

CHAMPIONS

SUPERPOWERED ROLEPLAYING



Aaron Allston

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Authors: Aaron Allston, Steven S. Long

Editing & Development: Steven S. Long

Layout and Graphic Design: Andy Mathews

Cover Art: Storn Cook

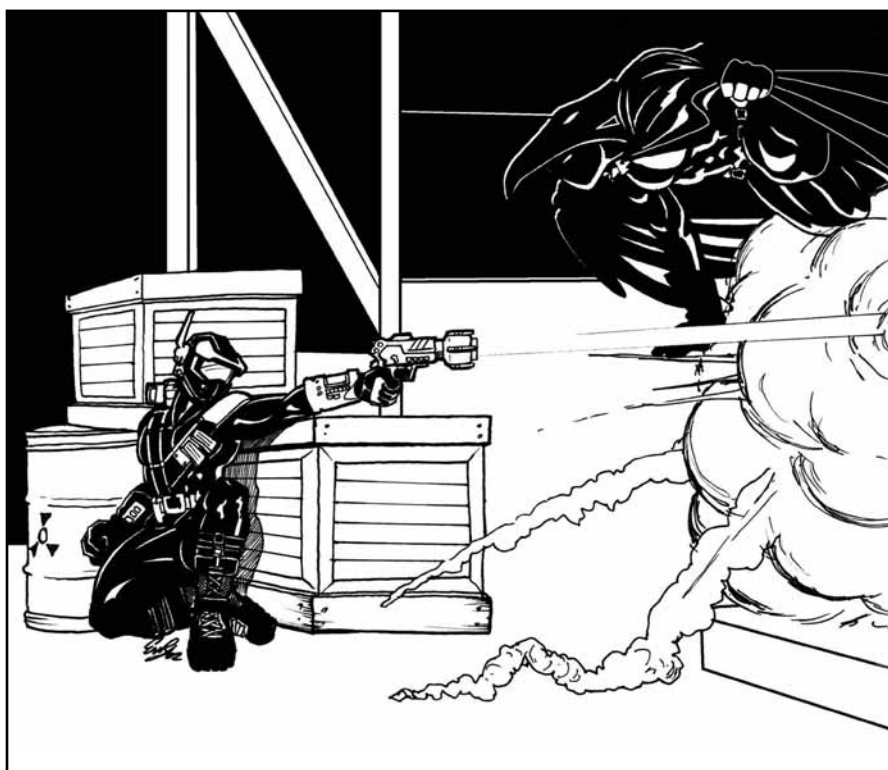
Interior Artwork: Storn Cook, Andrew Cremeans, Albert Deschesne,
Malcolm T. Harrison, Jeff Hebert, Scott Heine, Bryce Nakagawa, Eric Rademaker, Greg Smith

Dedication: To all the *Champions* and *HERO System* fans out there who have kept this game alive and vibrant for over 20 amazing years.

A WORD OR TWO OF APPRECIATION

Aaron's Special Thanks: Thanks must go to the players who have made the Strike Force Universe campaigns so much fun, and so instructive to a gamemaster and writer, over the years: Mark Bennett, Eric Bunker, Earl Cooley III, Kerry Gaber, Jeff Jacobson, Jan Lewellen, Beth Loubet, Denis Loubet, Billy Moore, Matt Pinsonneault, Susan Pinsonneault, Bob Quinlan, Roxanne Quinlan, Luray Richmond, Mark Richmond, Allen Sikes, Beth Ann Sikes, and Sean Summers.

Steve Special Thanks: Steve would like to thank the Calculator Commandos who once again took up calculator and pen to make sure the math was correct: Jeff and Cintra Bristol, Patrick Davis, Mark Ewbank, Bryan Sewell, and Leah Watts. But the errors remain my fault.



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Produced and distributed by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games.

Stock Number: DOJHERO200

ISBN Number: 1-58366-004-6

<http://www.herogames.com>

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INTRODUCTION



"Up in the sky – look!"

Those words opened each of the seventeen *Superman* short films produced by the animation studio of Max and Dave Fleischer in the 1940s. Spoken as if by an everyday man glimpsing something astonishing in the air above, they made it clear to the audience that it would soon witness uncommon wonders.

And it was true. In each entry in that groundbreaking cartoon series, audiences witnessed Superman, the first and arguably most popular of all the costumed superhumans, using the powers that were his alien birthright to battle giant robots, natural and unnatural disasters, enemy spies, and supernatural monsters.

These cartoons were, of course, passive entertainment — the members of the audience could imagine they were the superhero, accomplishing remarkable feats of strength and daring, but those were solitary imaginings, seldom shared, inevitably forgotten. With roleplaying games such as the *HERO System*, the audience becomes a set of participants, and the superhero up on the big screen is transformed into a more personal alter ego, one designed to give the player exactly the experience he previously could only imagine, and to share that experience with others in a collaborative story.

Champions is a set of rules, guidelines, and advice you can use to run superhero campaigns in the style of your favorite comic books — or, if your tastes lean toward other sources of superhero adventure, of cartoons, movies, television shows, radio shows, or movie serials.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Champions is designed both for players experienced with superhero roleplaying and those who are new to this style and genre of play. Nothing in these pages is secret or for the GM's eyes only, so every reader can simply choose to read it all the way through and then decide which portions he wants to utilize.

