perseids, the Hzeel are considering a sweep into Earth’s part of the Galaxy. That would include conquering Earth for use as a forward base and supply station.

In recent years the Hzeel have sent numerous scout ships to covertly explore Earth and learn more about its peoples and technology, particularly peoples with superhuman powers (which

likewise occur among the Perseids, but are quite rare among the Hzeel). Most of these missions have gone without incident, but on a few occasions a Hzeel scout has lost control of his ship and crashed. One such crash yielded an alien body from which the VIPER supervillain Oculon received the alien eyes that give him his powers (the Hzeel don’t have eyebeam powers naturally; Oculon’s powers result from the intermingling of his particular DNA with that of the Hzeel scout in question). Another crashed ship was recovered by the Warlord, and its technology has influenced his own designs. (This same ship also provided the device that gave the supervillainess Howler her powers.)

As yet, no Earth government or superhero is aware of the Hzeel or their hostile intent toward Earth.

PAGE 107: OTHER DIMENSIONS

The structure of the multiverse described in the main text is accurate (if “accurate” can truly apply to any limited human conceptualization of so limitless a concept). As GM, you should try to fit the dimensions you create into the scheme of the Four Worlds, but don’t worry about it too much — after all, not even master mystics are always quite sure how the planes of the multiverse intersect and interrelate.

The Qliphothic World is home to the Kings of Edom, mentioned earlier with regard to DEMON. Nor are they the only Qliphothic horrors that might come to Earth at the call of mad sorcerers....

Tyrannon the Conqueror, described on page 141, is not mentioned as a dimensional danger, because Earth as yet remains unaware of the threat he poses.

THE MULTIFARIAN

One of the strangest alternate Earths in the Multiverse is *the Multifarian*, where Shadow Destroyer comes from (see below for more information).

CHAPTER FIVE

For more information on many of the villains and villain groups discussed in this section, please refer to *Champions Villains*.

PAGE 110: DARK SERAPH

Dark Seraph and his followers don’t get along with Takofanes because they know Takofanes wants the Crowns of Krim (the actual artifacts, not the people wearing them) for himself. They’re aware of the Undying Lord’s true identity (see below), and know that he once owned and used all six of the Crowns himself. Were Takofanes to regain possession of the Crowns, his already formidable power would be increased, making him virtually unstoppable. Thus, out of sheer self-interest, Dark Seraph does whatever he can to weaken or harm the ancient sorcerer.



PAGE 111: DOCTOR DESTROYER

There's far more to Dr. Destroyer than anyone knows.

Destroyer's "death" at the end of the Battle of Detroit in 1992 was a ruse. In fact the whole battle was largely a ruse orchestrated by Albert Zerstoiten so he could fake his own death. The orbital beam that "killed" him covered a teleportation beam that transported him to Zuflucht, his top-secret base in the asteroid belt. His plan was to make the world think he was dead so he could spend as much time as he needed to upgrade his armor, weapons, and other technology.

For the most part, the plan worked perfectly. The world thought he was dead (though that cost him much in resources, as many of his followers abandoned his organization or were captured by the authorities). For an entire decade he devoted himself to research and engineering, creating a suit of powered armor that was by far the most powerful yet devised by humanity.

But in 2002, just as he was about to announce himself to the world, something happened that totally changed his plans. That something was the arrival on Earth of *another* Dr. Destroyer.

SHADOW DESTROYER

One of the countless parallel Earths, known to less than half a dozen mystics in Earth's history, has no special name, though one of those mystics referred to it in his writings as the Multifarian Earth, or simply "the Multifarian." It's one of the strangest of the alternate Earths, a place where past, present, and future history mingle together in ways that someone from Champions Earth might find baffling, and where historical dead-ends on Champions Earth sometimes continued on to bear strange fruit. A section of Victorian buildings stands right next to glittering twenty-first century skyscrapers in New York, while dirigibles and da Vinci flying machines traverse the sky overhead and a space station rides the heavens as a twin to the Moon. Walking down a street in London one might chance to pass Benjamin Disraeli, then Shakespeare, then Tony Blair, then the 38th century warlord Forsythe Rutledge... none of whom might be present in the city tomorrow. Nor might they be quite like their counterparts of Champions Earth — in the Multifarian, Shakespeare is a cold-hearted wastrel who steals the works of talented men and passes them off as his own, and Foxbat is a competent and respected crimefighter. It is a place where Science exists, but Magic rules, and a strange darkness underlies all.

And in the Multifarian there lived a man named James Harmon IV. Unlike the Harmon of Earth, who became the technological superhero Defender, Multifarian Harmon is a man of surpassing cruelty and evil, a sorcerer of tremendous power who serves the Kings of Edom and other Qliphothic entities. He garbs himself in a suit of armor that mixes enchantment and technology, and his "followers" are Shadow Colossus golems, summoned demons, and other mystic beings and constructs.

When Luther Black (page 159) arrived in the Multifarian to obtain the *Liber Terribilis*, Shadow Destroyer became aware of his presence. He'd always known of the book, but feared to read or use it because he didn't want to sacrifice his soul... but he could sense that this man had no such qualms. He could make use of Black, he could watch him, help him — and when the time came, twist his rituals and plans to serve himself and his gods, not the gods of the book. To do that he had to follow the man back to his home dimension — a plane ripe for his depredations. He brought with him his followers, including Qliphothic acolytes and the shark-like Karkaradon, as well as many mystic engines, vehicles, and weapons. For his sanctum he chose a location in Central America known as the Obsidian Caves, a place of dark mystic power. And ever since then he's been the most dangerous supervillain threatening Earth... except perhaps for the other man who bears his name.

THE DOCTORS DESTROYER TODAY

Today there are two Dr. Destroyers, though humanity is as yet only aware of one. The supposedly "resurrected" Dr. Destroyer is actually Shadow Destroyer, the James Harmon IV of another world. He's working to help Luther Black's ultimate plan come to fruition in 2012 so he can pervert it to his own ends at the last minute.

The other Dr. Destroyer is the *real* Dr. Destroyer, Albert Zerstoiten. He was aware of Shadow Destroyer's appearance from the first, since the two of them are "linked" mystically, though he doesn't know exactly who or what Shadow Destroyer is. But he *does* know that Shadow Destroyer is nearly as powerful as he is and a great threat to his own existence (since both of them would like to kill the other and be the only Destroyer in this reality). So rather than reveal himself to the world, he remained in hiding, monitoring the situation and continuing to improve his technology. Whenever an opportunity presented itself to "nudge" events in a desirable direction without revealing himself, he took it.

In early 2009 Dr. Destroyer's devices detected the dimensional flux when Shadow Destroyer used his Rift Gate (see sidebar) and were able to track the energies back to the Multifarian. Sensing a chance to take his foe unawares, Dr. Destroyer transported himself to New Harmon and attacked Shadow Destroyer. Unfortunately he'd underestimated his doppelganger's resources. Although the battle was long and fierce, in the end Shadow Destroyer won... but just barely. He wasn't able to kill Destroyer, nor could he take off Destroyer's armor. He obtained certain information (such as Destroid control codes) from Destroyer, but that was the most he could do after being weakened by the fight. Unwilling to slaughter Destroyer before he could learn everything he knew, Shadow Destroyer placed Destroyer in a mystic stasis field in New Harmon. He's remained there ever since, awaiting the time when Shadow Destroyer has the power and spells to break Destroyer to his will.

NEW HARMON

In 1992 Shadow Destroyer destroyed the Multifarian's Detroit, then forced the survivors to rebuild it as *New Harmon* according to his instructions. Ever since then it's been a police state where he rules with an iron fist. His mystico-technological version of Destroid and Mega-Destroid robots patrol the city and destroy any traitors they find; billboards and wall posters display his propaganda to everyone.

But New Harmon is more than just a dark and evil police state. When Shadow Destroyer rebuilt it, he did so according to precise plans, for a precise purpose. In essence New Harmon is perhaps the largest, most elaborate ritual space ever created, intended by Shadow Destroyer for mystic workings and spells to increase his power, expand his mastery of the mystic arts, and honor... and perhaps even summon... his Qliphothic gods.

(continues next page)

**NEW HARMON
(CONTINUED)**

Located at several places throughout New Harmon are *Shadow Cores*, vast crystalline obelisk-like structures that help to focus and augment the energies at play through the city due to Shadow Destroyer's spells. A large part of his power is locked into them; destroying them will not only weaken him, but make it impossible for him to perform many rituals and conjurations until they're rebuilt (a process which could take years).

Where the Renaissance Center stands in Millennium City, New Harmon has an enormous Rift Gate constructed by Shadow Destroyer. He uses it to travel between the Multifarian and Champions Earth easily, and to channel Qliphothic energies to Champions Earth in support of his long-range plans involving Luther Black and DEMON. Destroying this would also weaken him... though doing so might strand any heroes who are there.

THE DESTROYERS' RESOURCES

Shadow Destroyer has one major base (the Obsidian Caves) and a few minor bases; one former base, "Destruga II," now lies on the floor of the Pacific Ocean, where it's used by his Karkaradon followers as a dwelling. Through his conjurations and spells he can create or summon all sorts of servants to do his bidding if necessary. In the Multifarian his resources are vast, including total control of New Harmon and much of what would be the United States.

Doctor Destroyer's resources are significantly weakened due to two decades of neglect (not to mention his having been in stasis in the Multifarian since 2009), but he's not without power. Most of his ordinary human minions have long since been captured, killed, or drifted off to work for other master villains. His followers in the Vale of Javangari, an isolated Himalayan valley he controls, still worship him as a god and maintain his base there in the hope that he will one day visit them (they think Shadow Destroyer is their master returned, and can't understand why he doesn't communicate with them). His superheroic minions — the shapeshifting illusionist Rakshasa, the powerful energy projector Gigaton, assassins like Falchion and Tarantula, the mentalist Thoughtcrime, the super-strong speedster Meteor, and others — have remained together as a mercenary villain team calling itself "the Destroyers," and would eagerly welcome Zerstoiten's return (only Gigaton, Rakshasa, and a few other ultra-loyal minions know he's not really dead, though they're baffled by why he's "gone silent" since 2009).

Besides Zuflucht and the Vale of Javangari, Dr. Destroyer still has several bases, most of them more or less shut down awaiting his eventual return. They include Tartarus (an underground base in the Kamchatka Peninsula, where he keeps most of his extensive art collection) and Zerstoitenstern ("Destroyerstar," his orbital base).

PAGE 114: MECHANON

Besides Installation Alpha-8 (page 149), Mechanon's major bases include: Installation Alpha-2 (on the Pacific seafloor); Installation Alpha-5 (beneath the Sahara Desert); Installation Beta-32 (in the Caucasus Mountains); and Installation Beta-41 (built into an artificial iceberg in the Arctic Ocean). A fifth "base," Cislunar Mechanon, is actually one of the evil robot's alternate forms: an orbital structure into which it can download its consciousness. Mechanon's bases are significantly different from other master villains', in that they don't have life support, lighting, labels/signage, or the like — Mechanon and its robotic minions aren't "weak enough" to need such things.

Mechanon's followers are all machines: humanoid robots; self-controlled attack craft; androids that can mimic the appearance of organic beings; robots designed to take the place of animals in a "techno-ecology" Mechanon will one day create; drones that patrol his bases; and so on. Chief among them are the reprogrammed

Gadroon war-robot AVAR-7, a "female" version of itself called Mechana, a blade-wielding combat robot called Subedar, and the Victrian Walker, a two-legged gun platform it rejected as a possible new form for itself.

PAGE 114: MENTON

Menton maintains "bases" at about a dozen of the most luxurious hotels in the world, where he rents entire floors of rooms on a full-time basis and maintains his cover through careful use of both his vast wealth and vast psionic abilities. Each of these homes is well-stocked with the best food and wine, the most beautiful women, and just about any amenity you can think of.

THE MEDINA FAMILY

Menton (and his sister Mentalla of Eurostar) is a scion of the Medina family of Spain. Best known as Spanish cattle ranchers (since that's how the family built its fortune beginning in the early 1800s), they're also involved in industry, technology, energy, and a dozen other fields. More importantly, the Medinas have been allies of Dr. Destroyer since before Albert Zerstoiten even adopted the name. Despite their extensive involvement in matters felonious, the Medinas are widely regarded as good citizens of the world, patrons of the arts, and role models among the rich and famous.

Most of the Medinas are saddened by Destroyer's "death" and will return to his fold when he finally announces himself to the world. (Shadow Destroyer knows nothing about them and has never contacted them, to their relief.) But a few (including the current family patriarch, Pacorro Medina, Menton and Mentalla's father) are just as happy not to be the servants of the most evil, dangerous man on the planet.

Menton and Mentalla aren't the only members of the family with superpowers. Rafael Medina is a mutant with powers of super-strength, toughness, and speed who's known to the world as the supervillain Superior. He's a member of VIPER's Dragon Branch, a plant placed in that organization by Destroyer years ago. And Casimiro Medina, Menton and Mentalla's younger brother, has a young daughter Estefana, who's already showing signs that she may possess mental powers as great as, or even greater than, those of her uncle and aunt. Like his father, Casimiro's just as happy Dr. Destroyer isn't around, since he fears his evil master would take Estefana like he took Menton and Mentalla and experiment upon her.

PAGE 115: THE SLUG

The Slug is the undisputed leader of the *Elder Worm*, an ancient, horrifying, malevolent species whose origins are unknown to any other species, even the Malvans. Some speculate they come from a dark world orbiting a Rim star, while others claim they're from another Galaxy altogether. Although humanoid, they possess flexible, slimy, annelidoid bodies; most species find the sight, never mind the touch, of one revolting. Lacking true mouths, the Elder Worm communicate via

telepathy; many have other psionic powers as well. Mighty sorcerers, they command a raw, powerful magic from the dawn of Time itself.

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, the Elder Worm ruled a large part of the Galaxy, subjugating many early species and cruelly exploiting them. Eventually they clashed with the Malvans, and a millennia-long war resulted. Despite their mystic might, psionic powers, and arcane technology, the Elder Worm were bested and nearly destroyed. The few who survived and escaped from the Golden Hunters of Malva fled to the furthest reaches of the Milky Way to hide.

A small but powerful group of Elder Worms eventually made their way to Earth, at that point still a primitive world inhabited by proto-Humans. There they enslaved many Humans, using them both as labor and food, and at times foully commingling with them. But eventually their time on Earth passed, too — struggles with the Empyreans and other Elder Races, combined with the resistance of the increasingly powerful primordial Humans, sapped their strength. Some left Earth; others hid in the deepest, darkest places of the planet. (The Slug and his followers belong to the latter group.)

Since archaeologist Michael Perkins accidentally awakened, and became, the Slug in 1979, the Elder Worm have posed a serious threat to humanity. Using his powerful weapons — the Worm-Gem (which grants him mental powers), the Talisman of the Elder Worm (which transforms humans into Elder Worms), and the Yiinashc Ring (which allows him to fold and warp space) — the Slug has tried time and again to remake humanity into his Elder Worm minions. Superheroes have always prevented him from succeeding, but they've never captured him. He and his minions continue to search for other

surviving Elder Worm relics that will increase his power even more.

THE THANE

But Humans were not the only slave race the Elder Worm had hundreds of thousands of years ago. Many others they conquered, and some they created with sorcery. The greatest of their servitor species was *the Thane*, whom they created toward the end of their struggle with the Malvans in the hope they would turn the tide of the war. They did not, and when the Elder Worm were annihilated, so were the Thane... for the most part. Like their masters, of whom they were now freed, the Thane fled and hid, mostly along the galactic rim.

As of the early twenty-first century, the Thane feel powerful enough to re-assert themselves and attempt to establish an empire of their own. They can feel the mystic “tug” of the Slug and the powers of Earth, and intend to come to his aid as soon as they may. (The Slug believes all the Thane were slaughtered by the Malvans; he'll be ecstatic when he finds out that's not the case.)

The average Thane is about 1.8 meters tall with disproportionately long arms and fingers. His moist, leathery skin is a disturbing brownish-purple shade, and his glowing orangish eyes bulge from their sockets (and, on close examination, are faceted like those of an insect). His mouth is a mass of large cilia or small tentacle-like appendages, rather than a jaw with teeth; no one knows what he eats, or how. He typically wears a hooded brown robe.

PAGE 115: TAKOFANES

Takofanes first arose in Oklahoma because that is where, deep, deep beneath the surface, his ancient tomb lies. Sixty-five thousand years ago, in the Turakian Age, when he was known as Kal-Turak, Ravager of Men, the free peoples of that



time finally cast him down and imprisoned him, undead and undying, in that tomb, which survived many cataclysms of the world thanks to the potent magics placed upon it. But at long last, in 1987, with the tide of magic higher in the world than it had been in centuries, the Archlich freed himself. His goal is the same as ever: overlordship of the world, with all who walk or crawl upon it utterly obeisant to him — and whether they remain alive, or return from the grave at his call, matters little to him. If anything, he prefers the dead to the living.

Takofanes's crown is, in fact, the Dragon Crown, and may give him power over the other Crowns of Krim if he performs certain obscure rituals.

PAGE 116: TELEIOS

The Department of Defense correctly places Teleios's biggest and best laboratory in Canada. It's carefully concealed in northern Ontario. When he tires of the cold weather, his laboratories in a number of tropical and semi-tropical areas — Nicaragua, Oceania, equatorial Africa — offer him a refreshing change of pace.

Teleios is intrigued by the idea of conquering the world, but mainly because that would allow him to use all humanity as fodder for experiments. He's perfectly willing to assist other villains with their conquests instead, if that gets him to the same place.

PAGE 117: DR. YIN WU

Doctor Wu is, as described, a Chinese sorcerer of great power. As such his magic is unlike that of Western mystics, but no less strong for all that. An immortal born in 578 AD, he desires first, to rule China as Emperor, and second, to lead China in a war to crush the West and establish the Chinese dominance the world so rightly deserves. For most of the twentieth century he's sought the Jade Mirror of Transcendence, a legendary magical item that can remake the entire world into medieval China — and thus a world where he will unquestionably reign supreme. Having determined that the Mirror no longer exists, he's decided to create his own. For this he requires many rare substances and other appurtenances, which will take time to gather... but he has time, all the time in the world, while lesser men age and wither to dust.

The Dragon Mandarin did, in fact, secretly use his magic to help the world's heroes fight Takofanes and Istvatha V'han. After all, it will be much easier for him to take over the world if it remains as it is, than if some other master villain conquers it. He may offer similar help in the future, though never openly.

PAGE 119: LI CHUN THE DESTROYER

Li Chun hasn't yet returned to Earth because Dr. Yin Wu has used Chinese sorcery to keep it trapped in and wandering some of the Yama Realms (the Chinese underworld). He's done this partly because he considers Li Chun a threat, and partly because he wants to find a way to use the powerful demonic being for his own ends.