Chapter One, *Truth, Justice, And The American Way: The Superhero Genre*, describes what superhero comic books, and the campaigns based on them, are like. Players who are familiar with the comic books can skip this chapter initially, if they wish. They already know many of the genre conventions this chapter describes, but they should eventually return to this chapter to read how the game tends to implement those conventions. Players who are not familiar with superhero comic books should definitely read Chapter One.

Chapter Two, *Improbable Origins: Character Creation*, talks about using the *HERO System* rules to

build superhero characters.

Everyone — players and GMs, those familiar with the comics and those who are not — should read this chapter. Gamemasters may wish to pay special attention to the Quick Superhero Generator, a tool for the rapid generation of super-characters in situations where you don't have time to create a character in the more traditional manner.

Chapter Three, *Blasters And Jetpacks: Superhero Technology*, describes gadgets, vehicles, and headquarters as they are used by characters in comic book environments. Players who'd like to figure out how to spend some unused Character Points can browse through these pages for ideas; GMs who need a quick selection of devices for the NPCs in an upcoming adventure can use this chapter as a handy reference. When it's time for characters to begin building their own vehicles and headquarters, they should return here and re-read the sections related to those subjects.

Chapter Four, *...Comes Great Responsibility: Gamemastering Champions*, as is evident from its title, includes advice for GMs of superhero campaigns. But even players with no interest in running a campaign should give this chapter a look, if only to have an idea of what the GM may expect of them and what they should expect of their GM.

Chapter Five, *The Champions*, provides a few sourcebook-style examples from the *Champions Universe*, the official *Champions* campaign setting of Hero Games, to get you started. It includes writeups for a complete superhero team, the Champions, as well as their base, vehicle, and seven of their enemies. Its members can serve as examples of character designs for players who are still new to the rules. In addition, its members might end up as NPCs in your own campaign, if the GM so wishes.

All together, these chapters will serve as a handy jumping-off point for your own adventures. This book, like many Hero Games products, is a toolkit — one addressing a particular genre. Rather than telling you the One True Way of doing something, it typically discusses the options and alternatives (to make you aware of them), and then lets *you* decide how to implement something in your game or build a particular power.

As with every other set of rules and recommendations related to the *HERO System*, you should always remember two important things: first, if you're putting together your own campaign, you should adopt any rules that help you have fun and abandon those that don't; and second, if you know enough about the game to question something in it, you also probably know enough to change it to your satisfaction.

So fetch your impossibly bright, ridiculously bulletproof underwear from the dryer and prepare to have some fun!



CHAPTER ONE:

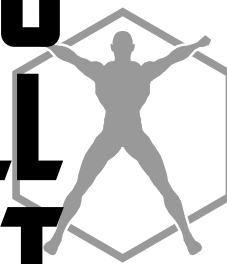
TRUTH, JUSTICE & THE AMERICAN WAY: THE SUPERHERO GENRE

If you've played the *HERO System*, you're familiar with the notion of character conception — the work you, as a player, do to create a character with a well-defined personality, a logically consistent set of Skills, and so forth. This chapter discusses *campaign conception*, using some of the same methods you'd employ to create a superhero character. It does so by reviewing the superhero genre as a whole, looking at its major periods and subgenres, including their special features, conventions, and “bits,” showcasing the major aspects of each and discussing how to represent or

use them in game terms.

For that reason, this chapter frequently speaks to the GM, but it's as of much use for the players. Players, especially those not familiar with comic books, need to understand the nature and features of the superhero genre as much as the GM, so they can design appropriate characters and roleplay them properly. After reading this chapter, you can go on the Chapter Two, *Superhero Character Creation*, or Chapter Four, *Gamemastering Champions*, for more information and ideas about your respective role in the gaming group.

WHAT SUPERHERO STORIES ARE ALL ABOUT



As far back as human storytelling can record, there have been stories about superheroes. Naturally, the bards and commentators didn't always use that word to describe them, but these characters possessed most of the traits of the modern superhero, including:

- Greater-than-human abilities
- Distinctive modes of dress
- Distinctive combat skills
- Champion-to-champion interaction

As an example, take a look at Heracles (Hercules), the preeminent hero of Greek mythology. As the son of a god, he had superhuman strength. He had a distinctive mode of dress (he wore the skin of the Nemean Lion as his cloak). In a time when the spear and the sword were the preferred weapons of the noble warrior, he carried a big club as his weapon of choice. And his adventures often brought him into alliance with or conflict with the other big-name heroes of his day: Theseus, Telamon, Jason, Polydeuces, Castor.

Where these characters stopped short of being modern superheroes, though, was in their lack of one characteristic:

- Adherence to a higher code

Heroes of the ages of myth were warriors and representatives of their individual tribes or nations. They killed without mercy, often without reflection. They helped their friends on raids and adventures even when their friends were performing tasks that would, by every modern analysis, be considered pure evil. They respected no laws, and the notion of "rights" was still thousands of years in the future. If brought to the modern era, most of them would be far more comfortable becoming supervillains or vigilantes — though many would be charismatic, popular ones. Comic book superheroes, on the other hand, tend to follow a code of conduct. They act "heroically" — they're morally upright, courageous, self-sacrificing, don't use lethal force, and so on. There are exceptions, of course, but throughout the history of the genre, most "four-color heroes" (as they're called) act this way. (See *Code Of The Hero*, page 67.)