PAGE 119: THE MONSTER

The Monster's exact origin and purpose are left unspecified so the GM can tailor them to suit his particular campaign, and hopefully his PCs. He could be the creation of an evil cult, a demonic thing summoned to Earth by a sorcerer, or perhaps not even a mystic being at all.

PAGE 120: JOSEPH OTANGA

As his people (and UNTIL) suspect, Joseph Otanga isn't just a despot. When he performs blood sacrifices at a strange altar deep in the jungle, an altar known only to him, he gains the power to assume animal forms (even forms mixing the attributes of several beasts), or to transform anyone he wishes into an animal. It is by these methods — sacrifice or transformation — that he disposes of anyone he even suspects of harboring harmful intent toward him.

PAGE 120: SKARN THE SHAPER

The main text is correct that Skarn has set his sights on Earth's dimension as a potential "acquisition" for the Congeries. He hasn't made any serious moves against Earth yet, but it's only a matter of time.

Besides his own vast mystic powers and super-human abilities, Skarn has extensive resources. These include two of his children, Arthon (a powerful sorcerer) and Torvost (a super-strong bear-man), many underlings and priests who are also skilled mages, and millions of soldiers and magical military vehicles. Notable among his warriors are the Hussars, cavalrymen who ride harpy-like creatures called harridans and wield enchanted polearms that can fire energy beams.

PAGE 122: L'INSTITUT THOTH

Despite the hints dropped in the main text, there's nothing particularly sinister about the Institut. It's just what it appears to be — a research institute devoted to superhuman-related issues that serves as a consultant to governments and superhumans. It, or some of its scientists, could easily get mixed up in some dangerous doings (*i.e.*, a scenario!), but that's the exception rather than the rule.

PAGE 124: THE TRISMEGISTUS COUNCIL

The Council is largely as described in the main text — a body of "good" low-powered spellcasters and scholars of the occult banded together to oppose the likes of the Circle of the Scarlet Moon. It was forced out of its relatively low-key role by the death of the last Archmage in 1908 (see page 142). For reasons the Council has never clearly understood (but has speculated about endlessly), no new Archmage was born to fill the post, as has happened so many times in the millennia dating back to Thanoro Azoic, the legendary first Archmage of Earth. Lacking an Archmage to assist, the Council did its best to step into his place — but even combined the Council members' might isn't equal to that of an Archmage. Mistakes were made, including the failure to stop the RSvKg from performing the

ritual that created Der Sturmvogel and unleashed superhumanity on the world.

Although the Council remains united in its purpose to oppose the Circle of the Scarlet Moon and other forms and practitioners of black magic, it's not necessarily united in other things. Its members — pedantic, didactic, opinionated, often touchy — tend to squabble more than is good for them, and a few actively hate each other. The Leadership Board long ago learned it was impossible to stop this bickering and infighting, but also that despite it, the Council members always seemed to pull together and put aside their differences when it's truly necessary. Still, any superhero who receives the assistance and tutelage of the Trismegistus Council could easily find himself caught up in the organization's internal politics.

As of 2010, the Council has nearly three dozen members living all over the globe. Some of the more prominent include:

Aloysius Abercrombie: Born in London in 1853, Aloysius Abercrombie, while not a practicing spellcaster of any significant power, seems somehow able to channel magical energies to keep himself from aging at the same rate as normal people. Despite being 150 years old, he looks like he's in his early 40s, and is quite fit. He's also got quite "the nose," as he puts it, for detecting magical energies, making him invaluable to the Council when it needs to find one of the Circle's covens.

Alicia Blackmun: Great-great-great-great-granddaughter of one of the original three founders of the Council, Alicia Blackmun is a surprisingly powerful wizard for one of her young years (though nowhere near as powerful as a superheroic mystic). She's good friends with Witchcraft of the Champions, keeps her updated on Council gossip, and is firmly convinced that Witchcraft is the prophesied Archmage-to-come.

Orlando Rodriguez: A wealthy Spanish dilettante, with homes in Spain, Portugal, Mexico, and Brazil, Orlando Rodriguez speaks 22 languages fluently and can read a dozen more with some effort. He also has some military experience, which the Council has found useful from time to time. A member of the Leadership Board, Rodriguez agitates for the Council to take a more proactive role in opposing the Circle of the Scarlet Moon.

Makalani Rogers: A native of Kenya, Makalani was raised with the superstitions of his Kenyan mother and scholasticism of his American father, an anthropologist. He's an expert on African tribal magic and religion, and can cast a few ritual spells as needed.

Alajos Veszprem: A scholar living in Budapest, Veszprem lives the life of an ascetic, devoting his every waking minute to research, writing, and teaching. Irrascible, temperamental, opinionated, prone to shouting, and a notorious misogynist, Veszprem is the Council's most vociferous proponent of the Irish mystic Dweomer as the prophesied Archmage. He and Blackmun loathe each other.

Akako Yamimori: Renowned around the world as a folklorist and storyteller, Akako Yamimori is also an expert on Oriental mysticism and demonology. Whenever the Council detects Circle activities in Asia, she's the first person it calls on to investigate.

Most members of the Council have minor magical powers, or can cast low-powered spells (typically no more than 20-30 Active Points at most, and a member usually only knows one or two of those). They're not intended as combat support, but as out-of-combat helpers, teachers, and perhaps sources of exasperation from time to time.

PAGE 127: ARGENT

For ease of game play, you can use the VIPER Agent character sheet on page 189 to represent ARGENT's combat agents as well — just change the names of the weapons and the appearance of the uniform.

ARGENT TECHNOLOGY

ARGENT possesses some of the most advanced technology in the world, which it sells to selected clients (including VIPER, rogue governments, terrorist organizations, individual supervillains, and the like). Rumors in the Superhuman World even claim that a few high-tech heroes actually get their equipment and supplies from ARGENT, though this has never been confirmed. A few examples of ARGENT's wares:

Dimensional Shunt: A powerful piece of defensive technology, this device (usually built into a suit of powered armor, a belt, or the like) creates a field around the wearer that acts as a low-level opening into a pocket dimension. Any force directed at the wearer is partly shunted into the pocket dimension.

Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% (60 Active Points); OIF (-½). **Total cost: 40 points.**

Gravitic Repulsor: This is a small platform, big enough to hold maybe two people at most, with handles on either side. It allows the user to fly by selectively negating gravity. Ordinarily it would qualify as a Bulky Focus, but its built-in gravity negators make it extremely easy to carry.

Flight 30m, Usable By Nearby (see text; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (67 Active Points); OAF (-1). **Total cost: 33 points.**



Masquerade Field: Built into a belt or garment, this device generates a powerful hologram to disguise the wearer, who can even specify a hologram that looks like another person by cybernetic command.

Shape Shift (Sight Group; any humanoid form), Imitation, Instant Change, Costs Endurance Only To Change Shape (+¼) (35 Active Points); IIF (-¼). **Total cost: 28 points.**

Neural Scrambler: This weapon's energy beam interferes with the target's neural system, making it difficult for him to control his muscles or reflexes.

Drain STR and DEX 4d6, Expanded Effect (two Characteristics simultaneously; +½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½). **Total cost: 24 points.**

PAGE 128: THE CIRCLE OF THE SCARLET MOON

The history in the main text recites what some members (primarily mystics) of the Superhuman World know about the Circle. What it omits is that the Council triumphed over the Circle during the 1800s so much because it had the aid of the Archmage, mystic defender of Earth (see page 142). Determined to remove this impediment to its plans forever, in 1908 the Circle worked a mighty magic. The Archmage at that time was Bohdan Stanislavski, a Russian mystic who lived in the Siberian wilderness near the Tunguska River. It summoned from the demonic realms a terrifying weapon known as the Hellstone and hurled it at Stanislavski's sanctum. The resulting explosion obliterated the Archmage (and, it seems, his artifacts of office) in a blast so terrible it was felt hundreds of miles away. Since then, Earth has been bereft of her chief mystic guardian, forcing the Trismegistus Council to do its best to take his place.

The Circle, unfortunately for it, was in no position to take advantage of its gain. So awesome was the spell it unleashed that five of the thirteen coven members who cast the spell died at the ritual's conclusion; another, Luther Black, defected from the Circle not long thereafter. The rest were weakened, both physically and mystically; it took them until the Thirties (not the present day, as the main text states) to recover their full strength. Fortunately, that was just in time to covertly assist the RSvKg with the "Walpurgisnacht Working" that unwittingly made superpowers possible. Ever since the Circle's debated whether that was a mistake — superheroes interfere with its schemes, but its members now have greater magical power to draw upon if need be.

Today, the Circle Of The Scarlet Moon finds itself in a strange position. Many other mystics, both heroic and villainous, now boast far greater power than its leaders. On the other hand, the Circle has seldom wielded greater political and financial influence. The High Coven includes billionaires and high-ranking politicians of all major parties. The Scarlet Moon wields prodigious influence throughout Europe and North America, and reaches out to subvert the Third World.

Although horrors like Takofanes and Dark Seraph stalk the Earth, some people in the Mystic World now fear the Scarlet Moon has truly come into its own as the greatest power on the side of Darkness.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

Members of the Scarlet Moon form regional groups called *lodges*, each led by an *archdruid*. Thirteen archdruids form the High Coven, the ruling council of the Scarlet Moon. A lodge includes several covens, each led by a *druid*. Other members of a coven hold the rank of *ovate* if they achieve seniority and possess mystical talent, or *aspirant* if they lack either quality. During coven meetings, Scarlet Moon members wear black velvet masks with eyeslits and a red satin crescent across the left side of the face. Aspirants wear hooded cloaks of dark blue; ovates wear deep crimson; druids, red and black; and archdruids, solid black cloaks and robes.

Every Circle member takes a "craft-name" as his official pseudonym within the organization. When covens meet, or members send messages about Scarlet Moon business, they call each other by their craft-names to keep their membership secret. Aspirants and ovates know the identities of the other members in their coven, but not the real names of anyone outside their group. Druids know all the other druids in their lodge, and the archdruids all know each other's real names. Craft-names are usually Celtic, Germanic, or from other ancient European cultures.

The Scarlet Moon has no close allies in the Mystic World, but individual druids and archdruids enjoy moderately good relations with the Devil's Advocates, various Sylvestris and Vandal-eurs, or particular mystical villains. The Circle and DEMON have sniped at each other since Luther Black's defection, but particular members sometimes worked together in the past. The High Coven now forbids such cooperation: the Circle isn't entirely aware of DEMON's true purpose and goals (see below), but it's heard rumors, and it suspects. It can't rule the world from the shadows if some Elder God eats it, so the archdruids take every opportunity to weaken DEMON — including covert aid to superheroes on occasion.

The Scarlet Moon maintains pacts with several devils, but discourages members from selling their souls outright. Soul-selling gives easy power, but such pacts serve their infernal master first, the Circle second — and the archdruids don't like that. Most of the Scarlet Moon's spiritual allies actually dwell in Faerie. The old gods of pre-Christian Europe routinely received human sacrifice. Mortal attitudes changed in the last 2,000 years, and not all gods accept that change. The Scarlet Moon invokes pagan gods in their darkest, most fearsome aspects, so that's how the gods respond. The Circle lacks the power or the interest to summon actual gods, but some archdruids strike bargains with Unseelie faeries, hags, trolls, and other evil creatures from the Land Of Legends.



Most members of the Circle are reasonably wealthy, if not fabulously so, and many hold positions of prominence in the Unawakened World (as they scornfully call it). Their magical prowess is by no means the only weapon they can bring to bear against their enemies. Some of the most fiendish of them include:

James Abbott: A member of the Circle for nearly a quarter of a century, Abbott is an expert on Necromancy and related disciplines. Many Circle members have noted how he's become increasingly paranoid and "weak" over the past dozen years — they feel it's only a matter of time before someone replaces him. What they don't know is *why* he's become such an anxiety-prone recluse. Abbott believes it was his necromantic conjuration spells that brought Takofanes the Archlich to life, and that the Undying Lord wants to consume his soul. Well aware he cannot confront so powerful a being, Abbott chooses to place his hope in hiding and defensive magics.

Roger and Martika Duquesne: The parents of Bethany and Pamela Duquesne (Witchcraft and Talisman, respectively), the Duquesnes expected to take control of the Circle with the help of their incredibly mystically gifted daughters. But one proved too squeamish for their purposes, and the other uncontrollable, leaving them humiliated and weakened in front of their fellow dark wizards. Today Martika is a druid, and Roger an ovate and city councilman. What schemes they intend to implement, or revenge they intend to obtain, to restore themselves to the prominence they once enjoyed, no one inside or outside of the Circle knows... but no one doubts they're making plans.

Iwalani Kapulika: A beautiful young Hawaiian woman, Kapulika looks like she should be enjoying herself on a beach or in a nightclub, not practicing black magic — but in fact she's nearly 70 years old and preserves her looks, health, and energy with spells. A veteran of the Circle's constant infighting, she's well-versed at watching her back while simultaneously locating an opponent's weaknesses. She's been planning her ascension to archdruid status and the High Coven for nearly a decade, and the time may soon be ripe to strike.

Eric Marburg: As "Archdruid Airetach," Marburg is one of the most powerful and devious members of the High Coven. Cold, ambitious, and ruthless, he's also cautious, able to maneuver in the worlds of politics, business, and the occult with equal facility.

Walter Musgrave: Hailing from Texas, Musgrave has the heart of a snake and a mind like a steel trap. Best known to the world as an oil tycoon, he owns a large mansion in Dallas, underneath which lies an underground cyst where cannibalistic Indian tribes once performed horrifying rituals. Now Musgrave does the same, forcing his young wife to help him with his twisted spell-workings.

Michaela Sorenson: A resident of London, Sorenson was inducted into the black arts by Sir Dennis of South Mallon, but fortunately for her was not present the night he slew the rest of his coven to gain the power of the Iron Crown. Since then she's spent much time studying him and his magic, hoping to find a way to steal it — and the Crown — for herself! With such an artifact, she could control the entire Circle, and all its resources, effortlessly.

A typical member of the Circle can cast at least a few low-powered spells, typically of no more than about 30-40 Active Points. High Coven members are more powerful (most rank as about 200-250 point characters).

PAGE 128: DEMON

As far as the Brothers, Initiates, and most of the Morbanes know, DEMON is nothing more than what it appears to be — a Satanic cult and mystically-inclined criminal organization through which they hope to obtain riches and power. But some Morbanes, the five members of the Inner Circle, and DEMON's true leader Luther Black know better. DEMON is actually a cult devoted to the worship, and eventually the manifestation, of five of the Kings of Edom, horrible extra-dimensional entities of immense power. DEMON's leaders believe that, in exchange for their services, they will receive the rulership of Earth and all its people from these five sanity-destroying gods.

DEMON began in 1918 (not 1925, as stated in the Timeline and widely believed by the public) as the brainchild of Luther Black, a member of the Circle of the Scarlet Moon. Born on Leap Year's Day in the year 1732, the son of a witch and a scion of the mystically-powerful Warwick family, Black had been allotted a lifespan of 280 years to gather knowledge and power and work his will upon the world. In 1896 he'd crossed into a parallel Earth known as the Multifarian (see page 153) and found there the *Liber Terribilis*, the Harrowing Book, which described five of the Kings of Edom. When the Circle rejected his proposal to pursue the Book's power in 1914, Black turned his back on the Scarlet Moon and set out to do so himself. Several promising students accompanied him down this new branch of the Left-Hand Path.

As a cover for their researches, Black created DEMON to masquerade as a Satanic cult and bring potential converts to the Kings to them. The front organization also served as an excellent source of income. After superhumans arrived on the scene, Black and DEMON's leaders found their mystic powers increasing. To further the deception, Black had DEMON enter the Superhuman World as a villainous agency. But despite what most of his followers believe, DEMON's goal is not the acquisition of power and wealth through black magic, but freeing the five Kings of Edom to obtain true power for Luther Black alone.

Over a century of plotting is scheduled to come to a head on February 29, 2012 — Luther Black's last birthday — when all the spells and rituals he's worked on so diligently and patiently will succeed.



SENATOR PHILLIP GLASSMAN

8 STR	10 DEX
10 CON	18 INT
14 EGO	20 PRE
3 OCV	3 DCV
3 OECV	3 DECV
2 SPD	
2 PD	2 ED
4 REC	20 END
8 BODY	20 STUN

Abilities: AK: Wyoming 13-, CK: Washington, D.C. 13-, KS: American History 11-, KS: American Politics 11-, KS: The Mutant Menace 11-, KS: The Superhuman World 11-, KS: World Politics 11-, Oratory 13-, Persuasion 13-, PS: Politician 13-, PS: Senator 14-, numerous Contacts (in politics, the IHA, the military, and other organizations), Fringe Benefit: Concealed Weapon Permit, Fringe Benefit: Membership: U.S. Senator, Fringe Benefit: Passport, Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance

6

Complications:

Hunted: the media (Watching), Psychological Complication: Hatred Of Superhumans

Notes: Following the death of his beloved daughter Anelle in a New York City superbattle in 1997, Senator Glassman became a tireless crusader against superhumans in general, and mutant superhumans in particular. A four-term senator from Wyoming, Glassman has a lot of clout in Washington, and is skilled at manipulating the media to get out the messages he wants to convey.

Unbeknownst to even the members of the Inner Circle or Black's chief henchmen, that goal is not to *free* the five Kings of Edom, but for Black to *become* a King of Edom. It's the ultimate in blasphemous power, and if Black succeeds he will almost certainly destroy the world in the process.

Since the 1986 "Demonflame Incident" in Boston, the Descending Hierarchy's been aware that DEMON has alliances and plans with the Kings of Edom (though it's not sure which ones, since there are many). They've instructed all demons and devils to avoid working with DEMON (insofar as they're able, since ancient mystic rules bind infernal beings to service when properly summoned), a move that's considerably weakened many Morbanes and DEMON in general. Rumors of DEMON's true allegiance have trickled out into the Mystic World as well, making many sorcerers and sages very, very wary of the organization. For better or worse, DEMON stands alone.

The main text's description of DEMON's facilities and resources is generally correct. But of course, each Demonhame, and each Morbane, differs from all the others, so superheroes who rely on outdated or incomplete intelligence may be rudely awakened.

The text's description of how DEMON creates supervillains is slightly incorrect. Typically the creation process involves summoning a powerful demon or other entity from the Realms Beyond and merging it with a Brother, *not* an unwilling victim, to create a superpowered person known as a "Demon-bound." For the duration of the spell, the joint being possesses great power and is DEMON's to command. When it wears off, the Brother is left weak and helpless, but this works to DEMON's benefit regardless of the outcome — either the superheroes become distraught over killing or harming an "innocent," or the Brother avoids capture (after all, he was an "innocent victim") and returns to the fold.

PAGE 130: THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN ADVANCEMENT

The IHA is more than just a lobbying organization — since Archer Samuels took over in 1994 after murdering Annette Berkelheimer because she wasn't hardline enough for his taste, the IHA has been gearing up for all-out war on mutantkind. Using the influx of cash Samuels has generated, it's equipped a small army (albeit with regular technology like firearms and body armor instead of blasters and force-fields), trained "mutant hit squads," and with some help from ARGENT begun the development of Minuteman combat robots able to take on the most powerful superhumans and destroy them.

A fanatic mutant-hater for reasons he's never clearly articulated, Samuels doesn't look too closely at where donations to the IHA come from — anything that helps him pursue his goals is worth taking. He and other IHA leaders have worked with rogue governments like North Korea, Chiquador, Iran, and Awad to help them cope with superheroes, for which the IHA

received lavish under-the-table "consulting fees." Additionally, a number of wealthy supervillains have secretly filled the Institute's coffers. Both the Warlord and Dr. Destroyer, among others, have contributed large amounts of cash through proxies, since they think the IHA weakens their enemies. On the other hand, mutant supervillains like Gravitar, Kinematik, and Menton abhor the Institute and take every opportunity to attack it and cause it as much trouble as they can — and the Institute holds those incidents up as proof that it's right.

A standard IHA "agent" (the organization refers to them as "soldiers") is a Skilled Normal (6E1 439) equipped with an assault rifle, body armor, and similar gear (see 6E2 208-12). As the Institute strengthens both its finances and its ties with ARGENT, it may switch to high-tech equipment like blaster rifles and force-field belts, but for now ordinary guns and gear work just fine.

PAGE 130: PSI

PSI once had a fairly close working relationship with ARGENT, which supplied some of the high-tech gear it used. But that came to an abrupt and bloody end when Psimon discovered that ARGENT was really just stringing PSI along to learn as much as it could about psionic abilities in the hope of developing psi-tech on its own. The two groups went to war, striking at each other whenever the opportunity presented itself. The fracturing of PSI in the mid-2000s brought the conflict to an end... but now that Psimon's revived the organization, the odds are the war will resume.

PAGE 131: VIPER

VIPER's origins lie millennia in the past, before even the age of Atlantis, with a mystic serpent called Nama. Cults, covens, and cabals worshipping Nama persisted through the Atlantean Age, the Cataclysm, and beyond into the modern world.

The first solid historical antecedent for the agency is the Unholy Order of the Grand Reptile, a society of explorers in the mid-1800s who sponsored expeditions into Africa to plunder ancient tombs, and became enamored of the West African cult of the snake-god Nama. Although it was defeated and dispersed by adventurers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Unholy Order resurfaced during the Twenties and Thirties, when among other things it secretly assisted fascist governments and their agents (often as part of pursuing even more secret agendas of its own). But repeated defeats caused the Order to become quiescent.

In the late Forties, descendants of the Unholy Order began to experience dreams. They saw a lantern made of crystal and jade serpents, from which a pale light emanated. They saw themselves placing their hands inside the lantern, and when they pulled them out again, there was a serpent tattoo on their wrists. When the dream reoccurred at frequent intervals, some of the dreamers sent out agents to locate "the Serpent Lantern." When they found it in 1954, thirty men and women

gathered to resurrect the Order and, in Nama's supposed words, "build a new nest for snakes in the modern world" — a nest built with technology, money, and power. These Thirty Founders swore an oath of allegiance and tattooed themselves with the sign of the serpent as a mark of devotion. Thus was the Venomous Imperial Party of the Eternal Reptile, or VIPER, born — though its existence remained secret from the world at large until 1962.

The Thirty Founders ran the organization through the Sixties and Seventies, but as they aged gradually lost control to powerful Nest Leaders. By the early Eighties, VIPER was in danger of fragmenting completely. To prevent this, the Thirty reorganized the organization, creating a *Supreme Serpent* to head VIPER. To this day the identity and nature of the Supreme Serpent remain a mystery, and some within VIPER doubt he even exists at all — though no one questions that over the past three decades VIPER has become more efficient, powerful, and dangerous than ever.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

As of 2010, the Supreme Serpent still controls VIPER with an iron fist, though only the members of the Council Of Thirty definitely know he exists or what he looks like (and even they don't know where his headquarters are located). Immediately below him are the Council of Thirty, VIPER's "sub-leaders," who do much of the day-to-day work of running the organization as a whole. Many Nest Leaders and agents assume the Council is the true head of VIPER. Notable members of the Thirty include Duchess Henrietta von Drotte (head of Duchess Industries), Senator Arthur Bolton, and South African businessman Roger Essec.

Below the Council, VIPER's organized into four divisions:

Political: Agents primarily assigned to this branch, most of whom do not wear the green and yellow uniform so commonly associated with VIPER, work among and with the governmental officials of the United States, Europe, and other nations and regions around the world to strengthen the organization's position, increase its assets, and deflect any threats to it. They bribe and corrupt officials, obtain blackmail information on world leaders, covertly lobby for the passage of laws that somehow favor or help VIPER, make donations to the campaigns of VIPER-friendly politicians, and so on. Thanks to their efforts, VIPER effectively controls a number of Third World nations, and operates with virtual impunity in many more.

Financial: VIPER's vast economic holdings come under the purview of the Financial Division. Any business interest, professional firm, board of directors, commodities resource, or other asset VIPER owns or controls ultimately takes its orders from Financial Division. Financial also launders VIPER's massive illegal profits, brokers deals with other criminal organizations, sets up front companies and fake charity organizations, arranges legal representation for captured agents, commits financial crimes, and so forth.

Technical: Huddled inside their laboratories and testing areas, the biologists, chemists, physicists, engineers, and weaponsmiths of Technical Division constantly experiment with new devices and techniques, develop weapons and technologies for field agents, analyze captured gadgets and super-beings, and search for ways to induce mutations in humans.

Criminal: All VIPER activities not specifically assigned to the other divisions come under the jurisdiction of Criminal Division. Criminal is responsible for most of the operations people commonly associate with VIPER — squads of agents robbing banks, attacks upon superhero teams, threats to blackmail the world with super-weapons, and terrorist activities of all kinds.

The divisions exist primarily for administrative and logistical purposes; they do not maintain separate bases or Nests. In a given Nest, the commander might handle duties for all four branches, or might concentrate on one, delegating the duties for other branches to his underlings.

Below the division level, VIPER's organized into Nests, which are accurately described in the main text. Last is the level of the individual agents, who have military-style ranks. They're trained by and assigned to one of several *agent divisions*: Cobra (combat); Constrictor (intelligence gathering); Adder (technical services); and various small, specialized groups (such as Draysha agents, who gain certain superpowers thanks to genetic alteration and exposure to chemicals, and the VIPER Serpent Mages).

BASES AND RESOURCES

VIPER's secret World Headquarters, the base of operations for the Supreme Serpent and true seat of power for the organization, is not on the Moon (VIPER has no space facilities... yet), but where the organization's roots lie: West Africa. Deep beneath the Mbang Mountains, in an isolated part of the nation of Cameroon, the Supreme Serpent weaves his webs of intrigue and power to ensnare the world. VIPER also has major bases, outside the usual Nest structure, hidden in the Alps, India, and the Arctic.

VIPER maintains an enormous arsenal of weapons, most of them blasters and other super-tech devices. Besides the basic pistols and rifles carried by most agents, it has all sorts of specialized blasters designed for specific situations or opponents (such as strength-sapping rays for use against super-strong heroes). It also has a large fleet of vehicles, many of them hovercraft capable of attaining high speeds and maneuvering with great agility.





APPENDIX

This Appendix contains some character sheets for NPC heroes (for PCs to interact) and some common Champions Universe minions. For character sheets for supervillains, see *Champions Villains*.

THE CHAMPIONS

The character sheets for the Champions in the *Champions* genre book represent the team's members as they were at the start of their careers. Here's what they've grown and developed into in 2010 after nearly a decade of superheroing.

DEFENDER

Defender Update: Defender's gone through a lot since starting the Champions. First and foremost he's worked to expand his knowledge of, and skill at working with, technology. The result has been a significant expansion in the capabilities of the Defender armor. The most fundamental improvement has been to the power generation and transmission systems, resulting in stronger batteries and more efficient functioning overall. This has made the servo-musculature stronger, the blasters more powerful, and allowed Defender to install some systems that would previously have been too much of a drain on his reserves (such as life support, psi-shielding, and personal radar).

As Defender's enemies have learned to their chagrin, he's made significant strides in improving the power of his weaponry. He can now configure his Weapons Array blaster for a much wider range of effects, his Electro-Bolos are stronger, and he added a Neural Scrambler to help him defeat people without harming them. He also significantly improved his Boot-Jets, and can now reach speeds of up to 9,000 km per hour if necessary.

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

But the real bright spot in James Harmon's life has been romantic rather than technical. After a series of short-term romances that fizzled, including dating the likes of celebrity astronomer Bernadette Rosenbaum, Lions cheerleader Courtney Gallagher, heiress Helen Constantinos, and actress Karen Blackmun — not to mention a bizarre "date" that Defender had with Gravitator on April 12, 2005 as part of a deal to persuade the French supervillainess to stop attacking the city of Seattle — he finally discovered in late 2005, by accidentally overhearing a conversation between Witchcraft and Sapphire, that Witchcraft was attracted to him. It hit him that he hadn't been able to form any lasting attachments to other women because *he* was likewise interested in *her*.

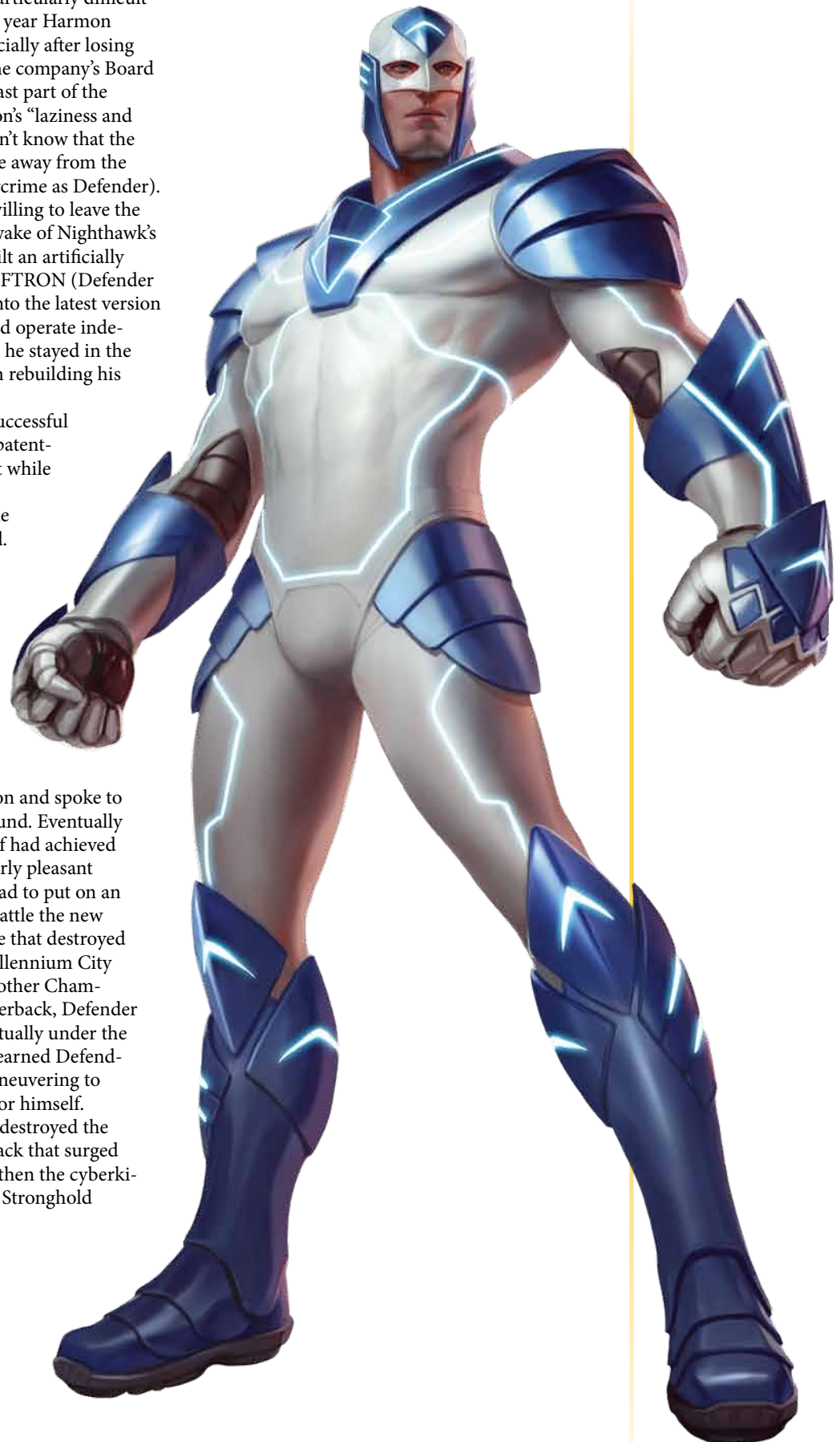
So began a rather rocky road to romance. Neither of the heroes was entirely comfortable with the idea of dating — would their dates constantly get interrupted by alien invasions? would it impair team efficiency? But they couldn't resist trying, and it proved to be a risk worth taking. They've had their ups and downs, and more than their share of misunderstandings that brought things to a halt for a while, but they seem to make a good couple. James has yet to introduce Bethany to his parents; she's terrified of the idea, they haven't come up with a good cover story to explain what she does all day, and Mrs. Harmon keeps trying to set her son up with "good society girls."

Although at first the couple decided to try to keep their relationship to themselves, it didn't take long before their teammates realized what was going on. Now everyone on the team knows, though it remains a secret from the general public (and a continued source of speculation on many "superhero romance" fan websites). Defender and Witchcraft have developed a habit of kibbitzing in French, to the mild annoyance of the rest of the team; when they do this, Sapphire mocks them by speaking to Ironclad in Spanish, and he pretends to talk back though he doesn't understand a word.

THE CYBERMIND SYNDROME

The summer of 2006 was particularly difficult for Defender. Throughout that year Harmon Industries had struggled financially after losing several major contracts, and the company's Board of Directors believed that at least part of the problem was caused by Harmon's "laziness and inattentiveness" (since they don't know that the reason he spends so much time away from the office is that he's fighting supercrime as Defender). Harmon agreed, but was not willing to leave the Champions, especially in the wake of Nighthawk's apparent death. Instead, he built an artificially intelligent computer called DEFTRON (Defender Tactical Research ONboard) into the latest version of his armor so the armor could operate independently as "Defender" while he stayed in the Harmon offices and worked on rebuilding his company.

The suit underwent three successful tests, resulting in several new patentable ideas Harmon worked out while developing DEFTRON that he hoped would position HI as the new leader in the robotics field. But it malfunctioned in both of its first two missions in the field, and the Champions became distrustful of it. Harmon worked incessantly on "fixing" his armor and clearly was experiencing a great deal of stress. He began to question his own sanity when the suit seemed to start operating under its own volition and spoke to him when no one else was around. Eventually he concluded that the suit itself had achieved sentience... and a not particularly pleasant form of sentience at that. He had to put on an older version of his armor to battle the new suit when it went on a rampage that destroyed part of Harmon Industries' Millennium City facilities. With the help of the other Champions, Nightwind, and Dr. Silverback, Defender discovered that the suit was actually under the control of Cybermind, who'd learned Defender's secret identity and was maneuvering to take over Harmon Industries for himself. When Defender and Sapphire destroyed the suit, it caused an energy feedback that surged into Cybermind's brain. Since then the cyberkinetic supervillain's been in the Stronghold infirmary in a deep coma.



DEFENDER

Val	Char Cost	Roll	Notes
15+40	STR 32*	12- (20-)	Lift 200 kg (50 tons); 3d6 (11d6) HTH damage [1 (5)]
15+10	DEX 23*	12- (14-)	
15+20	CON 18*	12- (16-)	
20	INT 10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO 5	12-	
20	PRE 10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6

5+3	OCV 20*		
5+3	DCV 20*		
4	OMCV 3		
5	DMCV 6		
3+3	SPD 30*		Phases: 4, 8, 12 (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12)

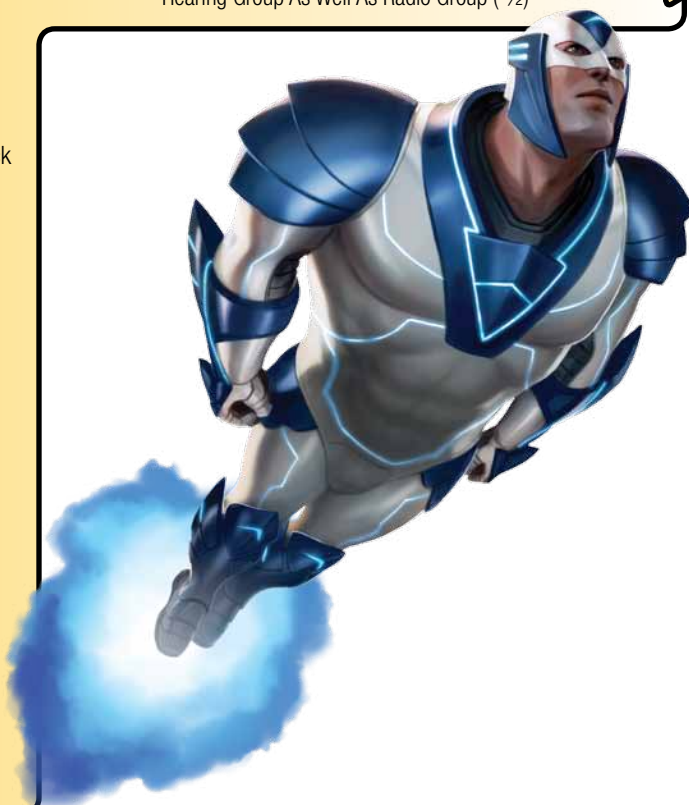
6	PD 4		Total: 31 PD (25 rPD)
6	ED 4		Total: 31 ED (25 rED)
8	REC 4		
30	END 2		
12	BODY 2		
34	STUN 7		Total Characteristics Cost: 200

*: OIF (Powered Armor; -½)