A superhero story, of course, is a story in which one or more superheroes interact with vil-

lains, other characters, or forces of nature, and the reader's interest and pleasure derive from watching how these heroes solve problems (often through combat or similar adventures involving superhuman powers) and balance their human natures with their superhuman natures. But a superhero *campaign* has some additional things to accomplish. Every episode (game session) or two, a superhero campaign should:

- Give every player character a task to accomplish
- Give every player character an opportunity to shine as only he or she can

Roleplaying games are about wish fulfillment, and superhero campaigns are an ultimate expression of wish fulfillment. Players can act as characters who are as unlike them as humanly possible. The average can become brilliant, the weak can become super-powerful, the insufficiently socialized can become incredibly popular.

But, while it's easy to design all these traits into a character sheet, this doesn't do anyone any good unless a campaign is set up to allow a character to showcase those traits. What use is it to have STR 80 if there are no gigantic boulders to throw around, or a Flight power if adventure after adventure consists of office politics taking place in the confines of a cramped building?

So it's not enough to be able to *build* a superhero character; a player has to have the opportunity to *act* like a superhero. And the first thing that allows a super to act like a super is his environment — the campaign world, and the way it works unlike our world.

Just like a character, a campaign has several types of traits. They include:

- Period (of history)
- Timeline (leading up to the campaign)
- Mood (campaign atmosphere)
- Sources (for superpowers)

Once you, as a GM, have settled on the broad details of these traits, you can allow your players to begin creating or adapting characters for your campaign.



DEFINING COMIC BOOK PERIODS

The periods used in *Champions* to define different eras of comic book history for gaming — the Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Iron Ages — aren't necessarily the same as those adopted by comics historians, because (a) the needs of gaming and of comic books aren't necessarily identical, and (b) not all comics historians share the same opinions on various stages of comics history. For example, some historians disagree as to exactly when the Silver Age ended, or whether there's been a Bronze Age and an Iron Age, or if the Silver just segues into the Bronze and we haven't reached an Iron Age yet. Each serious student and fan of the genre probably has own ideas on the subject. So, if you want to run a campaign set in the late 1970s and call it an *Iron Age Champions* campaign, based on your own opinions about the subject or the nature of the campaign, feel free. After all, even today, in the twenty-first century, some companies publish comics that have more of the tone of the Silver Age than the Iron Age.

The use of the terms Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Iron shouldn't be construed as a comment on the relative quality of comics in the different periods. They're just convenient designations, used by long custom. Each period has its gems, and each its trash.

Traditionally, superhero comic books have been set in recognizable periods of Earth history, and those periods have usually had consistent, recognizable characteristics you can adapt to a *HERO System* campaign. This section reviews each of those periods, including the more unusual features involved and whether to use them.

Most superhero comic books, and consequently most campaigns designed to simulate them, are set on Earth sometime between the start of World War II in 1939 and the present day. These campaigns usually draw a considerable amount of inspiration from the real-world events that took place in the appropriate periods. Campaigns set in the 1940s are heavily influenced by the events of World War II; campaigns set in the 1960s are influenced by the social upheavals of that era; and so on. Following the traditions of the comic books and their fans, *Champions* divides the standard twentieth/twenty-first-century campaign era choices into several distinct periods and discusses the advantages and disadvantages each one offers a campaign. But beyond that, other periods — the far future, the distant past — are also appropriate for superhero gaming.

THE GOLDEN AGE

Campaigns set in the so-called Golden Age of Comics — *Golden Age Champions* campaigns — take place in the period of roughly 1939 to the mid-1950s, and often concern themselves with these events, elements, and trends:

WORLD WAR II

In the 1920s and 1930s, Fascist organizations — groups devoted to the notion that the nation or race was the only thing that was important — gained power in nations such as Japan, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Eventually the expansionist natures of some of these nations brought them into conflict with surrounding countries, with war breaking out in Asia in the early 1930s and in Europe in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. In December 1941, Japan's attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii brought the United States into the war.

In superhero campaigns, adventures prior to the advent of the war often bring heroes into conflict with the superpowered representatives and spies of the Fascist nations and their allies. When war begins, but prior to the U.S. involvement, some supers go overseas to fight the aggressor nations; when the U.S. does enter the war, the majority of American supers find a way to contribute to the

war effort, either by banding together to fight the supers and other threats of the Fascist states or by joining the armed forces and becoming part of military-sponsored special superhero units.

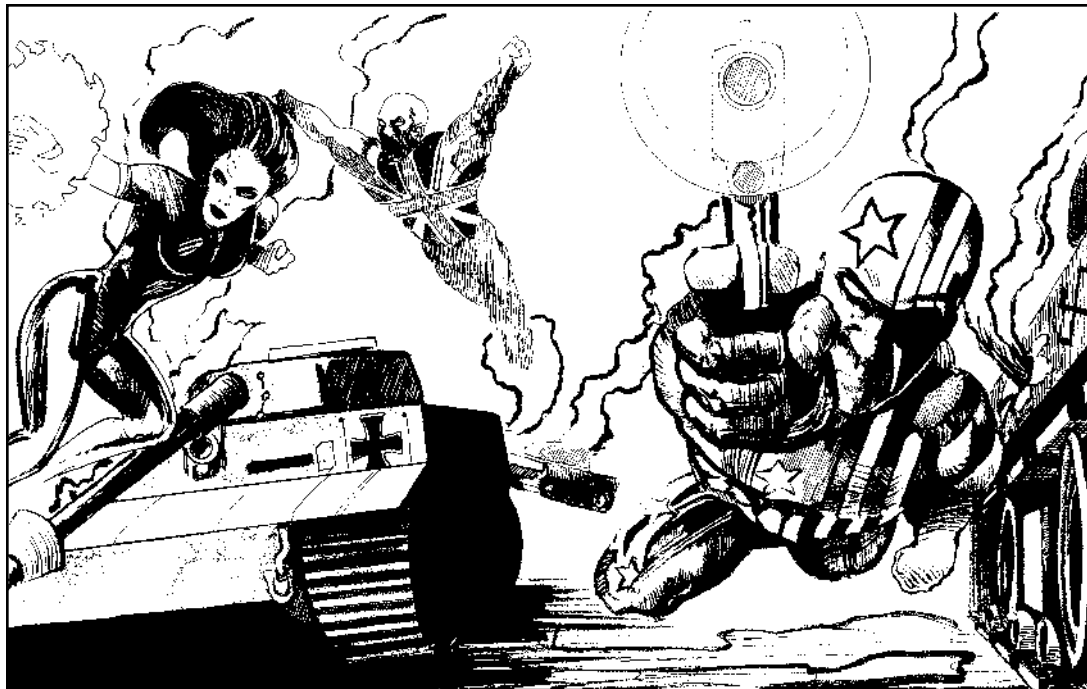
Incorporating World War II Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the World War II element:

Learn Your History. Read up on the historical events and social changes that took place in the real world in the 1930s and 1940s. By studying this period, you'll be able to present a more compelling, realistic game atmosphere, steeping your characters in the cultural, clothing, music, architectural, and engineering differences between then and now. It's not inappropriate to put music of the period on your CD or MP3 player during games, to have period movies playing (with the sound turned off) on the TV, and so on. A grasp of the history of the time also allows you to set adventures around important or interesting events.

But Don't Make Your Players Suffer For Your Research. The downside of doing a fair amount of research into a specific time period is that you may unintentionally inflict too much of your research on your players. For instance, it's enough to tell them, when cars are speeding by on the road outside, about their size and blockiness, their running boards and hood ornaments, the characteristics that differentiate them from modern cars, and especially appropriate to have the player characters encounter a car made by a manufacturer no longer in business in the modern era... but it's going too far to sideline the game with any amount of detail that doesn't pertain to the adventure at hand.

Stick to Black-and-White Morality. One of the most significant differences between comic books of the 1940s and those of today is that there were comparatively few moral dilemmas to confound the heroes. The Axis Powers (Germany, Japan, and their allies) were the Bad Guys; the Allies (the United Kingdom, the U.S., and their allies) were the Good Guys; moral quandaries were few. (Real-world historical events where the governments' choices were highly questionable, such as the interment of innocent Japanese-Americans in camps, were not generally part of the comic book environment.) It was a time of war, so Codes Versus Killing were comparatively rare, even among superheroes (though heroes still only killed in battle; they were never cold-blooded killers).



PULP HEROES AND MYSTERY MEN

Prior to the advent of the superhero in the comic books, his role was largely occupied by the "pulp hero." Pulp heroes were essentially superheroes, though most lacked one or more of the traits of superheroes — some wore no costumes, some had no truly superhuman powers. Many were vigilantes operating outside the law, and instead of teaming up with other pulp heroes at their own level of accomplishment, they worked alone or with support teams of somewhat less powerful heroes.

The adventures of the pulp heroes were published in text form from the early part of the twentieth century up to the late 1940s. (Paper shortages and competition from the comic books, which offered the same sort of entertainment but used less paper, eventually killed the hero pulps as a publishing industry.)

In the real world, despite the similarities of the characters and their adventures, crossover interaction between the heroes of the pulp magazines and the superheroes of the comic books was rare, but in later decades, writers and artists who were fond of both sorts of entertainment found ways to bring those two types of characters together; comic books featuring the old pulp heroes were produced, and those heroes began interacting, usually in a 1930s or 1940s setting, with the superheroes of their time period.

In a *Golden Age Champions* campaign, some of the player characters could be pulp heroes who have been adventuring for many years before the true advent of the age of superheroes.

Incorporating Pulp Heroes Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the pulp heroes and mystery men element:

Research Hero Pulps. The adventures of pulp heroes such as Doc Savage, the Shadow, and the Spider were extensively reprinted in paperback form starting in the 1960s and can be found in used book stores. Reading a few of these will give a GM a sense of the lurid and action-filled universe where pulp heroes did their crimefighting.

Consider Different Design Rules for Pulp Heroes. Characters who are supposed to be pulp heroes, especially those who have been adventuring for years before the dawn of the superhero ages, should have some disadvantages and some character benefits superheroes don't have to worry about. For instance, all pulp heroes should take the *Normal Characteristic Maxima* Disadvantage, but should be able to buy a greater number of career-related Perquisites (Favors and Contacts) and Combat Skill Levels than the new generation of superheroes to begin with — a reflection of their years of experience. You may decide pulp heroes can buy Bases and take the *Money Perk* while superheroes cannot. All these choices will, in the campaign, demonstrate the differences between these two types of characters, but will give each special advantages the other does not possess.