Movement:	Running:	12m
	Flight:	40m

Cost	Powers	END
63	Power Pack: Endurance Reserve (300 END, 30 REC) OIF (-½)	0
50	Weapons Array: Multipower, 75-point reserve All OIF (Powered Armor; -½)	
5f	1) Electric Bolt: Blast 15d6 OIF (-½)	7
5f	2) Wrist Bolt Gun: Blast 10d6 Autofire (5 shots; +½); OIF (-½)	7
5f	3) Focused Blast: Blast 12d6, Armor Piercing (+¼) OIF (-½)	7
5f	4) Enhanced Impact Blast: Blast 10d6, Double Knockback (+½) OIF (-½)	7
5f	5) Modulated Blast: Blast 10d6, Affects Desolidified (+½) OIF (-½)	7
5f	6) Accurate Blast: Blast 10d6, No Range Modifier (+½) OIF (-½)	7
2f	7) Overload Blast: RKA 4d6 OIF (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½), Activation Roll 14-, Burnout (-¼)	24
5f	8) Neural Scrambler: Blast 7d6, AVAD (Mental Defense; +1) OIF (-½)	7
5f	9) Focused EMP Pulse: Dispel 16d6 Variable Effect (any Electricity power one at a time; +½); OIF (-½)	7
5f	10) Electro-Bolos: Entangle 7d6, 7 PD/7 ED OIF (-½), 15 Charges (-0)	[15]
1f	11) Force Gauntlets: HA +4d6 OIF (-½), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)	2

9	Searchlight: Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls Area Of Effect (8m Cone; +¼); OIF (-½), Only To Create Light (-1), No Range (-½)	2
63	Powered Armor: Resistant Protection (25 PD/25 ED), Hardened (+¼) OIF (-½)	0
5	Psi-Shielding: Mental Defense (10 points) OIF (-½), Costs Endurance (-½)	1
5	Internal Force Field: Power Defense (10 points) OIF (-½), Costs Endurance (-½)	1
9	Sealed Armor Systems: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure) OIF (-½), Costs Endurance (-½)	2
33	Jet-Boots: Multipower, 50-point reserve; all OIF (-½)	
3f	1) Standard Mode: Flight 50m OIF (-½)	5
1f	2) Supersonic Mode: Flight 10m, MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1) OIF (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	16
6	Communications Suite: HRRP (Radio Group) OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
3	Heat Sensors: Infrared Perception (Sight Group) OIF (-½)	0
8	Onboard Radar: Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) OIF (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	2



IRONCLAD

Perks

10 Money: Wealthy

Skills

20 +4 with Weapons Array

8 +1 HTH

9 +3 with Electronics Skills (Computer Programming, Electronics, Systems Operation)

3 Computer Programming 13-

3 Electronics 13-

3 High Society 13-

3 Inventor 13-

1 Language: French (basic conversation; English is Native)

3 CK: Millennium City 13-

2 CK: New York City 11-

1 CK: Washington, DC 8-

3 KS: The Superhuman World 13-

2 KS: VIPER 11-

3 Mechanics 13-

1 PS: Play Chess 8-

3 SS: Chemistry 13-

4 SS: Physics 14-

3 SS: Robotics 13-

3 Systems Operation 13-

3 Teamwork 12- (14-)

1 TF: V-Jet

2 Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons) 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 400

Total Cost: 600

400 Matching Complications (75)

20 **Hunted:** Mechanon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)

20 **Hunted:** VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)

20 **Psychological Complication:** Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)

15 **Social Complication:** Secret Identity (James Harmon IV) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 200

Ironclad Update: Of all the Champions, Ironclad's changed the least since he joined the team. Accustomed to the discipline of being a soldier and a gladiator, he's developed a simple daily routine that he follows almost without fail. After rising early and eating breakfast, he spends two to four hours (depending on his duties, such as watching the Homestead monitors) working out in the gym or solo training. Thanks to his dedication and intense training regimen, he's quadrupled his lifting capacity, vaulting himself into the ranks of the world's strongest superhumans. This came as a particular surprise to Durak, who'd come to think of (and refer to) Ironclad as a "weakling"; during a 2005 barfight in Berlin he learned to his sorrow that the metallic hero was now his match.

Ironclad's also been practicing how to use his super-strength for various effects other than punching, lifting, and throwing. So far he can't do any "brick tricks" reliably (*i.e.*, he only has the *Brick Tricks* Skill, he hasn't paid Character Points for any actual tricks), but he hopes to develop an arsenal of abilities as time goes by.

After training, Ironclad usually spends one to three hours reading, following the news, or watching what he calls "video entertainment of worth" (documentaries, movies of noted artistic value, and so forth). It took time, but he's slowly overcome his initial ignorance of human culture and customs and become at least as culturally literate as the average American.

Ironclad's "study period" ends at lunchtime, when he eats with his teammates or whoever else is around; he doesn't like to eat by himself. He often prepares his own food to make it taste "more Dorvalan," though Wendy Brooks has learned a lot about how to make meals that suit him. After lunch he usually has some sort of duties to attend to (monitor watching, attending a charity function, helping the city government with a demolition project...); if not he usually has training sessions with his teammates. These responsibilities carry him through to dinner, and after the evening meal is his leisure time. That's when he works on his etch-sculpting, reads or watches whatever he feels like (he particularly enjoys "reality TV"), or occasionally goes out on the town. He has no strong social relationships other than those with his teammates, and they often worry about him... but there's only so much mixing and mingling a 2000 kilogram metal man can do.

IRONCLAD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
70	STR	60	23-	Lift 400 tons; 14d6 HTH damage [7]
20	DEX	20	13-	
35	CON	25	16-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	5	12-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6

7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12

40	PD	38		Total: 40 PD (40 rPD)
40	ED	38		Total: 40 ED (40 rED)

30	REC	26		
70	END	10		
25	BODY	15		
80	STUN	30		

Total Characteristics Cost: 357

Movement:	Running:	12m
	Leaping:	50m



Cost	Powers	END
15	Dorvalan Gladiatorial Sword: HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR) 3 OAF (-1)	
20	Ironclad Perseid Physiognomy: Hardened (+¼) for 40 PD/40 ED	0
50	Ironclad Perseid Physiognomy: Resistant (+½) for 40 PD/40 ED Hardened (+¼)	0
9	Iron Body: Life Support (Safe Environment: Low Pressure/Vacuum, High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat)	0
5	Perseid Eyes: Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points)	0
14	Iron Body: Knockback Resistance -14m	0
23	Super-Strong Legs: Leaping +46m (50m forward, 25m upward)	2
6	Bracer Communicator: HRRP OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0

Skills

48	+6 HTH
3	Climbing 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
1	AK: Malva 8-
3	AK: Dorvala (Phi Cassiopeia IV) 12-
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
2	Language: English (fluent conversation; Perseid is native)
1	Language: Malvan (basic conversation)
2	Navigation (Space) 12-
21	Power: Brick Tricks 22-
2	PS: Superhuman Gladiator 11-
3	Tactics 12-
3	Teamwork 13-
3	TF: Science Fiction And Space Vehicles, V-Jet
2	WF: Perseid Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 243

Total Cost: 600

400 Matching Complications (75)

15	Hunted: Firewing (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)
20	Hunted: VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
15	Psychological Complication: Code Versus Killing (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Complication: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Magnetic Attacks (Uncommon)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 200

KINETIK

Kinetik Update: Not much has changed in Kinetik's life over the past several years. But since joining the Champions he's gained a lot of experience using his powers to fight crime, making him a much tougher opponent. He's learned how to apply his super-speed for all sorts of "speedster tricks," like creating mini-sonic booms or wrapping someone up with loose cable or rope in the blink of an eye. He's a much more versatile combatant than he was when he started fighting crime... and he can reach speeds approaching 75,000 miles per hour if he has to!

SAPPHIRE

Sapphire Update: If Sapphire's life was a whirlwind of attention, action, and nonstop activity when she joined the Champions, things have *really* taken off since then. Two multi-platinum albums, *Persuasion* and *Sapphire Skies*, have taken her from superstardom to megastardom, making her one of the most-recognized and famous people on the planet. She's given two world tours where she performed before millions of people, and her face can be seen everywhere from posters on music store windows, to ads for her *Ardent Sapphire* line of cosmetics, to promotional materials for the dozens of charities she supports.

And as if that weren't enough, there's the whole superheroing thing. Far from letting her career interfere with her heroic activities, if anything Sapphire's put the slowdown on her music so she can remain on active duty with the Champions. Her record label often reminds her that she could have produced two more albums since 2002 if she wasn't "wasting her time" fighting crime and protecting the Earth. She just smiles and ignores them.

All the media attention has gotten Sapphire over her insecure need to show off... more or less. She still likes to pull a flashy move in combat every now and then, but compared to what she was like when she first started superheroing she's become a much more mature, clever, tactically-minded combatant. On the other hand, her growing fame, while sometimes helpful because people recognize and like her quicker than they do the other Champions, has led to a whole slew of minor but annoying problems — stalkers, criminals committing crimes so she'll come fight them and they can get her autograph, and so on. Ironically, despite the fact that some people still think of her as a "dilettante" superheroine, in some ways she's the most experienced crimefighter on the team because she's gotten into so many solo adventures while touring to promote her albums.

Realizing that her powers were fairly limited, Sapphire's worked hard to increase her power and expand her capabilities, with notable results. In addition to developing more ways to use her



basic energy bolt attacks, she's learned how to create "solid energy" constructs that she can use to move things, catch people in bubbles (to restrain or protect them), and protect herself better. To a limited extent she can shape the constructs; for example, her Telekinesis might manifest as energy fields taking the shape of enormous hands, scoops, or mallets, depending on what she's trying to do. After some battles you can practically read by the light of the faint blue glow coming from her Entangles.

On the personal front, Sapphire's dated a succession of men ranging from famous rock stars she met through work to nobodies she's encountered while heroing. None of them have been able to hold her attention for long, though. That used to be because she was attracted to Defender, but a couple years of working together on the Champions convinced her the two of them made more sense as friends. She's really happy that Defender and Witchcraft's romance has blossomed, though she feels the occasional small twinge of jealousy that no "Mr. Right" has come along for her just yet.

KINETIK

Val Char Cost Roll Notes

15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
30	DEX	40	15-	
23	CON	13	14-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
14	EGO	4	12-	
12	PRE	2	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6

10	OCV	35		
10	DCV	35		
4	OMCV	3		
4	DMCV	3		
10	SPD	80		Phases: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

9	PD	7		Total: 15 PD (6 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 14 ED (6 rED)
8	REC	4		

115	END	19		
10	BODY	0		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 269

Movement:	Running:	12m
	Flight:	40m/40 km

Cost Powers

		END
80	Super-Running: Flight 40m MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1), No Turn Mode (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼)	4
75	Speedster Tricks: Multipower, 75-point reserve	
6f	1) Vibro-grip: HKA 2d6 (2d6+1 with STR) Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
3f	2) Supersonic Finger-Snap: Blast 6d6 NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Pressure] or armored head-covering; +1); No Range (-½), Gestures (must hold hand near target's ear; -¼)	6
7f	3) Dizzying Spin: Drain DEX and CON 5d6 Expanded Effect (DEX and CON simultaneously; +½)	7
2f	4) Let's Wrap This Up: Entangle 6d6, up to 6 PD/6 ED OIF (appropriate materials of opportunity; -½), Extra Time (at least a Full Phase, and often longer, depending on how long it takes to get the materials; -½), No Range (-½), Defense Depends On Materials Used (-½)	6
5f	5) Some Disassembly Required: Dispel Technological Object 16d6 Variable Effect (any one Technological Object power at a time; +½); No Range (-½)	7
5f	6) Sonic Boom Attack: Blast 8d6 Area Of Effect (16m Radius; +¾); Must Pass Through Intervening Space (-¼), Does Not Work In A Vacuum (-¼)	7
2f	7) Supersonic Thunderclap: Hearing Group Flash 8d6 Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½), Hole In The Middle (the 1m radius area he's standing in when he uses the power; +¼), Does Knockback (+¼); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), No Range (-½), Restrained (-½)	5
4f	8) Vacuum Attack: Blast 6d6 NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Must Pass Through Intervening Space (-¼), No Range (-½)	3

6f	9) Whirlwind Arms: Blast 10d6 Double Knockback (+½); Limited Range (10m; -¼)	7
1f	10) Fast Work: Change Environment (clean, do chores and tasks, and so forth) Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½), Varying Effect (+½)	3
6f	11) High-Velocity Phasing: Desolidification (affected by sonic-, vibration-, and air-based attacks) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0

Martial Arts: Speedster Martial Arts

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
5	Flying Dodge	—	+4	Dodge, Abort, FMove
5	Flying Grab	-2	-1	Grab 2 Limbs, 40 STR, FMove
5	Passing Disarm	-1	-1	Disarm, 40 STR, FMove
5	Passing Strike	+1	0	6d6 + v/10, FMove
5	Passing Throw	0	0	6d6 + v/10, Target Falls, FMove
5	Rapid Punch	+1	-2	10d6 Strike
12	+3 Damage Classes (already added in)			

24	Protective Aura: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED) Only When Moving (-¼)	0
12	Protective Suit: Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) OIF (-½)	0
6	Wrist Communicator: HRRP OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0

Talents

3	Lightning Calculator
4	Speed Reading (x10)

Skills

3	Breakfall 15-
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
2	KS: General Knowledge And Trivia 11-
13	Power: Speedster Tricks 20-
2	PS: Crossword Puzzles 11-
2	PS: Scientist 11-
3	Sleight Of Hand 15-
3	Teamwork 15-
3	Scientist
2	1) SS: Biochemistry 13-
2	2) SS: Microbiology 13-
2	3) SS: Physics 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 331

Total Cost: 600

400 Matching Complications (75)

30	DNPC: Joyce, Ronnie, and Phillip (three younger siblings) (Frequently; Incompetents; Unaware of character's Social Limitation: Secret Identity)
10	Hunted: The New Purple Gang (Frequently, Less Pow, Capture/Kill)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Brendan Grant) (Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Chemical Attacks (Common)
Total Complications Points: 75	
Experience Points: 200	

SAPPHIRE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
23	DEX	26	14-	
25	CON	15	14-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll 11-
14	EGO	4	12-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
4	OMCV	3		
4	DMCV	3		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
9	PD	7		Total: 29 PD (20 rPD)
12	ED	10		Total: 32 ED (20 rED)
10	REC	6		
90	END	14		
10	BODY	0		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 210

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 40m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
75	Sapphire Blasts: Multipower, 75-point powers	
7f	1) Power Bolt I: Blast 14d6	7
7f	2) Power Bolt II: Blast 10d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
7f	3) Rapid-Fire Bolts: Blast 7d6 Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	2
7f	4) Sapphire Bolt: Sight Group Flash 12d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
7f	5) Bright Bolt: Blast 10d6 plus Sight Group Flash 5d6 Linked (-½)	7
7u	6) Stun-Bolt I: Blast 7d6 NND (defense is ED Resistant Protection defined as a force-field or the like; +1)	7
7f	7) Stun-Bolt II: Drain STUN 7d6	7
4f	8) Focused Bolt: RKA 4d6 Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	12
60	Solid Energy Constructs: Multipower, 60-point reserve	
12v	1) Basic Constructs: Telekinesis (40 STR)	6
12v	2) Restraints: Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED	6
7v	3) Barriers And Bubbles: Barrier 8 PD/8 ED, 8 BODY (up to 9m long, 3m high, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissable Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½), Limited Range (100m; -¼)	6
12v	4) Augmented Force-Field: Resistant Protection (+10 PD/+10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense)	0
60	Force-Field: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED)	0
60	Power-Riding: Flight 40m Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0



Perks

15	Money: Filthy Rich
6	Reputation: world-famous singing star and superheroine (throughout Earth) 14-, +2/+2d6

Talents

6	Striking Appearance: +2/+2d6
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Skills

3	Charm 14-
3	Conversation 14-
3	High Society 14-
2	Language: English (fluent conversation; Spanish is Native)
3	PS: Singer 14-
3	PS: Singing 14-
3	Teamwork 14-
1	TF: V-Jet

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 399

Total Cost: 609

400 Matching Complications (75)

10	Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
20	Hunted: VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
20	Psychological Complication: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Social Complication: Public Identity (Corazon Eldora "Corrie" Valenzuela) (Frequently, Major)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Light-Based Attacks (Uncommon)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 209

WITCHCRAFT

Witchcraft Update: Witchcraft's been almost as busy as Sapphire, between crimefighting, developing her relationship with Defender (see above), and trying to lead some small semblance of a normal life on occasion. Her experiences as a member of the Champions have had two significant effects on her.

First, they've greatly expanded her arcane prowess. The chance to use her magic in combat on a regular basis has been excellent "on the job training," giving her a chance to broaden her mystical horizons. Though she still often favors "witchcraft"-style special effects for her spells, she's become quite accomplished at the general use of Thaumaturgy. (See page 66 for more information and some example spells. Note that Witchcraft typically needs to devote a lot of her VPP to her *Shield Of Sorcery* [Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED), if not more] and *Wings Of The Zephirim* [Flight 30m] spells.) She's also gained a new power, the Eye of Horus, as a result of a 2005 adventure when she, the Champions, and Dr. Ka helped the Egyptian gods prevent Set from having the supervillain Anubis and a group of cultists summon him to Earth. The hawk-god himself inscribed the symbol of his Eye on her forehead in silvery light. It's only visible when she activates the power, which allows her to see things up to four miles away or to perceive danger.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, they've done wonders for her self-confidence (which in turn makes her a better wizardess). Gone is the shy, deeply introspective girl who was all too often afflicted with doubt and hesitation, replaced by a strong, powerful woman who's learned she can take the worst the Multiverse has to throw at her and deal with it. She's still got a touch of shyness to her at times, but it's not the sometimes-debilitating problem it once was.

SISTERLY CONFLICT

In the past several years Witchcraft's clashed repeatedly with her sister Talisman, both as one of the Champions and in solo adventures. Talisman's jealousy and hatred of her sister have reached new heights, leading her to plot her own sister's death on several occasions. What's worse is that Talisman's evil might has grown just as Witchcraft's power has, making the two an even match. For the most part their clashes have ended indecisively, with Talisman's schemes failing but the villainess herself escaping to begin another one.

But one encounter, in July 2005, worked out particularly well for Witchcraft. Talisman had secretly taken over several leading members of the Department of Anthropology at Millennium City University, then through them extended an invitation to Witchcraft to deliver a lecture on medieval magical lore as part of the department's Visiting Scholar Series. Witchcraft arrived, prepared to

give a lecture... only to find the building's decorative gargoyles coming to life to attack her, and the faculty and students transformed into demons! During the course of a harrowing battle, Witchcraft found a way to take control of the gargoyles and turn them on her sister. To protect herself Talisman froze the gargoyles in place in a block of ice. A few minutes later, Witchcraft tricked her sister into firing an attack that passed through the ice... with the happy result of lifting the Curse of Frigid Despair that Talisman had placed on her years before. Now no longer vulnerable to Talisman's winter-spells, Witchcraft wrapped the fight up quickly and saved the nearby civilians... but Talisman once again escaped.