GOLDEN AGE CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Golden Age Champions campaigns are usually Low-Powered Superheroic games, with player characters built on 150 Base Points + 100 Disadvantage points (sometimes less). Characters typically have around 40-60 Active Points in most powers, CVs of 6-10, and SPDs of 3-6.

EXAMPLE GOLDEN AGE POWERS

Here are a few powers appropriate for various *Golden Age Champions* characters:

Bowl 'Em Over: A super-strong character can spread his arms, charge into a group of people (like a platoon of Nazi soldiers), and knock them all down. (At the GM's option, any character with a large, broad Focus, like a shield, could also buy this power.)

Area Of Effect (up to a 6" Radius; +1) for up to 60 STR (60 Active Points); Only Versus Groups Of People (-½), Only With Move Through/By (-½). Total cost: 30 points.

Let's Get 'Em, Partner!: The character fights better in the presence of his sidekick due to their long hours practicing together. (The sidekick usually also buys this ability.)

Aid DEX 3d6, Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +1) (60 Active Points); Self Only (-½), Usable Only Within 5" of Sidekick (-1), Only Increases OCV And DCV (-¼). Total cost: 22 points.

Smash The Luftwaffe!: Some flying Golden Age characters are particu-

Continued from last page

larly skilled at destroying Nazi aircraft.

HA +8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Only With Move Through/By (-½), Requires A KS: Axis Aircraft Roll (-¼). Total cost: 27 points.

Victory Punch: Just the thing a character needs to give the Hun the thrashing he deserves.

HA +6d6 (30 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Only Versus Axis Enemies (-½), 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 7 points.

PULP HERO POWERS

Pulp heroes tend to emphasize Skills, Perks, and Talents instead of Powers. They may have a few weird abilities bought as Powers (not to mention weapons!), but what sets them apart from true superheroes is their training and learning. Here are some sample abilities for pulp heroes in your *Golden Age Champions* campaign:

Animal Empathy: The character has a natural gift for relating to animals; even the fiercest of them seem to like him and treat him deferentially.

Animal Handler (all 13 categories), PRE +5 roll. Total cost: 24 points.

Doormashing Fists: The character's enormous fists are strong and tough enough to smash down the strongest doors... and men!

HA +4d6 (20 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½). Total cost: 10 points.

Playing In A Golden Age Champions Campaign

If you're playing in a *Golden Age Champions* campaign, it's important to create and play your character so that you help the GM emulate the Golden Age "feel" and themes.

Keep It Simple. The Golden Age was a time when characters did not have tremendously complicated and elaborate arrays of powers, nor did most of them have the level of power enjoyed by some superheroes starting in the 1960s. There is generally no reason to have a Multipower with more than a half-dozen slots, nor to have any Attack Power exceed 60 Active Points (at most) — and most Attack Powers have only one Advantage, if any.

Even if you choose to play a pulp hero-style character, this guideline still applies. Although pulp heroes are often more complex, darker, and "grittier" than Golden Age superheroes, they're still simple and easily understood compared to more modern characters. Right is still Right, and Wrong is still Wrong, and it's easy to tell which side of the line pulp heroes fall on — even if, unlike their superpowered colleagues, they tend to do their crimefighting with thundering automatics and martial arts powers learned in the mysterious Orient.

Consider Playing Patriots and Sidekicks. Two types of characters who were tremendously popular in the wartime comic books, but who gradually decreased in numbers in later decades, were the flag-wearing super-patriot and the sidekick. By playing one of them, you can not only emphasize the subgenre, but try a type of character you might not otherwise have the opportunity to play.

The flag-wearing character, or "patriot," had a costume incorporating many elements of the flag of the character's nation. There was no standardization to the types of abilities possessed by this sort of character, though most were at best only slightly superhuman (possessing the strength and reflexes of championship athletes rather than the ability to lift yachts or bounce bullets off their skin).

Sidekicks were the junior partners of more established characters. They were often younger than their partners (most were teenagers) and most wore costumes that were variations on their partners' outfits. Some even had powers that were less formidable versions of their partners'. At first glance, there seems to be no up-side to playing a sidekick character, since they appear to be in all ways inferior versions of their partners, but this isn't necessarily the case. Sidekicks were often underestimated by the bad guys (a consideration for the GM), giving them more opportunities to escape or move without interference, and there is always the advantage associated with playing a lower-powered character: they do not have to take, or suffer from, as many Disadvantages.

Other Golden Age Elements

World War II, by itself, isn't all that defines the Golden Age period. Some of its other elements include:

Normals As Opponents

In the careers of many Golden Age (and early Silver Age) heroes, superpowered criminals — supervillains — were rare, or even nonexistent, opponents. The average foe tended to be a relatively "ordinary" human criminal or soldier. A few of the enemies were as colorful as the heroes — "super"villains with distinctive garb and *modus operandi*, in other words — but they didn't usually have superpowers. They might be mad scientists, or have themed weapons and gadgets based around some motif, but that was as far as it went. Some of the superheroes so outmatched their usual enemies that the trick was not in defeating them — it was in figuring out who to defeat. Rooting out the names and headquarters of a band of masked bank robbers was the hard part; once that was done, a single blow to each one not smart enough to surrender usually sufficed to end the crime spree.

Of course, gaming sometimes differs from its source material, and this is a good example of that phenomena. Most *Golden Age Champions* campaigns feature plenty of superpowered villains, and there's no reason yours can't, too, if you want them.

The Superhero Gap

In the late 1940s and early '50s, superhero comics went into decline, with most of the old favorite heroes fading away as their books were cancelled due to poor sales. It wasn't until the mid-50s that superhero comics underwent a resurgence that's lasted, essentially, to this day. Comics writers of later decades have sometimes tried to explain this dearth of superheroes in continuity terms — for example, by suggesting that most superheroes were killed in the war (or chose to retire after it, wanting to spend time with family and friends).

Another popular explanation is that the actions of the House Unamerican Activities Committee drove them underground. Starting in 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy initiated a crusade against alleged Communist infiltrators of the U.S. government and popular media; the activities of himself and HUAC led, over just a few years, to the blacklisting of many prominent citizens, including many notable Hollywood celebrities. In 1954, the broadcast of one of McCarthy's hearings demonstrated the irrational nature of the investigations and public sentiment turned against him; late in the year, he was censured by the Senate, his power effectively broken. But during the first half of the 1950s, his actions had a chilling effect on American freedom, one which definitely would affect superheroes and their activities by causing them to either (a) maintain a super-patriotic, anti-Communist persona, (b) make their activities as secret as possible, (c) oppose McCarthy directly, or (d) some or all of the above.

However you explain it, you might want to consider working "the superhero gap" into your

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campaign as an element, or accounting for it in the timeline of a campaign set in a later era.

THE SILVER AGE

Beginning in the mid-1950s, and running until about the early 1970s, the Silver Age is an intriguing blend of the two periods that bracket it. On the one hand, it retained, especially early on, the relative lightheartedness and simplicity that characterizes the Golden Age; on the other, as time went by, the social issues that help to define the Bronze Age perspective began to influence the Silver Age. It's during this period that some of the best known, and most archetypal, superheroes were first introduced, and when sophisticated writing and plotting began to appear in the "funnybooks."

Silver Age Champions campaigns often concern themselves with these events, elements, and trends:

LIGHTEARTEDNESS

In this more comfortable time, the creators of comic books steered their stories away from the grimness of war (and the grimness of hard social issues had not yet arisen). Many superhero series became far more whimsical. Genuinely goofy opponents became more frequent. Superpowered pranksters and meddlers were regular opponents. In at least one major superhero's life, gorillas became a recurrent theme — he had to fight intelligent gorillas, bands of escaped gorillas, superpowered gorillas, and so on. Another hero frequently encountered criminals using giant-sized objects as props/deathtraps (enormous typewriters, pinball machines, and so on). Other types of stories that were common to the era included the eternal efforts of allied NPCs to discover the superhero's secret identity.

Incorporating Lightheartedness Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the lightheartedness element:

Capture The Social Tone. It's appropriate for you to immerse yourself, if only briefly, in the sort of popular culture entertainments that were dominant at this time, and most appropriate to look at the popular TV shows of the era, for this is the period in which television began its ascendancy. Watching such series as *I Love Lucy*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Milton Berle Show* and *Your Show of Shows* will steep you in the cultural and comic sensibilities of the era.

Keep The Cast Small And The Focus Local. Most Silver Age superhero stories were actually single-hero or hero-and-sidekick adventures rather than stories involving superteams. Most of them, excepting the most mobile and powerful of superheroes, kept the heroes pretty much confined to their home towns. There's no practical way to simulate the single-hero story in a *Champions* campaign where you have a cast of several player characters, of course, but you can achieve some of the same feel by keeping

superhero NPCs out of the campaign altogether. Oh, certainly, there may be NPC superheroes in other towns and cities, but the PCs should remain very insulated from them, with supers not usually needing the help of outsiders to solve their problems. This has the advantage of demonstrating to the PCs just how exceptional they are; they no longer have to compete, deliberately or accidentally, with equally flashy, competent characters fighting the same cause.

Avoid Wrenching The Emotions. Golden Age campaigns tend to avoid moral dilemmas; lighthearted Silver Age campaigns go that one step better by avoiding any truly painful situation. The threat of imminent death, of the ruination of one's country or loss of one's family, that are a routine part of the Golden Age campaign are entirely absent here. Concentrate on providing adventures that exercise the player characters' abilities and powers, often in humorous ways.

Playing The Lightheartedness Element

Here's some advice for players to help them emulate the lightheartedness of the Silver Age:

Simplicity, Redux: Characters in the Silver Age aren't significantly more complex than their Golden Age counterparts. It's often enough just to have a superpower (or two); you don't have to dress it up with a lot of fancy Power Modifiers. As time goes on, some characters do become a little more complex, as their histories and backgrounds develop — Batman, for example, steadily increased his arsenal of gadgets — but they're still pretty straightforward compared to later characters.

Play It For Laughs: Since the period is a lighthearted one, play that way. Create characters with some humorous elements to them, and don't hesitate to get your character involved in situations intended primarily for comedic effect.