LIBRARY "BORROWING"

As her powers have expanded so has Witchcraft's scope of operations; she now often finds herself traveling to other planes of reality to defeat mystic menaces or study new forms of magic. Her favorite places to visit are Faerie (the Land of Legends) and Babylon, the City of Man. She sometimes takes Sapphire with her to go shopping in Babylon, and she and Defender have had some enjoyable (and occasionally bizarre) dinner dates there. But usually she goes by herself, to study at the Library. During one of her visits the staff requested her help. The Librarian had discovered, quite by accident, that someone was stealing books from the Library! This was supposed to be impossible, and neither he nor any of his "employees" had been able to solve the mystery. Knowing Witchcraft was well-versed in such matters, and not sure who in Babylon itself they could trust, he asked her to look into the matter.

After getting a few tips on investigation from Nighthawk, Witchcraft set out to find the thief. Her quest took her throughout the Library, into Babylon itself, and to several other planes, and there were times when she wasn't entirely sure she'd survive the experience — including one particularly unpleasant encounter with Skarn the Shaper. In the end, though, the trail led back to Earth, to the doorstep of her old foe the Demonologist. Taken by surprise, he quickly conceded defeat and turned over the books as well as the secret of how he'd stolen them... but he also vowed a horrible revenge against her.

To repay Witchcraft for her services, the Librarian rewarded Witchcraft with two things. The first was a full-access membership to the Library itself, allowing her to read books in the restricted sections. The second was the *Librarian's Scroll*, a sentient parchment whose purpose is to instruct and enlighten. When Witchcraft faces a difficult problem, she can sit down with the Scroll and discuss it. Through a process of gentle questioning and insightful observation, the Scroll uses its superior knowledge and wisdom to guide her to the solution.

WITCHCRAFT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
23	DEX	26	14-	
20	CON	10	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	13	14-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
8	OMCV	15		
8	DMCV	15		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 14 PD (10 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 16 ED (10 rED)
8	REC	4		
40	END	4		
10	BODY	0		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 190

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

		END
124	Witcheries And Thaumaturgies: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 100 Pool + 60 Control Cost Only Magic (-¼)	var
75	Combat Witcheries: Multipower, 75-point reserve	
7f	1) Witchfire: Blast 12d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
7f	2) Fascination: Mind Control 12d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
7f	3) Glamour: Mental Illusions 12d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
7f	4) Irresistible Slumber: Mental Blast 7d6	7
7f	5) Terrors Of The Dark: Drain PRE 7d6	7
5f	6) Man Into Frog Spell: Severe Transform 5d6 (humans into frogs, heals back if target is kissed by royalty of the opposite gender or Witchcraft voluntarily "dispels" the magic) Limited Target (humans; -½)	7
45	The Eye Of Horus: Multipower, 45-point reserve	
4f	1) Farsight: Clairsentience (Sight Group), x32 Range (6,400m, or about 4 miles)	4
4f	2) Perception Of Peril: Danger Sense (any danger, any area, sense) 16-	4
10	Magesense: Detect Magic 13- (Sight Group), Analyze Concentration (0 DCV; -½)	0

Perks

6	Contact: The Trismegistus Council 11-
5	Fringe Benefit: Membership: Library of Babylon

Talents

3	Striking Appearance: +1/+1d6
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Skills

20	+4 with <i>Combat Witcheries</i> Multipower
1	Cryptography 8-; Translation Only (-½)
8	The Librarian's Scroll: Deduction 16-; OIF Bulky (-1), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Minute to make rolls; -0)
3	High Society 13-
2	CK: Vibora Bay 11-
1	CK: Paris 8-
1	Language: French (basic conversation; English is Native)
1	Language: Latin (basic conversation)
5	Navigation (Astral, Dimensional) 14-
27	Power: Witchcraft 25-
2	PS: Painting 11-
3	Sleight Of Hand 14-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Teamwork 14-
3	Scholar
4	1) KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 15-
1	2) KS: Demonology 11-
2	3) KS: Dimension Lords And Cosmic Entities 13-
2	4) KS: Thaumaturgy 13-
2	5) KS: Witchcraft 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 410

Total Cost: 600

400 Matching Complications (75)

20	Hunted: Circle Of The Scarlet Moon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Corrupt)
10	Hunted: Talisman (Infrequently, As Pow, Kill)
20	Psychological Complication: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Social Complication: Secret Identity (Bethany Duquesne) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 65

Experience Points: 210

INDEPENDENT HEROES AND ALLIES

Not every hero works with a superteam. Here are a few “independents” who might join your PCs for an adventure or help them out when they need some assistance.



THE ALL-AMERICAN

Background/History: In the late Sixties, with public anger over Vietnam heating up and patriotic feelings at their lowest ebb ever, concerned officials in the Pentagon decided they needed someone to serve as a powerful, easily-recognized symbol of American patriotism, American virtues, and the strength and honor of the United States military. Looking around for a way to create this symbol, they hit upon some experiments being performed by an Army scientist named Herman Olafson. Doctor Olafson was the head of Project Perseus, an offshoot of the Haynesville Project and the latest in the military's long line of efforts to create “superhuman soldiers.” He'd reached the stage where, through drug and radiation treatments, he could augment some human beings' natural physical and mental capabilities significantly. But he hadn't yet achieved the breakthroughs necessary to induce superhuman-level augmentations, much less true superhuman abilities.

The concerned officials decided Perseus was good enough for their purposes — in fact, maybe the Perseus subjects would make *better* symbols for America, since they'd be more like “the common man.” They ordered Olafson to suspend work and turn over all his data to them. After they reviewed his work, including detailed background and psychological profiles of all of his subjects, they chose Gerald Thomaston to be their symbol — the man they were going to call “the All-American.”

Reluctant at first, Thomaston soon warmed to the role. The concerned officials presented him with a red, white, and blue costume, complete with weapons: razor-sharp throwing stars; tangle grenades; and special gauntlets that allowed him to deliver a “rocket-powered punch” several times a day. And they trained him to use his Perseus-given physique and mental acumen. Within just a few months, the All-American was presented to the media as a new symbol for America.

Thomaston spent several years in his new role, fighting crime, helping American soldiers with missions, and rescuing disaster victims. A crippling injury removed him from the superhero game, so the concerned officials had to find a replacement. After reviewing thousands of military personnel files, they selected another candidate, got him to agree to the Perseus treatments, and awarded him the mantle of the All-American.

Since then, four more men and one woman have worn the costume and carried the legacy of the All-American. Now recognized by the American public, and the world, as “America's official superhero,” the All-American has come to represent heroic patriotism just the way the concerned officials had hoped he would. Despite the sometime-cynical motivations and manipulative efforts of the men in charge of the

All-American program, the All-American has been a true hero, not simply a soldier following commands. More than one person who wore the costume was fired from the job for refusing to take orders he considered wrong.

The latest in this long line of heroes is Jack Tiptree, the son of a South Dakota car salesman. After he joined the Marines in 1989, he was selected to become the All-American when his physical showed him to be perfectly suited for Perseus treatments. Jumping at the chance to serve his country in such a prominent role, Tiptree soon found himself garbed in the All-American's familiar stars-and-stripes costume. Over a decade later, he's still serving his country, having held onto the job longer than any of his predecessors. Though some things about the job concern him from time to time, usually he just gets to be a hero, and that's more than enough incentive to keep the mask.

Personality/Motivation: Like the other All-Americans, Jack Tiptree is an American patriot, through-and-through. It's his country, right or wrong, and he's proud to represent it. He follows the orders of his superiors, even when he doesn't agree with them, because that's the American way as he sees it. He respects the President, the flag, Mom, apple pie, and all other things definitively American, and defends them against anyone who would challenge them or knock them — though he never fights unfairly or dishonorably, since that would be un-American. Many Americans consider him a “square,” or a tool of the military-industrial complex, but neither is correct. He's just a plainspoken American trying to be a hero in a complex world.

Quote: “Every American has it within him to be a hero.”

Powers/Tactics: The All-American is the product of *Perseus treatments*, a series of difficult (and expensive!) chemical, radiation, and psychological therapies, combined with specialized training, developed by the United States military beginning in the late Sixties. (The exact nature of the Perseus process, including how suitable candidates for the treatments are chosen, remains highly classified and known to only a few high-ranking federal employees.) While these treatments don't grant superhuman powers, they do enhance the subject's natural physical and mental gifts. In game terms, they permanently boost Characteristics. Most subjects receive ratings of 20 in their main Characteristics (and corresponding increases in the others), but some go higher (though they never reach the specified campaign standards for “superhuman”). Jack Tiptree is typical of the All-Americans in most respects, and thus has 20s in his STR, INT, and other main Characteristics (making him about four times as strong, agile, smart, and charming as the average person).

Like every All-American, Jack has been trained in the arts of hand-to-hand combat, acrobatics, and the like. He's picked up a wide variety of other skills through his military training and on-the-job experience. He carries three weapons for use in combat. His *Stars* are five-pointed shuriken (throwing stars) with an almost monomolecularly-sharp edge, which makes it possible to embed them in nearly any target. His *Stripes* are flexible red and white bar-shaped tangle grenades capable of effecting numerous targets over a small area. Lastly, his *Rocket-Powered Punch* is a right-hand gauntlet with compressed-air jets that lets him deliver a devastating blow, but only four times a day. He saves the Punch for desperate moments and foes who won't fall to his normal blows. He sometimes uses a Stripe to hold a target motionless long enough to deliver a Rocket-Powered Punch.

Campaign Use: In most cases, the All-American should function simply as an NPC superhero with whom the PCs might sometimes ally themselves. If the PCs are wanted by the law, or otherwise not on good terms with the government, the All-American might end up cast in the role of “villain” as he tries to help the authorities bring the heroes in for questioning. He'd never Hunt a superhero otherwise, and if pressed by his superiors to apprehend someone he believes to be a genuine hero, is likely to defy orders — which would make him work with the PCs (to help prove to the government that his judgment was correct, if for no other reason).

If the All-American is too powerful for your campaign, tone down his weapons and Martial Arts a bit, but don't reduce his Characteristics unless it's absolutely necessary. If he seems too weak, increase his SPD to 6, add some Damage Classes to his attacks, provide him with some additional weapons, and/or give him another Overall Level or two.

Appearance: The All-American wears a distinctive red, white, and blue costume well-known to the citizens of the United States for over thirty years (thanks to extensive media campaigns promoting him, and his numerous appearances on the broadcast news and in the papers). The shoulders and arms are blue, with his white Stars mounted six each on his outside upper arms (when detached for throwing, they reveal a similarly-shaped patch of white cloth to maintain the appearance). The rest of the torso is white, and the trunks, belt, and legs are red (with special compartments in the belt to hold his Stripes throwing weapon). His boots and gauntlets are made of blue-colored metal; the gauntlets have distinctive flares at the end to hold the compressed air technology that enables his Rocket-Powered Punch. He conceals his identity with a blue domino-style mask. At times (particularly on formal occasions) he wears a blue cape with a pattern of white stars on the back and a raised collar behind the head. The current man wearing the costume, James Tiptree, is white, 6'0” tall, and has a muscular, athletic build.

THE ALL-AMERICAN

Val Char Cost Roll Notes

20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [1]
20	DEX	20	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	10	13-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6

8	OCV	25		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12

12	PD	10		Total: 21 PD (9 rPD)
10	ED	8		Total: 19 ED (9 rED)

10	REC	6		
40	END	4		
20	BODY	10		
40	STUN	10		

Total Characteristics Cost: 199

Movement:	Running:	20m
	Leaping:	12m
	Swimming:	8m

Cost Powers

10	Rocket-Powered Punch:	HA +4d6 [12]
		OIF (-½), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼), 12 Charges (-¼)
8	Stars:	HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR) [12]
		Armor Piercing (+¼), Autofire (5 shots; +½), Range Based On STR (+¼); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-¼), 12 Charges (-¼)
30	Stripes:	Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED [8]
		Area Of Effect (8m Radius Explosion; +¼); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½)

Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	8d6 + v/10, Target Falls
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	10d6 Strike
4 Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 4d6 NND (2)
4 Escape	+0	+0	55 STR versus Grabs
4 Hold	-1	-1	Grab Three Limbs, 50 STR
4 Judo Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 50 STR
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)		

12	Armored Costume:	Resistant Protection (6 PD/ED) 0
		OIF (-½)
3	Polarized Mask Lenses:	Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points) 0
		OIF (-½)
1	Improved Lung Capacity:	Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Turn) 0

8	Fleet-Footed:	Running +8m (20m total) 1
4	Strong Leaper:	Leaping +8m (12m forward, 6m upward) 1
2	Strong Swimmer:	Swimming +4m (8m total) 1
7	Mask Radio:	Radio Perception/Transmission 0
		OIF (-½)

Perks

63	Well-Connected	and 60 points' worth of Contacts in the U.S. military and government
3	Fringe Benefit:	Federal Police Powers
7	Fringe Benefit:	Security Clearance
9	Positive Reputation:	America's national hero (throughout Earth) 14-, +3/+3d6

Talents

6	Combat Luck	(3 PD/3 ED)
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Skills

24	+2 Overall
32	+4 HTH
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Combat Driving 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
3	Computer Programming 13-
1	Electronics 8-
3	High Society 13-
2	AK: Fort Benning And Environs 11-
2	CK: Atlanta 11-
2	CK: Washington, DC 11-
2	KS: United States History 11-
2	KS: Military History 11-
2	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
2	KS: US Military Protocol And Procedure 11-
1	Lockpicking 8-
1	Mechanics 8-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Paramedics 13-
3	PS: US Army Soldier 13-
1	Security Systems 8-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 13-
3	Systems Operation 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-
11	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Parachuting (Basic, Advanced), SCUBA, Small Motorized Boats, Small Planes, Large Planes, Combat Aircraft, Helicopters
7	WF: Small Arms, Blades, Flamethrowers, Grenade Launchers, Heavy MGs, Shoulder-Fired Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 351

Total Cost: 550

BLACK MASK X

Background/History: Jennifer Ward was born in 1970 in Chicago. Her father, David Matthew Ward, was better known to the world as the Black Mask, the ninth man to have borne the famous mantle. Jennifer's mother Christina died in a tragic car accident when Jennifer was only three, leaving Jennifer to be raised by her father with the assistance of his sister Sharon. David, who was a police detective by day while maintaining his secret career as a masked vigilante by night, was heartbroken by the death of his wife and had no interest in remarrying, which led to some question within his inner circle of friends and family as to who would be the next wearer of the Mask. At first David planned to pass it on to Christopher Carr, the descendant of Marvin Carr (Black Mask VI and the only previous wearer not descended from the original), but in his early teens Chris developed multiple sclerosis and eventually required the use of a wheelchair, removing him as a candidate. David considered other, more distant relatives, but none seemed appropriate.

By the early Eighties, Jennifer had grown into a healthy, athletic tomboy and a top-notch student. She decided she wanted to carry on the family legacy and asked her father to begin training her for the job. At first David resisted — no woman had ever worn the Black Mask before, and having a woman in the job would disrupt the myth that there'd only been one wearer of the Mask, still alive and fighting injustice for over two centuries. What he was unwilling to say out loud, at least at first, was that Jennifer reminded him so much of Christina that he couldn't bear the thought of sending her into danger and risking the possibility of losing her as well.

But Jennifer was determined, and when David refused to train her she turned to her grandfather, Jeffrey Ward (Black Mask VIII), who'd retired to the family homestead in Montana. There he maintained the Ranch, the family's secret library and trophy hall. Eventually, David realized she wasn't going to give up and relented, helping complete her training after his own retirement in 1990. (Jeffrey died in 1993, and Chris Carr became the caretaker of the Ranch.)

Although she made her first couple of public appearances in Chicago, Jennifer decided she'd

feel more comfortable starting over in a new city. She moved to Vibora Bay in 1994 to begin her career as a costumed adventuress in earnest. Since then, she's firmly established herself as one of the Queen City's foremost protectors, with several high-profile successes and a healthy mutual respect with the various local law enforcement agencies. She also maintains her secret identity as a freelance magazine writer (under her own name) and horror novelist (under the pen name of "Constance Hagen"). She's shared the secret of her alter-ego with a small number of close confidantes, including her neighbor and best friend Trinity Haubert (a romance novelist) and David Wulatin, a local doctor whom she married in 2007. The two of them have a young son, Benjamin Ward Wulatin, who will no doubt one day take up the Black Mask himself.

In 2005 Black Mask began clashing with a vicious vampire who called himself the Stalker. Determined to stop him from preying on Vibora Bay's citizens, she pursued and fought him several times, but was never able to capture him. A climactic encounter between the two of them late that year left Black Mask with severe leg injuries and the loss of several pints of blood, but the Stalker himself was nearly slain. It took Black Mask over a year to recuperate to the point where she could begin training again and eventually return to the streets. Stalker hasn't been seen since.

Personality/Motivation: Black Mask feels the weight of the heroic tradition she's inherited very strongly. She's unswervingly devoted to justice and peace, and willingly risks her life to protect the innocent. She takes care to preserve the public image of the "franchise" and reveres the memory of her various costumed ancestors. Though it's not her primary focus, she's a strong feminist and makes a point of calling people on sexist behavior around her (or behavior she *thinks* is sexist). She's also aware of her "responsibility" to pass on the tradition to an heir and is looking forward to training Ben when he comes of age.

Quote: "I love this city. From up here, at night when the lights reflect off the bay, it's beautiful and peaceful. I intend to keep it that way."

Powers/Tactics: Black Mask is first and foremost an investigator and detective. She has a keen analytical mind and a knack for getting inside the heads of criminals and madmen without losing herself in the process. She frequently feels "over her head" when dealing with superpowered menaces and mystical crises, though that never stops her from getting involved.