THE RED SCARE

One Silver Age element at odds with the general lightheartedness is the presence of the Communist menace. During World War II, the large Communist states — the U.S.S.R. and the Red Chinese — were also enemies of the Fascist states. But as soon as the war ended, considerable paranoia sprang up between the Communist and capitalist states. Within a few years, the U.S. was engaged in a ferocious behind-the-scenes struggle, the so-called Cold War, with the Communist states, a struggle that played out mostly in the arena of international politics and espionage until the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

There isn't much precedent in the real world's comic books of the early Silver Age for "Red scare" stories. Comics of the era did sometimes feature Communist enemies, but by and large comic book buyers didn't want to be confronted with the realities of unpleasant international politics. Comics produced later in the period were more likely to feature Communist enemies or anti-Communist superheroing, though, so it is an appropriate element for *Silver Age Champions* campaigns to include.

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Facial Manipulation: The character has such fine control over his facial muscles that he can use them to alter the shape of his face, making him look just like someone else.

Shape Shift (Sight, Touch, and Hearing Groups), Imitation (26 Active Points); Facial Features And Voice Only (-1), Extra Time (1 Minute to activate; -¾). Total cost: 9 points.

Genius Insight: The character has a certain gift of insight he can apply to the problems that confront him. It's not universally reliable, but it usually seems to come in handy at crucial points during an adventure.

+5 with All Noncombat Skills (40 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-½), 1 Charge (-2), Only Applies To Knowledge/Wisdom-Related Rolls, Not To Physical Actions (-1). Total cost: 9 points.

Heroic Intimidation: So steely is the character's gaze, so intense his demeanor, that his stare can unnerve even the most hardened criminal.

+4 with Interaction Skills (20 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Only To Intimidate (-1). Total cost: 8 points.

SILVER AGE CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Silver Age Champions campaigns are usually Low-Powered Superheroic games, with player characters built on 150 Base Points + 100 Disadvantage points (sometimes 150 Disadvantages, later in the period). Characters typically have around 40-60 Active Points in most powers, CVs of 6-11, and SPDs of 3-7.



THE COMICS CODE

One of the reasons for the lightheartedness of the Silver Age was the imposition of the *Comics Code*. In 1954, Dr. Frederick Wertham published *Seduction Of The Innocent*, which claimed comic books contributed to the delinquency of minors and similar societal ills. In response to the furor (including U.S. Senate hearings) this accusation created, the leading comic book companies banded together and established a code of self-regulation, the *Comics Code*. Comics that met the standards of the Code had a special logo on the cover, thus “certifying” them as safe for young readers.

The Comics Code was extensive and detailed. Its major points included:

- Crime shall never be depicted as glamorous or rewarding; it must always be shown as sordid and unpleasant. Criminals could never be sympathetic, or seen to gain from their actions; they had to always be captured by the heroes or come to a bad end due to their

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Incorporating The Red Scare Into Your Campaign

Here’s some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the Communism element:

Learn Your History. The Cold War actually continued up until the reunification of Germany and division of the U.S.S.R. mere years ago. There is a considerable amount of information on its historical events and social implications available for research purposes, not to mention plenty of movies and spy novels to inspire plot ideas.

Scale Character Power Levels To Characters’ Tasks. If you wish to run adventures that are chiefly superhero spy missions, it’s best to put restrictions on the power levels of the player characters — for instance, 40 Active Points per power and a mandatory *Normal Characteristic Maxima* Disadvantage (possibly as a campaign standard, for no points). On the other hand, if you plan to have the international Communist menaces be powerful supers, you’ll want to have player characters built at the same scale.

Playing The Red Scare Element

You’ll have the most fun in an anti-Communist story if you embrace the theme. Regardless of your own personal perspective on the period or its politics, don’t try to impose your views on the setting. The Communists are *Evil*, and they threaten the world with their God-forsaking philosophy — no true American hero could possibly think otherwise, or fail to take action to stop them! (This standard applies, to a greater or lesser degree, to just about *any* historical *Champions* campaign — *Golden Age Champions* superheroes shouldn’t be German apologists, for example.)

THE SECOND GENERATION

In the comics of the late ’50s and into the ’60s, many of the heroes of the wartime years were quietly abandoned and replaced by doppelgangers — heroes who had the same names as their predecessors, and often similar powers and costumes, but who had different backgrounds, secret identities, and personal histories.

One of the major comic book publishers of the era — DC Comics — explained this change through the creation of an alternate Earth. The heroes of the earlier generation had gone through their adventures on one world; the heroes of the newer generation were on a parallel Earth where those earlier heroes had never appeared. Eventually, by use of dimensional travel, the two groups of heroes met, and so began a tradition of a “cross-over” stories in which a menace too great for one set of heroes obligated the two worlds’ worth of supers to pool their abilities once every year or so. Over the years, other alternate dimensions were discovered, each with its own set of superheroes — most of whom had been the heroes of a different publisher’s brand of comics.

The other major comic book publisher of the time — Timely, later known as Marvel Comics — made the changeover a bit more logically. The new heroes appeared on the same world as the old, and the previous heroes’ exploits were definitely part of the world’s history. But those heroes were aging, retiring, or sometimes inadvertently falling into suspended animation, and new heroes were needed.

Incorporating The Second Generation Into Your Campaign

Here’s some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the second generation element:

Fabricate A World History. Perhaps the most important task of the GM in a Second Generation campaign is setting up a detailed history of the previous generation of superheroes and their adventures. This history would have to include names and career information for a number of supers, the villains they fought, and the major historical events they influenced. The GM also has to make it clear that the older generation of heroes, for whatever reason, is no longer up to the challenge of defending the world. (Such a campaign does not have to be set in the Silver Age, of course; this idea lends itself to practically any time period.)