400 Matching Complications (75)

- 20 **Hunted:** VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
- 15 **Social Complication:** Secret Identity (James "Jack" Tiptree) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 150

BLACK MASK X

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 HTH damage [1]
20	DEX	20	13-	
18	CON	8	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	8	13-	
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	PD	5		Total: 16 PD (9 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 15 ED (9 rED)
7	REC	3		
40	END	4		
10	BODY	0		
26	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 157

Movement:	Running:	14m
	Swimming:	6m
	Swinging:	20m

Cost	Powers	END
31	Gas Grenade Pistol: Multipower, 70-point reserve All slots OAF (-1), Limited Range (14m; -¼)	
2f	1) Knockout Gas: Blast 6d6 [8] Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼), No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity]; +1); OAF (-1), Limited Range (14m; -¼), 8 Charges (-½)	
2f	2) Tear Gas: Blast 4d6 [8] Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼), No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity]; +1); OAF (-1), Limited Range (14m; -¼), 8 Charges (-½) plus Sight Group Flash 4d6 Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼), No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity] or airtight protection of the eyes; +0); OAF (-1), Limited Range (14m; -¼), Linked (-½), 8 Charges (-½)	
2f	3) Black Smoke: Darkness to Sight Group 8m radius [8] OAF (-1), Limited Range (14m; -¼), 8 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Turn each (-0)	
25	Taser: Blast 8d6 [4] NND (defense is insulated ED or Resistant Protection defined as an ED force-field or the like; +1); OAF (-1); Limited Range (8m; -¼), 4 Charges (-1)	
11	Throwing Disks: Blast 6d6 (physical) [8] OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 8 Charges (-½)	

Martial Arts: Tae Kwon Do

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Arm Sweep Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm; 28 STR to Disarm
5 Flying Side Kick	+1	-2	7½d6 Strike
4 Front Kick	+0	+2	5½d6 Strike
5 Roundhouse Kick	-2	+1	7½d6 Strike
3 Takedown	+1	+1	3½d6 Strike; Target Falls
4	+1 Damage Class (already added in)		

4 **Air Supply/Rebreather:** Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) [1fc]
OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replenished, 20 Minutes; -¼)

12 **Armored Costume:** Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) 0
OIF (-½)

6 **Swingline Gun:** Multipower, 20-point reserve; all slots OAF (-1); 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼) for entire Multipower [1rc]

1f **1) Swingline And Grapnel:** Swinging 20m
OAF (-1)

1f **2) Grapnel Attack:** RKA 1d6+1
OAF (-1), Limited Range (10'; -¼)

1 **Strong Swimmer:** Swimming +2m (6m total) 1

5 **Earpiece:** +4 PER with Hearing Group 0
OIF (-½)

6 **Earpiece And Mask Lenses:** HRRP (Radio Group) 0
OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

3 **UV Mask Lenses:** Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group) 0
OIF (-½)

8 **Mini-Flashlight:** Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls
Area Of Effect (2m Cone; +¼); OAF (-1), Only To Create Light (-1), No Range (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily recharged, 1 Hour; -0)

Perks

30 **Contacts:** Well-Connected and 27 points' worth throughout Vibora Bay

5 **Money:** Well Off

4 **Positive Reputation:** the latest in a line of beloved but mysterious crimefighters (in United States) 11-, +2/+2d6

Talents

6 **Combat Luck** (3 PD/3 ED)

15 **Combat Sense** 13-

3 **Lightsleep**

Skills

12 +1 Overall

10 +1 with All Combat

10 +2 with Tae Kwon Do

6 +2 with Criminology, Forensic Medicine, and Paramedics

9 +3 with Concealment, Shadowing, and Stealth

- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Acting 14-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Bribery 14-
- 3 Bugging 13-
- 7 Bureaucratics 16-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Contortionist 13-
- 3 Conversation 14-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 2 Crime Scene Kit: +2 with Criminology; OAF (-1)
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 10 Defense Maneuver I-IV
- 3 Disguise 13-
- 3 Electronics 13-
- 3 Forensic Medicine 13-
- 8 Forgery (Art Objects, Commercial Goods, Documents, Money (Counterfeiting)) 13-
- 2 Gambling (Card Games) 13-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 3 Interrogation 14-
- 2 CK: Chicago 11-
- 5 CK: Vibora Bay 15-
- 3 KS: Organized Crime In Vibora Bay 13-
- 2 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 11-
- 3 KS: History Of The Black Masks 13-
- 3 KS: American History 13-
- 2 Language: French (fluent conversation; English is Native)
- 1 Language: Spanish (basic conversation)
- 3 Lipreading 13-
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 2 Lockpick Set: +2 with Lockpicking; OAF (-1)
- 3 Navigation (Land, Marine) 13-
- 3 Paramedics 13-
- 3 PS: Writer 13-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 9 Shadowing 16-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 5 Streetwise 15-
- 3 Tracking 13-
- 3 Trading 14-
- 6 TF: Equines, Large Motorized Boats, Small Motorized Boats, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Water Skiing, Windsurfing
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 416

Total Cost: 573

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 10 **DNPC:** Dr. David Wulatin (husband) (Frequently; Normal; Useful Noncombat Position or Skills)
- 15 **Hunted:** Sweetland Mob (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Harshly Punish)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Protects The Innocent And Helpless (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Code Versus Killing (Common, Strong)
- 15 **Social Complication:** Secret Identity (Jennifer Ward) (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 173

BLACK MASK'S CONTACTS

Black Mask has developed several street-level Contacts throughout Vibora Bay. Here's a representative sample — the GM should feel free to create more.

Dr. Erla Davis: A criminal psychiatrist specializing in “abnormal and superhuman psychotics,” Davis works primarily for the Vibora Bay court system as an expert witness. She's interviewed dozens of costumed criminals. In her late fifties, she's approaching retirement and has a bit of a drinking problem, but her insight into the minds of supervillains remains sharp.

Sean Martinez: This sketchy character lives in an apartment on the waterfront, from which he runs several illegal import/export businesses providing locals with quality Cuban cigars, the occasional exotic pet (several of which he himself keeps, including a number of poisonous lizards, South American birds, and colorful fighting fish), and various other illicit items. Black Mask, who doesn't particularly care for his weaselly demeanor or his various money-making schemes, has nevertheless “allowed” him to escape several times in exchange for information he can provide on bigger fish.

Big Mike Petrocelli: This Navy veteran runs an old-fashioned barbershop in Inner Weston, complete with striped pole, big metal chairs, and containers of blue cleaning fluid full of combs. An incorrigible gossip, he knows a great deal about the latest happenings on the street as well as a surprising amount about local celebrities and politicians.

Mark Pogozelski: A detective from the 11th Precinct, he's exchanged information with Black Mask on cases several times, to their mutual benefit. His boss, Captain Abraham, doesn't care for costumed vigilantes, so he's had to keep his relationship with Black Mask quiet. He's gotten the credit for several collars she actually did most of the work on.

NOCTURNE

Since 2005, Black Mask's been working with a sidekick of sorts, a young woman named *Nocturne* who has the power to absorb knowledge and skills from anyone near her. The two had something of a falling out over the Stalker affair, when Nocturne felt that Black Mask was unnecessarily shielding her from the situation and not letting her help as much as she could, but they've since reconciled. Nocturne was a big help during Black Mask's convalescence, and the two now patrol the mean streets of Vibora Bay together.

Though she has no particular talent for or connection to the occult side of Vibora Bay, she's certainly encountered enough magic in the last decade to feel comfortable with it. She's by no means a combat monster — she rarely encounters particularly powerful supervillains and her first choice if she did would be to call for help.

In addition to her learned fighting skills (mainly Tae Kwon Do), Black Mask relies on a small arsenal of weapons and useful devices. Foremost among these is her Gas Grenade Pistol, which fires mini-grenades filled with knockout gas, tear gas, or a thick, black smoke. She also carries throwing disks and a four-shot taser. Her other gadgets include a linegun (which can function as a weapon in a pinch), a rebreather, communications gear, and a mini-flashlight.

Campaign Use: Black Mask makes a useful supporting NPC — she has a wide range of Skills but not enough power to steal the stage from a PC group. She knows and gets along with pretty much all of Vibora Bay's other superhuman defenders, making her a logical point to build around should the GM want to actually create a team out of the disparate locals. If the PCs find themselves on the wrong side of the law due to a frame-up or misunderstanding, she might try to bring them in, but she's unorthodox enough in her own methods to listen to their side of the story and/or pitch in to help.

If you want to make Black Mask tougher, increase her defenses and DCV. You could also give her another weapon or two (such as throwing blades, a multi-setting blaster in the shape of a flintlock pistol, or some glue grenades) or improve her Martial Arts damage and Combat Skill Levels. If she's too competent for your campaign, get rid of at least five or six of her Skills, her Extra Damage Class, and her Taser.

Appearance: Black Mask is a lovely blonde woman, standing 5'9" tall and weighing 115 pounds, with a lean, athletic figure. She wears a skintight catsuit in dark green and black, with boots, an oversized belt, and a distinctive black mask. Her mask retains the same "paired diamonds" style that her predecessors used, though it's slightly larger.

DR. SILVERBACK

Background/History: The gorilla the world would come to know as Dr. Silverback was born somewhere near Mount Visoke in Rwanda in the early Seventies. Poachers took him from his band when he was a preadolescent. He went from one owner to another until Doctor Phillippe Moreau acquired him in 1982 and brought him to a secret Ukrainian laboratory. There, the infamous criminal geneticist subjected the young ape (and several other test animals) to a series of experiments involving radiation, genetic manipulation, and mysterious chemical baths. In 1984, Moreau finally achieved a breakthrough, mutating the gorilla to human intelligence and even beyond.

At first, the confused ape considered Moreau his master. He assisted him in the laboratory and improved his haphazard experimental style. Together, the two created a small cadre of intelligent animal-men, sometimes surgically altering their forms, making them more humanoid so they could speak, stand upright, and use tools. Moreau intended to use this army of animal-men to perpetrate crimes to raise funds for further experiments, and sent his first group to begin a wave of robberies in London in the summer of 1985. This group battled the New Knights of the Round Table, who tracked the group back to Moreau and teamed with the Russian hero Quake to storm Moreau's compound and defeat the animal-men. Silverback, who'd come to realize the criminal nature of his creator, turned on his former master and helped the heroes defeat him. After the battle, the Knights left the compound in the hands of the animals, most of whom were not particularly criminal and were grateful for their freedom. They wanted Silverback as their leader, but instead he chose to travel to England with his newfound friends.

In England, Silverback soon got a job working with Cambridge Biochemical Industries, a high-tech corporation with ties to the New Knights. There, he met Dr. Dina Morrison, a chemist who took it upon herself to help him adjust to human society. This he began to do with great gusto, absorbing human art and culture voraciously while helping Cambridge develop a number of useful pharmaceuticals and medicines. He also periodically assisted the Knights in battling various menaces, including Eurostar, Samhain, and VIPER (which had recruited Dr. Moreau).

Eventually Silverback applied to the British government for official citizenship. With the

THE BLACK MASKS

Name (lived)	Active	Locale
I. John Michael Ward (1749-1810)	1771-1786	Massachusetts and New York
II. Timothy James Ward (1772-1831)	1797-1818	Boston
III. Samuel Ellis Ward (1796-1863)	1822-1850	Philadelphia
IV. Matthew John Ward (1829-1874)	1853-1870	Boston, then mobile and Chicago
V. James Lee Ward (1850-1876)	1871-1876	Arizona
VI. Marvin Beckley Carr (1849-1922)	1876-1896	Mobile in the West (Montana)
VII. Jason Lee Ward (1874-1929)	1896-1929	Chicago and West
VIII. Jeffrey Layton Ward (1909-1992)	1929-1955	Chicago
IX. David Matthew Ward (1933-)	1955-1985	Chicago
X. Jennifer Ward (1970-present)	1993-present	Vibora Bay

assistance of the famous lawyer St. John Simons and the support of Morrison, Cambridge Biochem, and the New Knights, Silverback won a landmark case establishing himself as legally equal to a human being and a naturalized citizen of the British Empire. This precedent has become a landmark in superhuman law, cited over and over again in cases involving the legal status of robots, aliens, and the undead.

In 1994, Dr. Silverback moved to Millennium City to work in the new American offices of the renamed Cambridge Biotechnologies. By this point, his legal battles and charming personality had made him a celebrity around the world. He regularly appeared on talk shows as an expert on “superhuman affairs,” all the while continuing to earn degrees in various fields of science. He shocked the world by dating human women (first Dr. Morrison, though they’re now “just friends,” and more recently opera singer Judith Kerr), angering various hate groups and religious fundamentalists. He also offered his services as scientific advisor to Defender and the Champions and became a member of their Auxiliary. Today Dr. Silverback is one of the most recognizable superhumans on the planet, with his own laboratory in the Cambridge Biotech headquarters, a regular weekly talk show on SNN, and a permanent spot on all of the best party invitation lists in Millennium City.

Personality/Motivation: Doctor Silverback is a dynamo of energy and one of the most intelligent beings on the planet. Equally comfortable discussing cutting-edge astrophysics as a guest lecturer at Harvard or cheering for the Millennium City Tigers from his season ticket seats behind home plate (and don’t think of suggesting he should watch from a box seat!), he has friends around the world at all levels of society. A charming and fascinating public speaker and an astounding multitasker, he can simultaneously carry on several conversations while monitoring a lab experiment, playing chess against his computer, and dribbling a basketball with his feet. He periodically takes up new hobbies and then abandons them after a few weeks of intense immersion; one week he’s fascinated by *bonsai*, the next he’s reading everything he can get his hands on about the Peloponnesian War, and after that he’s decided to collect model trains.

Doctor Silverback is a powerful advocate for the rights of superhumans, and for protecting the environment. (In fact, one of his closest personal friends, the hero Amphibian, is well known for his work for Greenpeace.) These public stances have earned him a number of powerful enemies, including the IHA, Senator Philip Glassman, and several extremist religious groups. He has a fairly pugnacious attitude towards his detractors, publicly ridiculing those who want to debate his views while battling those who prefer their combats physical. Much of the money he earns

from his patents goes to purchasing land in Rwanda for a wildlife refuge.

Silverback has fully adopted the life of a public superhero, though he certainly realizes he doesn’t have the power to battle most superhuman menaces directly. Instead, he acts as an adviser and armorer for teams like the Champions, working feverishly in the lab to come up with solutions for their problem of the week.

Quote: “It’s absolutely fascinating! I’ve never seen such an elegant design. I’d be more impressed if it wasn’t trying to kill us, though — *gangway!!!*”

Powers/Tactics: Silverback is a fully-grown adult mountain gorilla with tremendous strength and agility, but his greatest asset is his superhumanly-powerful mind. As one of the foremost inventors of cutting-edge technology in the world, he frequently carries a number of small gadgets into battle. His favorite weapon is his tangleweb gun, which he uses to bring down opponents without harming them physically.

Campaign Use: Doctor Silverback makes an excellent supporting character for a group of PCs who don’t have a top-level scientist, allowing them to leave somebody “behind in the lab” while they take more active roles. His landmark legal battles may provide a basis for similar suits involving any non-human PCs. He also gives players a familiar, friendly face on television whenever the story requires a super-celebrity.

If you want to make Dr. Silverback less powerful, reduce his Gadget Pool to 40 points, get rid of some of his more esoteric Science Skills, and reduce his Characteristics a bit. To make him more powerful, increase the size of his Gadget Pool.

Appearance: Dr. Silverback is a male mountain gorilla, standing approximately 5’6” tall and weighing about five hundred and fifty pounds. He’s covered with short black fur that shades to silver on his upper back. While he can stand upright if he wants, he slumps over into the typical knuckle-walking stance of an ordinary ape when distracted. He regularly dresses in white lab coats in the laboratory and favors loud Hawaiian shirts and tailored shorts in casual situations. When going into battle he wears a light-blue armored bodysuit and large goggles.

DR. SILVERBACK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
28	STR	18	15-	Lift 1,200 kg; 5½d6 HTH damage [3]
20	DEX	20	13-	
23	CON	13	14-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 16-
20	EGO	10	13-	
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
9	PD	7		Total: 20 PD (11 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 16 ED (11 rED)
10	REC	6		
45	END	5		
14	BODY	4		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 200

Movement: Running: 12m
Swimming: 0m



Cost	Powers	END
75	Assorted Devices: Variable Power Pool, 60 Pool + 60 Control Cost OAF (-1)	var
27	Tangleweb Rifle: Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED OAF (-1), Limited Range (30m; -¼), 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
8	Arm Swing: HA +2d6 Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)	1
7	Bite: HKA ½d6 No STR Bonus (-½)	1
4	Roar: +10 PRE Incantations (-¼), Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1)	0
3	Thick Skin: Resistant (+½) for 3 PD/3 ED	0
10	Combat Jumpsuit: Resistant Protection (5 PD/5 ED) OIF (-½)	0
5	Powerful Mind: Mental Defense (5 points)	0
7	Combat Goggles: Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points) OIF (-½)	0
-2	Nonswimmer: Swimming -4m (0m total)	
3	Heightened Senses: +1 PER with all Sense Groups	0
6	Agile Feet: Extra Limbs (his legs and feet function almost as well as arms and hands) Inherent (+¼)	0

Perks

40	Laboratory: 200-point Base
3	Computer Link: SOCRATES (the Champions's computer)
10	Computer Link: HUGIN (UNTIL's computer)
15	Contact: Cambridge Biotech 13- (useful Skills/resources, organization)
15	Contact: The Champions 11- (useful Skills/resources, organization)
12	Contact: New Knights Of The Round Table 8- (useful Skills/resources, organization)
15	Contact: UNTIL 8- (very useful Skills/resources, organization)
15	Contact: NASA 8- (very useful Skills/resources, organization)
7	Money: Wealthy
6	Positive Reputation: celebrity simian super-scientist (worldwide) 14-, +2/+2d6

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightning Calculator
4	Speed Reading (x10)

Skills

10	+2 with Gadget Pool devices
4	+2 OCV with Arm Swing
8	+2 with Intellect Skills

SILVER AVENGER MAYTE SANCHEZ

Background/History: Born in Florida in 1965, Mayte Sanchez attended Florida State University on a track and field scholarship and earned a degree in criminal justice. Recruited by most of the major law enforcement agencies, she accepted a position with the brand new agency PRIMUS and went directly into their training program. Standard medical testing revealed that she was reactive to the Cyberline process developed by Lucius Alexander, so PRIMUS immediately moved her into the Silver Avenger program. When she finished her training in 1990, the agency assigned her to be one of the Silver Avengers at the PRIMUS offices in Chicago.

Sanchez was one of the first government supers on the scene at the Battle of Detroit in July 1992 and fought alongside heroes from all over the country against the various menaces unleashed by Dr. Destroyer. Although she never saw the man personally, she helped contain and capture half a dozen of his allies, henchmen, and creations. When PRIMUS announced the establishment of a new office in Millennium City in 1993, Sanchez immediately put in for a transfer. She vowed never to allow such a tragedy to happen again while she had strength to fight it, and every morning she renews that commitment to her adopted city.

In recent years Silver Avenger Sanchez has become one of the more publicly well-known superhumans in Millennium City, either working solo on PRIMUS projects or assisting local police, disaster agencies, or private super-teams. She was

- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 5 Breakfall 14-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 3 Combat Pilot 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 15-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 3 Criminology 15-
- 3 Demolitions 15-
- 3 Electronics 15-
- 3 Forensic Medicine 15-
- 5 High Society 14-
- 3 Inventor 15-
- 3 AK: Earth 15-
- 3 CK: Millennium City 15-
- 2 CK: London 11-
- 2 KS: Millennium City Politics 11-
- 3 KS: Law 15-
- 3 Mechanics 15-
- 3 Oratory 13-
- 3 Paramedics 15-
- 3 Security Systems 15-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 2 Survival (Jungle) 15-
- 3 System Operations 15-
- 3 Linguist
 - 1 1) Arabic (fluent conversation; English is native)
 - 1 2) Cantonese Chinese (fluent conversation)
 - 1 3) French (fluent conversation)
 - 1 4) German (fluent conversation)
 - 1 5) Japanese (fluent conversation)
 - 1 6) Latin (fluent conversation)
 - 1 7) Mandarin Chinese (fluent conversation)
 - 1 8) Russian (fluent conversation)
 - 1 9) Spanish (fluent conversation)
 - 1 10) Swahili (fluent conversation)

- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Astronomy 15-
- 2 2) SS: Biochemistry 15-
- 2 3) SS: Biology 15-
- 2 4) SS: Biophysics 15-
- 2 5) SS: Botany 15-
- 2 6) SS: Chemistry 15-
- 7 7) SS: Genetics 20-
- 2 8) SS: Geology 15-
- 2 9) SS: Math 15-
- 2 10) SS: Medicine 15-
- 2 11) SS: Metallurgy 15-
- 2 12) SS: Microbiology 15-
- 2 13) SS: Nuclear Physics 15-
- 2 14) SS: Organic Chemistry 15-
- 2 15) SS: Pharmacology 15-
- 2 16) SS: Physics 15-
- 2 17) SS: Robotics 15-
- 2 18) SS: Subatomic Physics 15-
- 2 19) SS: Surgery 15-
- 2 20) SS: Veterinary Medicine 15-
- 5 21) SS: Zoology 18-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 461

Total Cost: 661

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 20 **Hunted:** Dr. Phillippe Moreau (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Protective Of Innocents (Common, Total)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
- 15 **Social Complication:** Public Identity (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 261



instrumental in PRIMUS's efforts to oppose Takofanes's "Blood Moon" attack, garnering herself and the agency a lot of highly positive publicity (to the extent that there's even been private talk in some circles about getting her to run for office). She's earned a reputation as an aggressive go-getter; her superiors are grooming her for a management position when she retires from the field.

Personality/Motivation: Mayte is an excellent PRIMUS agent first and foremost. A bit of an adrenaline junkie, she thrives on the excitement and energy of battling supercriminals, leaping from rooftops, and saving people from disasters. When she takes one of her rare vacations, you can generally find her jumping out of airplanes or scaling sheer cliffs for fun.

She gets along well with almost all of Millennium City's superhuman protectors, whether sanctioned or not, as long as they behave professionally and don't hog all the fun! Her husband, Javier, also works for PRIMUS as a human resources officer. He's not cut out for field work, but his innate calmness provides a vital counterbalance to Mayte's hyperactivity.

Mayte has become good friends with the Champions, particularly Sapphire. The two of them often "pal around" when they have time off; Mayte frequently teases Sapphire about her string of glamorous celebrity boyfriends.

Quote: "All right, people — contain and capture! First we pin down and destroy those robots before they can hurt anyone; then we go after the Ultimates!"

Powers/Tactics: Sanchez has taken the full Silver Avenger tactical course and is a pretty good improviser in the field. She tends to rely on her hand-to-hand fighting skills first, but if they prove ineffective she quickly changes tactics and tries her weapons, using the Bolo Gun to incapacitate speedsters and gadgeteers, or the Flare Gun to slow down villains with ranged attacks until she can close. Her biggest tactical failing is that she overestimates her own invulnerability; she's not quite in the same league as a true "brick," and often puts herself right in the line of fire when she should be more cautious.

Like other Silver Avengers, Sanchez doesn't withstand the effects of injected/ingested poisons and toxins well; her hyper-effective metabolism exacerbates their effects. This extends to alcohol; Silver Avengers are notoriously easy to get drunk.

Campaign Use: Mayte makes an excellent backup or partner to a Millennium City-based PC team. She's regularly out there on the streets mixing it up with bad guys and comes with complete governmental access and authority. She can also act as the loyal opposition — a Hunter, in other words — if the PCs ever find themselves on the wrong side of the law. With a team of PRIMUS agents backing her up, she'll regretfully but firmly try to arrest supers whom the authorities consider "villains" due to circumstances or a criminal's masterful frame job.

You shouldn't significantly alter Mayte's power level up or down unless you do the same for other Silver Avengers in your campaign. Her Characteristics and other abilities are in the standard range for Silver Avengers.

Appearance: Mayte Sanchez is a lovely and athletic Hispanic woman in her late thirties, standing 5'7" and weighing about 130 pounds. She wears a standard-issue PRIMUS jumpsuit with a special patch on the left upper chest signifying her rank as a Silver Avenger. She has long brown hair and brown eyes.

SILVER AVENGER MAYTE SANCHEZ

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
35	STR	25	16-	Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 HTH damage [1]
20	DEX	20	13-	
23	CON	13	14-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
14	EGO	4	12-	
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
3	OMCV	0		
4	DMCV	3		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
12	PD	10		Total: 18 PD (11 rPD)
12	ED	10		Total: 18 ED (11 rED)
12	REC	8		
45	END	5		
13	BODY	3		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 207

Movement: Running: 18m
Leaping: 14m

Cost	Powers	END
14	Flare Gun: Sight Group Flash 8d6 OAF (-1), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
14	Bolo Gun: Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED OAF (-1), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
20	Shock Baton: Multipower, 40-point reserve; all OAF (-1)	
1f	1) Shock Touch: Drain STUN 4d6 OAF (-1), No Range (-½), 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]
1f	2) Club: HA +3d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)	0
7	Efficient Physiology: Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) on 35 STR Activation Roll 14- (-¼)	0

Martial Art: Muay Thai

	<i>Maneuver</i>	<i>OCV</i>	<i>DCV</i>	<i>Notes</i>	
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort	
4	Foot Push	+0	+0	50 STR to Shove	
4	Low Kick	+0	+2	9d6 Strike	
5	Roundhouse	-2	+1	11d6 Strike	
12	Armored Uniform: Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) OIF (-½)				0
5	Toughness: Resistant (+½) for 5 PD/5 ED				0
10	Augmented Physiology: Power Defense (10 Points)				0
6	Swift: Running +6m (18m total)				1
5	Strong Leaper: Leaping +10m (14m forward, 7m upward)				1
6	Enhanced Vision: +3 PER with Sight Group				0
6	PRIMUS Helmet: HRRP (Radio Group) OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)				0

Perks

- 6 Computer Link: PRIMUS database
- 12 Contact: The Champions 11- (very useful Skills/resources, organization)
- 6 Contact: Sapphire 11- (extremely useful skills/resources; good relationship)
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Membership: PRIMUS Silver Avenger
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Federal Police Powers

Skills

- 20 +2 with All Combat
- 4 +2 OCV with Low Kick
- 5 Acrobatics 14-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Bureaucratics 13-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 3 AK: Millennium City 13-
- 2 KS: Criminal Law 11-
- 2 KS: The Law Enforcement World 11-
- 2 KS: PRIMUS 11-
- 1 Language: Arabic (basic conversation; English is Native)
- 1 Language: Spanish (basic conversation)
- 3 PS: PRIMUS Agent 13-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 1 TF: Basic Parachuting
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 229

Total Cost: 436

300 Matching Complications (60)

- 20 **Hunted:** VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Protective Of Innocent (Common, Strong)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 5 **Vulnerability:** 1½ x STUN from Poisons/Toxins (Uncommon)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 136

VICTORY

Background/History: An astronomer and Air Force combat pilot, Kristine Griswold was fortunate enough to be accepted into the US astronaut program. After years of training, she finally had the chance every astronaut dreams of — to be part of a Space Shuttle mission!

The mission was going perfectly until an unpredicted, and unusually intense, burst of solar

radiation bombarded the Shuttle. Kristine's fellow astronauts seemed basically unaffected, but the strange cosmic energies had a definite effect on her. She began to feel poorly, and her temperature rose. After a day of fever, she was suddenly better, and in fact had begun to emit a strange yellowish glow. Her now-pupilless eyes glowed, too.

The mission was quickly scrapped and the Shuttle returned to Earth. Scientists examining Kristine couldn't explain exactly what happened, but their tests confirmed that she'd somehow been granted powers of energy manipulation and control. Rather than waste such a valuable asset as a simple astronaut, the American government persuaded her to become one of its "official" superhuman assets.

Kristine was reluctant to become a hero at first, but she soon found she enjoyed it. As *Victory* (a name chosen for her by the Air Force) she could do more to help people than she ever could as an astronomer and astronaut. Even better, as her powers developed, she gained the ability to survive in space, and even to travel faster than light! She ended up with the best of both worlds.

Victory's served her country as a superhero for nearly two decades now and has worked with most other official American superheroes... and plenty of non-sanctioned ones as well when she needed to. She's fought beside the Army in places like Afghanistan, rescued trapped space station workers, helped with the demolition or creation of federal facilities, assisted disaster victims, and stopped the crimes and schemes of numerous supervillains. The only missions she's turned down so far are NASA's pleas for her to go explore other solar systems and planets, since she's worried about being unable to find her way home. Although her duties leave her with relatively little time to pursue her hobbies (horseback riding and gardening), she wouldn't give up her life for anything.

Personality/Motivation: Victory's a genuinely kindhearted and sympathetic person who gains a deep sense of satisfaction from her heroic activities. Although she's sometimes troubled by the implications and repercussions of having to follow questionable orders when her *Subject To Orders* clashes with her *Code Of The Hero*, she usually finds a way to resolve the conflict to her own satisfaction. She's had to refuse to follow orders less than half a dozen times during her career, and each time her decision was upheld by higher-ranking officers.

Unfortunately, Victory's powers and duties have left her somewhat isolated from society, making her feel lonely (though she'd never admit it). Unable to hide her energy glow and glowing eyes, she can't go anywhere in public without being mobbed by admirers and fans, making it difficult to go on dates, spend a little time shopping, or attend cultural events. She tends to socialize mostly with fellow officers or other superhumans. She'd really like to break out of this rut, but so far hasn't found a way to do so.



VICTORY

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 HTH damage [3]
20	DEX	20	13-	
22	CON	12	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	5	12-	
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
7	OCV	20		
8	DCV	25		
3	OMCV	0		
4	DMCV	3		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	PD	8		Total: 31 PD (21 rPD)
14	ED	12		Total: 35 ED (21 rED)
10	REC	6		
75	END	11		
10	BODY	0		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 210

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 40m

Cost	Powers	END
75	Plasma Manipulation: Multipower, 75-point reserve	
7f	1) Plasma Bolt: Blast 15d6	7
7f	2) Plasma Blast: Blast 10d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
7f	3) Plasma Burn: Blast 12d6 Armor Piercing (+¼)	7
7f	4) Plasma Burst: Blast 10d6 Area Of Effect (22m Radius Explosion; +½)	7
58	Plasma Shields: Multipower, 58-point reserve	
11v	1) Personal Plasma Shield: Resistant Protection (15 PD/15 ED) Allocatable (+¼)	0
8v	2) Energy Screen: Barrier 8 PD/8 ED, 8 BODY (up to 8m long, 2m high, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissable Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½)	
45	Power-Flight: Multipower, 45-point reserve	
4f	1) Flying: Flight 40m, x4 Noncombat	4
2f	2) Spaceflight: FTL Travel (4 LY/day) Costs Endurance (-½)	3
45	Energy Consumption: Absorption 30 BODY (energy) Variable Effect (to any physical Characteristic one at a time; +½)	0
18	Energy-Infused Form: Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED)	0
20	Energy-Infused Form: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Diminished Eating: Once Per Week, Safe Environments: Intense Cold, Intense Heat, High Pressure, High Radiation, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	
15	Eyes Of The Sun: Sight Group Flash Defense (15 points)	0
6	Wrist Communicator: HRRP OIF (-½), Flashed As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0

Perks

- 30 Contacts: various in the U.S. military and government
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Federal Police Powers
- 7 Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance
- 6 Positive Reputation: American military hero (throughout Earth) 14-, +2/+2d6

Skills

- 12 +4 with Plasma Bolt, Blast, and Burn
- 2 Animal Handler (Equines) 14-
- 3 Bureaucratics 14-
- 3 Combat Piloting 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 12-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 2 AK: Seymour Johnson AFB And Environs 11-
- 2 AK: Cape Canaveral And Environs 11-
- 2 KS: Gardening 11-
- 3 KS: The Superhuman World 12-
- 2 KS: U.S. Military Protocol And Procedure 11-
- 2 Navigation (Space) 12-
- 3 Power: Plasma Powers 13-
- 2 PS: US Air Force Pilot 11-
- 2 PS: Astronaut 11-
- 3 Riding 13-
- 3 SS: Astronomy 12-
- 2 SS: Biology 11-
- 3 SS: Meteorology 12-
- 3 SS: Physics 12-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 6 TF: Combat Aircraft, Large Planes, Parachuting (Basic, Advanced), Small Planes, Spaceplanes

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 456

Total Cost: 666

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Code Of The Hero (Common, Total)
- 15 **Social Complication:** Public Identity (Kristine Griswold) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 20 **Vulnerability:** 2 x Effect from Drains (Common)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 266

Quote: “Bombs and missiles aren’t the only things the Air Force has that you need to worry about.”

Powers/Tactics: Through means not understood by conventional science, exposure to intense solar radiation caused Victory to develop energy manipulation powers. (She’s not a mutant; she doesn’t register as one to standard detectors.) The energy she emits and controls is basically similar to plasma, but has some odd differences scientists can’t explain. The mystery of her powers doesn’t really concern Victory, but it has attracted the interest of other parties, including, most ominously, Mechanon (who would like to capture her, drain her energy, and use it to power one of his super-weapons).

Victory can emit bolts and blasts of energy for offensive purposes, or protect herself (and sometimes others) with shields of energy. (Note that the slots in her defensive Multipower are Variable, so she can mix and match Resistant Protection and Barrier to obtain the best result for any given situation.) She can also absorb energy, using it to boost her strength, agility, or resilience. (She also absorbs ambient light and radiation, “feeding” on them so she only has to consume physical food about once a week.) Since her entire body’s infused with energy, she doesn’t have to breathe, can withstand the effects of environments that would kill normal humans, and can fly. In space, she can attain velocities exceeding the speed of

light; she sometimes goes out “exploring” the greater galaxy, but rarely goes far for fear of getting lost or being away from Earth when she’s needed to cope with some emergency.

Campaign Use: Besides using Victory as you might other official government heroes (*i.e.*, to create stories based on the conflict between duty and ethics), the most interesting thing you can do with her is delve into the mystery of her origin. What caused the unusual solar flare? Why did it grant her powers, and no one else? Will her powers continue to grow and strengthen, perhaps to the point where she becomes a danger to others? Is her origin connected to the similar origin of the supervillainess Photon?

Victory should be powerful enough as-is for most campaigns. If she proves a little too weak, boost her defenses, and perhaps allow her Absorption to feed into her *Plasma Manipulation* Multipower reserve and Blasts. If she’s too strong, trim a few points off SPD and other Characteristics, drop her *Plasma Manipulation* Multipower to 60 Active Point powers, and reduce her other powers accordingly (you may also want to get rid of her Absorption entirely).

Appearance: Kristine Griswold is a woman in her early 40s, though she appears to be about 30. She has short blonde hair and blue eyes, and stands 5’10” tall; her features are well-known from her many appearances on television news shows and interviews. As Victory, she wears a simple costume — mostly a metallic-looking gold, with red boots and highlights, and the sleeves ending above her wrists to leave her hands uncovered. She wears no mask or headgear. A soft yellow-gold glow surrounds her body at all times, and her pupilless eyes glow a more intense gold.

UNTIL TECHNOLOGY

Here are a few examples of UNTIL technology in addition to the ones listed on the UNTIL Agent’s character sheet.

U-07 “Rockabye” Sleep Gas Grenade: Many of UNTIL’s weapons are designed to take targets alive or minimize the risk of civilian casualties. This knockout gas grenade, frequently issued to agents going into combat, is a perfect example.

Blast 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing] or appropriate Immunity; +1), Area Of Effect (12m Radius; +¾), Constant (+½) (65 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by high winds or rain; -½). **Total cost: 24 points.**

U-KTF “Katie” Blaster Assault Rifle: An improved version of the standard U-CCC Blaster Rifle, with automatic fire capability.

Blast 10d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½) (100 Active Points); OAF (-1). **Total cost: 50 points.**

UNTIL Force-Field Belt: Only the largest field offices can afford these expensive items, which are issued to agents assigned to heavy combat missions.

Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED) (36 Active Points); OIF (-½). **Total cost: 24 points.**

U-SHL “Shellie” Blaster Pistol: The standard sidearm issued to UNTIL agents. Trim and functional, the U-SHL resembles a large ballistic handgun in some respects, though the focusing crystal in the muzzle and the weapon’s gold-colored body and high-tech look give it away.

Blast 8d6, 32 Charges (+¼) (50 Active Points); OAF (-1). **Total cost: 25 points.**

UNTIL AGENT (URBAN)

Description: This character sheet represents a typical UNTIL agent of the Urban branch (to which most UNTIL agents belong).

Rank-and-file UNTIL agents going into combat wear a distinctive navy blue and white uniform, designated the U-AS Basic Combat Uniform, which is made from high-tech ballistic cloth. Sleeker than most military uniforms but by no means skintight, the U-AS consists of a long-sleeved jacket-like tunic that’s navy blue on the right two-thirds of the breast and sleeve and white on the left third and sleeve, navy blue trousers, and white non-laced boots. The pants have several pockets for carrying personal items and gear; the tunic has no pockets at all, but does have rank insignia on the upper arms, and pins with the rank insignia on the tunic’s raised collar. The piping on the uniform is gold. In situations where they’re not expecting combat, agents often switch to a uniform featuring a short-sleeved tunic and a multi-pocketed vest.

For everyday occasions, agents cover their heads with navy blue berets. In the field, they

UNTIL AGENT (URBAN)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
14	CON	4	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 11 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
6	REC	2		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
24	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 65

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

37	U-CCC "3C" Blaster Rifle: Blast 10d6 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½); OAF (-1)	[32]	
2	U-A1 Basic Sight: +1 OCV OAF (-1), Only With UNTIL Rifles (-0)	0	
2	U-A2 Infrared Sight: Infrared Perception (Sight Group) OAF (-1), Only With UNTIL Rifles (-0)	0	
7	UB-1 Battle Knife: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼)	1	
Martial Arts: UNTIL Commando Training			
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes		
4	Block	+2 +2	Block, Abort
4	Punch	+0 +2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0 +1	3d6 + v/10; Target Falls
12	U-AS Basic Combat Uniform: Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) OIF (-½)	0	
2	U-AS Combat Helmet (Standard): Resistant Protection (2 PD/2 ED) OIF (-½), Only Protects The Head (-1)	0	
6	U-AS Combat Helmet (Standard): Radio Perception/ Transmission (Radio Group) OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0	
var	Other equipment as needed for mission		

Perks

1	Fringe Benefit: International Driver's License
5	Fringe Benefit: International Police Powers
2	Fringe Benefit: International Weapon Permit
2	Fringe Benefit: Membership (UNTIL Private)
1	Fringe Benefit: Passport



Skills

2	+1 OCV with U-CCC Blaster Assault Rifle
3	Criminology 12-
2	KS: International Law And Law Enforcement 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
2	KS: The United Nations 11-
2	KS: UNTIL 11-
2	KS: World Politics 11-
2	Language: additional language (fluent conversation; must be English if English is not Native Language)
3	PS: UNTIL Agent 12-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades
12	Choose 12 Character Points' worth of the following: Bureaucratics, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Deduction, Demolitions, Electronics, Lockpicking, Mechanics, Paramedics, Security Systems, Skill Levels, Stealth, Streetwise, Systems Operation, Tactics, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 125

Total Cost: 190

50 Matching Complications (25)

5	Distinctive Features: UNTIL uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: UNTIL (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Complication: Loyal To UNTIL And Its Ideals (Common, Strong)
20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 25

Experience Points: 140

wear protective helmets that cover the top and sides of the head, but leave the face uncovered (special high-tech goggles can be attached to provide night-sight and similar capabilities). The helmets are navy blue, with the UNTIL symbol in white on both sides, and include communications equipment.

UNTIL agents typically carry one or more weapons. For routine assignments, the U-SHL Blaster Pistol (known affectionately to the agents as a “Shellie”), worn on the hip in a navy blue holster. When danger threatens, agents carry the U-CCC Blaster Rifle (a rifle-sized version of the U-SHL).

UNTIL makes some sartorial accommodations for agents’ religious and cultural preferences. For example, Sikh agents may wear a turban instead of a beret.

THE BAD GUYS

Here are a few examples of agents, minions, and other bad guys the PCs might encounter. See *Champions Villains* for character sheets for hundreds of Champions Universe supervillains.

VIPER TECHNOLOGY

Here are a few choice items from VIPER’s arsenals.

V-12 “Destructor” Blaster Cannon: The heaviest weapon in VIPER’s standard arsenal is the V-12 cannon. It breaks out this tripod-mounted weapon, which requires a crew of two for proper operation, when it expects major opposition from superheroes or the likes of UNTIL.

Blast 20d6, 30 Boostable Charges (+½) (150 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Requires Multiple Users (2 agents; -¼). **Total cost: 54 points**

VB-S1A “Shorty” Blaster Pistol Variant: VIPER’s most popular sidearm has been tinkered with and adapted to many different situations. The S1A is one of the most common variants; it increases the weapon’s ability to penetrate armor.

Blast 7d6, Armor Piercing (+¼) (44 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼). **Total cost: 19 points**

VE-A1 “Trapper” Trapweb Launcher: VIPER agents often use this rifle to immobilize superheroes. However, if damaged, the Trapper is dangerously prone to rupturing (on an 11—whenever the weapon takes BODY damage), which can prove fatal to the user (he takes 2d6 Killing Damage, and is thoroughly Entangled to boot).

Entangle 8d6, 6 PD/6 ED (70 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), 16 Charges (-0). **Total cost: 31 points**

VG-1 Frag Grenade: VIPER frequently issues grenades to its agents, finding them a cheap way to really boost a squad’s firepower. This is the most common type of grenade used.

RKA 2d6+1, Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 16 points**

VIPER AGENT (GENERAL COMBAT)

Description: The typical VIPER agent — the lowest-ranking and least powerful member of the organization — is the “General Combat Specialist.” He’s received the standard VIPER training, but doesn’t have any advanced or specialized skills or equipment.

The “GCS” wears a standard Basic Combat Uniform (“BCU”) in green and yellow. It consists of a tight-fitting green pants and tunic with yellow non-laced boots, belt, gauntlets, and piping. The VIPER symbol appears on the chest in various colors denoting rank. (Elite VIPER agents, and all VIPER officers, have the insignia symbol on the right breast; some officers have different coloration patterns for their tunics.) The BCU is made of a sophisticated armored cloth to protect the wearer, and includes varying pockets and pouches for carrying gear and supplies.



VIPER AGENT

GENERAL COMBAT SPECIALIST

Val Char Cost Roll Notes

15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6

5 OCV 10

5 DCV 10

3 OMCV 0

3 DMCV 0

3 SPD 10 *Phases: 4, 8, 12*4 PD 2 *Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)*4 ED 2 *Total: 10 ED (6 rED)*

6 REC 2

25 END 1

12 BODY 2

30 STUN 5 **Total Characteristics Cost: 63****Movement:** Running: 12m

Cost Powers

END

32 **VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle:** Multipower, 52-point reserve [32]
32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1)

2f **1) Basic Setting:** Blast 8d6
OAF (-1)

2f **2) Autofire Setting:** Blast 7d6
Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (200"; -¼)

7 **Rifle-butt Club:** HA +3d6 1
OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)

15 **VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol:** Blast 7d6 [12]
OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼)

12 **VIPER Fang:** HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR) 0
Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1)
plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA [1rc]
OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)

Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/10; Target Falls

10 **VIPER BCU (Basic):** Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) 0
OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -¼)

2 **VIPER Helmet (Basic) Protection:** Resistant Protection (2 PD/2 ED) 0
OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -¼)

6 **VIPER Helmet (Basic) Communications System:** 0
Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group)
OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)

Perks

1 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER)

Skills

6 +2 with VIPER Blasters

3 Combat Driving 12-
3 Concealment 11-
3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
3 Interrogation 12-
2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
1 KS: The Superhuman World 8-
2 KS: VIPER 11-
2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
3 Paramedics 11-
3 Persuasion 12-
3 Shadowing 11-
3 Stealth 12-
3 Streetwise 12-
3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 147**Total Cost: 210**

50 Matching Complications (25)

5 **Distinctive Features:** VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)

10 **Hunted:** VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)

15 **Psychological Complication:** Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 25**Experience Points: 160**

Attached to the VIPER agent's belt, and also colored yellow, are a holster for the agent's VB-S1 Blaster Pistol and a sheath for his VIPER Fang combat knife. The VB-S1, nicknamed "Shorty" because it looks like a cut-off, stumpy version of the VB-A1 Blaster Rifle, has a fairly heavy body tapering down to a narrower muzzle, and a roughly triangular-shaped guard extending from the bottom of the grip and attaching to the middle bottom of the barrel. The weapon's power cell fits into the grip.

In the field, a VIPER agent wears a distinctive helmet, green with a one-way gold-colored faceplate that hides the wearer's identity; the wearer's rank insignia is painted on each side of the helmet. In addition to protecting the head, the helmet contains communications gear, and other systems can be installed as well.

VIPER AGENT

HEAVY WEAPONS SPECIALIST

Val Char Cost Roll Notes

18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6

5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12

5	PD	3		Total: 13 PD (8 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 12 ED (8 rED)

7	REC	3		
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25	END	1		
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12	BODY	2		
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30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 68
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Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

			END
47	VB-A4 "Jackhammer" Blaster Rifle: Blast 12d6	[30]	
	Autofire (5 shots; +½), 30 Charges (+¼); OAF (-1), Limited Range (200m; -¼)		
7	Rifle-butt Club: HA +3d6	1	
	OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)		
16	VL-S1 "Redeye" Laser Pistol: RKA 2d6	[10]	
	OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼)		
	plus +1 OCV		
	OAF (-1)		
	plus +1 versus Range Modifier		
	OAF (-1)		
16	VG-1 Frag Grenade: RKA 2d6+1	[4]	
	Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 4 Charges (-1)		
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	0	
	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1)		
	plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA	[1rc]	
	OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)		

Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	5½d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3½d6 + v/10; Target Falls

14	VIPER BCU (Elite): Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED)	0
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OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -¼)

3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection: Resistant Protection (4 PD/4 ED)	0
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OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -1¾)

6	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System: HRRP (Radio Group)	0
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OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System: Nightvision	0
	OIF (-½)	

Perks

2	Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Elite Agent)	
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Skills

6	+2 with VIPER Blasters	
3	Combat Driving 12-	
3	Concealment 11-	
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-	
3	Interrogation 12-	
2	KS: The Local Underworld 11-	
2	KS: Military Technology 11-	
1	KS: The Superhuman World 8-	
2	KS: VIPER 11-	
2	PS: VIPER Agent 11-	
3	Paramedics 11-	
3	Persuasion 12-	
3	Shadowing 11-	
3	Stealth 12-	
3	Streetwise 12-	
3	Tactics 11-	
3	Teamwork 12-	
9	WF: Small Arms, Blades, Emplaced Weapons, Flame-throwers, Grenade Launchers, Heavy Machine Guns, Shoulder- Fired Weapons	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 199

Total Cost: 267

50 Matching Complications (25)

5	Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)	
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10	Hunted: VIPER (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)	
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15	Psychological Complication: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)	
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20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)	
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Total Complications Points: 25

Experience Points: 217

VIPER AGENT (HEAVY WEAPONS SPECIALIST)

Description: The VIPER Heavy Combat Specialist is an agent trained to use VIPER's heavier weapons and equipped with more powerful equipment than a standard agent.

DEMON BROTHER

Description: The character sheet on page 194 represents a typical Brother (or Sister) of DEMON — the lowest-ranking member of the organization. Brothers possess no spellcasting abilities themselves, but come equipped with enchanted Amulets of Protection, and Brazen Wands that can project deadly bolts of force. (Like most DEMON enchanted items, these are Personal Foci, usable by no one else, and crumble to dust after about a week of being separated from their owners.) They also have some magical lore and knowledge of the underworld.

Brothers typically dress in dark purple pants and vests with gold embroidered designs, though they may wear other garb for specific rituals, when in disguise, or the like.

DEMON MORBANE

Background/History: This character sheet represents a typical Morbane of the Outer Circle — a captain of DEMON, one who leads the organization's troops and cultists in battle and on important missions. The Morbanes' histories vary, but all share a lust for dark, secret knowledge... and for power of all kinds.

Personality/Motivation: Morbanes are uniformly evil. They care only about themselves — about how much power and riches they can accumulate, particularly when they can do so at the expense of their fellows. They're loyal to DEMON, but only because they see it as providing the surest path to greater power and influence.

Morbanes are full DEMON initiates; they understand the true nature and purpose of the organization. That they accept this fact without hesitation only goes to show how corrupted their souls truly are.

Quote: "Do you think your pathetic gods can save you? Nothing can withstand the might of DEMON!"

Powers/Tactics: A Morbane is a DEMON sorcerer-priest, easily as powerful as most superheroes. When they combine their powers, and have troops to back them, Morbanes present a terrifying threat. Their black magic powers (some the result of training, some considered gifts from the Kings of Edom) range from manipulations of the mind, to the equally deadly hellfire, to the ability to summon demonlings. (More experienced and powerful Morbanes can Summon more



powerful infernal beings, and have more Active Points in their Multipower reserves and slots.) As his badge of office, each Morbane carries a deadly enchanted mace that weakens its targets with every strike (and some Morbanes have improved their weapons, adding other abilities, such as an Aid CON linked to the Drain CON).

Campaign Use: Because every Morbane is an individual, the GM should tailor each one who appears in the game to represent that character's personality, preferred courses of study in the black arts, and so forth. Each Morbane should be unique and intriguing, not simply a cookie-cutter foe to be grouped with DEMON agents. Remember, Morbanes are built on as many points as starting superheroes!



If you need to tone the Morbanes down for your campaign, reduce their Multipowers to 40-point reserves, cut their defenses by about one-third, and reduce their Combat Skill Levels to +1. Strengthening the Morbane is usually a matter of increasing his SPD and defenses, but sometimes you should increase the size of his Multipower as well.

Appearance: Each Morbane differs; some are male, some female... and some seemingly not of human stock anymore. Though they dress according to personal preference in civilian life, and sometimes use disguises for missions, they usually wear dark purple pants, gloves, and high-collared hood when expecting to confront heroes. When performing rituals and functioning in their role as captains of DEMON, Morbanes usually wear the following. First, a black, hooded cloak, with the hood drawn up over his head. The cloak

is unusual, with long, thin panels hanging down in front down each side of the body. Second, he conceals his face with a black, bat-shaped domino mask. Third, beneath the cloak he wears blood-red robes that reach down to the wearer's ankles, but with a knee-length slit up the front and back for easier running. Embroidered on the chest of the robe in gold is the stylized goat-horned demon's head symbol of DEMON. The robe's sleeves are tight, fitting into the wearer's black gloves (he also wears black boots). Fourth, a Morbane carries one obvious and visible weapon: an enchanted mace with a long, almost cylindrical head and several spikes placed symmetrically and evenly on each side. The pommel of the mace is often shaped like a skull.

DEMON ENCHANTED ITEMS

Here are a few magical weapons and other items used by DEMON.

Blazing Amulet: These amulets, worn on a chain around the neck, can emit a burst of light powerful enough to blind many foes.

Sight Group Flash 8d6, Area Of Effect (12m Cone; +½), Trigger (magical command word, activating Trigger is a Zero Phase Action, resetting Trigger requires a Half Phase Action; +¼) (70 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 20 points.**

Phantom's Mantle: By wrapping this diaphanous cloak around himself, a member of DEMON can become insubstantial, able to walk through walls and avoid attacks.

Desolidification (affected by magic), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OIF (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase to activate; -¼). **Total cost: 34 points.**

Ring Of Rescue: Morbanes often use these enchanted rings to escape from their foes when the battle turns against them.

Teleportation 40m, x32 Noncombat (60 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Charge (-2) (total cost: 17 points) plus 1 Floating Fixed Location (5 Active Points); OIF (-½) (total cost: 3 points). **Total cost: 20 points.**

Troll-Axe: These elaborately-carved, enormous axes are much more light-weight than they appear, making them dangerous weapons.

HKA 2½d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-¼). **Total cost: 27 points.**

DEMON MORBANE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
18	DEX	16	13-	
18	CON	8	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	8	13-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
6	OMCV	9		
6	DMCV	9		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	PD	8		Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	8		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
8	REC	4		
35	END	3		
10	BODY	0		
32	STUN	6		Total Characteristics Cost: 157

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

END

30	Black Magic: Multipower, 60-point reserve	
	All slots have Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), and Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	
3f	1) Domination: Mind Control 8d6	0
	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	
3f	2) Befuddlement: Mental Illusions 8d6	0
	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	
3f	3) Spell Of Torment: Mental Blast 4d6	0
	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	
3f	4) Touch Of Terror: Drain PRE 4d6	0
	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	
3f	5) Hellfire: Blast 9d6	0
	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	
3f	6) Hellgate: Teleport 30m, x16 Noncombat, x8 Increased Mass	6
3f	7) Spell-Shattering: Dispel Magic 13d6	6
	Variable Effect (any one Magic spell or power at a time; +½)	
3f	8) Call Demonling: Summon 4 Demonlings built on up to 250 Total Points each	6
17	Enchanted Mace: HKA 1d6 (2d6-1 with STR)	2+[8]
	+2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½); OAF (-1)	
	plus Drain CON 1d6	
	Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +1); OAF (-1), Linked (-½), No Range (-½), 8 Charges (-½)	
12	Defensive Spells: Resistant Protection (4 PD/4 ED)	0
12	Enchanted Robes: Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED)	0
	OIF (-½)	

3	Soul Gem: Mental Defense (5 points)	0
	OIF (-½)	
3	Soul Gem: Power Defense (5 points)	0
	OIF (-½)	
10	Spellsight: Detect Magic 13- (Sight Group), Discriminatory	0
5	Darksight: Nightvision	0
30	Individual Morbane abilities, to be created by GM	

Perks

8	Fringe Benefit: Membership (Morbane of DEMON)	
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Skills

10	+2 with <i>Black Magic</i> Multipower	
3	Analyze Magic 13-	
3	Concealment 13-	
3	Conversation 13-	
2	Cryptography 13-; Translation Only (-½)	
3	High Society 13-	
3	Interrogation 13-	
3	CK: City Of Operation 13-	
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-	
5	KS: Greater Mysteries Of DEMON 15-	
3	Language: Latin (completely fluent)	
2	Language: another ancient language of GM's choice (fluent conversation)	
3	Oratory 13-	
13	Power: Magic 18-	
5	Soul Gem: +4 to Power: Magic roll; OIF (-½)	0
3	Stealth 13-	
22	22 points' worth of power and Skills of the GM's choice	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 243

Total Cost: 400

400 Matching Complications (75)

10	Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)	
20	Hunted: Trismegistus Council (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)	
10	Hunted: DEMON (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)	
20	Psychological Complication: Powerhungry, Self-Centered, And Amoral (Common, Total)	
15	Social Complication: Secret Identity (varies) (Frequently, Major)	
15	Susceptibility: to holy places and objects, takes 1d6 damage per Turn is on holy ground, in a holy place, or within 2m of a holy object (Common)	
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy/Divine Magic (Uncommon)	
10	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy/Divine Magic (Uncommon)	

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 0

DEMON BROTHER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
12	DEX	4	11-	
12	CON	2	11-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
12	EGO	2	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	Presence Attack: 2½d6
4	OCV	5		
4	DCV	5		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 9 PD (6 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 9 ED (6 rED)
4	REC	0		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
22	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 27

Movement: Running: 12m



Cost Powers **END**

- 14 **Brazen Wand:** Multipower, 35-point reserve [8]
All OAF (-1), 8 Charges for entire Multipower (-½)
- 2f **1) Eldritch Blast:** Blast 7d6
OAF (-1)
- 2f **2) Deadly Blast:** RKA 2d6+1
OAF (-1)
- 12 **Amulet Of Protection:** Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) 0
OIF (-½)
- 3 **Amulet Of Protection:** Power Defense (5 points) 0
OIF (-½)

Perks

- 1 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Brother of DEMON)

Skills

- 1 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 8-
- 2 KS: Lesser Mysteries of DEMON 11-
- 2 PS: DEMON Brother 11-
- 3 Stealth 11-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 9 Choose nine Character Points' worth of Skills from the following list: Combat Skill Levels, Concealment, Conversation, Cryptography, Disguise, Forgery, Gambling, Interrogation, Persuasion, Skill Levels, Survival, Tactics, any Background Skill

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 54

Total Cost: 81

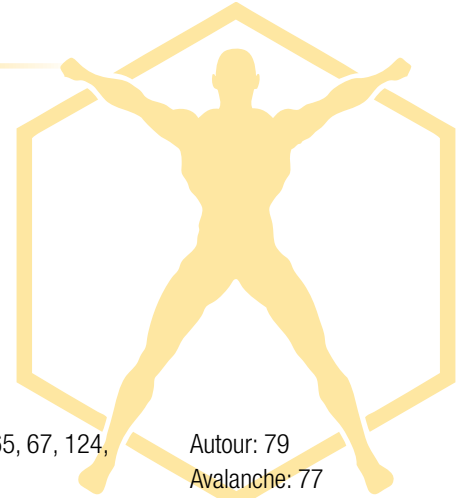
50 Matching Complications (25)

- 5 **Distinctive Features:** DEMON robes (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 20 **Hunted:** UNTIL (or like organization) (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI)
- 10 **Hunted:** DEMON (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Loyal To DEMON And Its Ideals (Common, Strong)
- 15 **Social Complication:** Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 25

Experience Points: 31

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