A good “second generation”-inspired history should include plenty of mysteries and unanswered questions (What happened to all that Nazi gold? Who killed Captain X? Why did the Crystal Duke retire at the height of his career and the peak of his powers?). And you should come up with answers to some of those questions — answers that will serve as the bases for adventures for the new generation of heroes.

Obviously, to reduce the amount of work the GM has to do, and perhaps to increase the involvement and enthusiasm of the players, the GM might want to base portions of this history on heroes from published comic books. Players who are familiar with the comics often enjoy comparing their characters to the campaign version of characters from the comics — though it’s important to remember that the PCs, not published supers, are the heroes of this campaign.

Playing The Second Generation Element

Here’s some advice for players who want to use the “second generation” concept when creating and playing characters:

Create A Detailed History For Your Character’s Predecessor. The GM can’t do all the work himself, after all! Since it’s important for you to create a PC you enjoy playing, you need to have some idea of what his predecessor was like, why the changeover occurred, and so forth. By working with the GM to weave your ideas into the overall history he’s establishing, you can ensure that your character has the maximum appeal for both you and your gamemaster.

Respect Your Elders: Unless the “first generation” heroes are all dead (and sometimes even then), take advantage of their experience, wisdom, and advice. They learned a lot during their careers, and there’s no sense letting that information go to waste. Just as the GM should bring the first generation into the story occasionally, you shouldn’t hesitate to have your character maintain a relationship with his predecessor and call on him for help from time to time.

ATOMIC MONSTERS

In the comics and especially the movies of this era, fear of the atom bomb (acquired by the U.S.S.R. in 1948 and other nations not allied with the U.S. in subsequent years) led to a succession of stories about gigantic monsters created through the misuse of, or accidents involving, radiation (as well

as the occasional meteor from space or mad scientist). Starting at this time and through the decades since, ants, spiders, blobs, praying mantises, lizards, locusts, birds of prey, eyeballs, men, women, Gila monsters, leeches, shrews, crocodiles, invertebrates, rabbits, apes, columns of stone, Tyrannosaurus Rexes, pteranodons, turtles, moths, crustaceans, patches of industrial pollution, robots, and other things have become gigantic and stomped their way across the map, leaving death and ruin in their wake.

The “atomic monsters” element gives superheroes a chance to show off their prowess without either the dopiness of the pure lighthearted stories or paranoia of “Red scare” plots. The GM could even base a campaign around this element, allowing him to pit superheroes against a succession of destructive byproducts of the Atomic Age, setting them up as a sanctioned or private super-force dedicated to protecting the world from gigantic creatures of all sorts.

Incorporating Atomic Monsters Into Your Campaign

When you use atomic monsters in your campaign, the design of each monster species should follow this pattern: the monster is too powerful for the PCs to defeat or even constrain, but it possesses weaknesses that, when discovered, allow the heroes to beat it. This means that when the heroes first encounter the monster, they may attack it, may even confuse and baffle it enough to send it somewhere else, but they cannot end the menace it poses; they simply do not have enough power in and of themselves. But during each subsequent encounter with the monster, they learn more about it, until they, perhaps with the cooperation of government scientists and the Army Corps of Engineers, can come up with the means to defeat it.

For instance, perhaps this week’s menace is a horde of giant bees. Each superhero is individually strong enough to defeat one or more of the insects, but there are thousands of the things — their great strength is in their numbers, and the heroes cannot defeat those numbers. But by confronting the bees in fight after fight, protecting the communities in their path, analyzing samples, watching the bee behavior, the heroes discover how to duplicate the chemical pheromones the queen bee uses to control her drones, and that allows them to wrest control of the drones away from her and end the menace.

On a related note, design each monster so it can leave the heroes behind (for example, by going into deep water, tunneling, teleporting, diving into lava pools, flying into space, or the like — going to some place the characters cannot survive or leaving by some means they cannot duplicate). Otherwise, no matter how tedious it makes the adventure or how irrelevant the action is, one or more heroes will stay with the monster at all times, not permitting you to advance the adventure in a timely fashion to its next stage.

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own wickedness. Good must always triumph over evil.

■ No depictions of the details and methods of committing crimes.

■ No excessive violence, gore, blood, gruesomeness, luridness, or the like.

■ No profanity; and the use of slang is discouraged.

■ No suggestive, salacious, or lewd illustrations allowed.

■ Parents, established authorities, respected institutions, and moral/honorable behavior should never be depicted in disrespectful ways.

The result of this self-regulation was, in part, the death or diminishment of such then-popular comics genres as horror, romance, and Western. Superhero comics, at the time a small segment of the market, were largely unaffected and thus soon came to dominate the industry to the virtual exclusion of other types of comics.

For many years, the Comics Code Authority covered nearly all comics. But by the Bronze and Iron Ages, creators and publishers interested in exploring themes and story types forbidden by the Code began ignoring it — and discovered that they could still survive and thrive in the marketplace without the Comics Code Authority logo on their books. Today, the Code is often ignored altogether, even by the major publishers.

Gamemasters who want their games to have a Golden or Silver Age “feel” should strive to impose a “Comics Code” style of play in their games, in large part by designing scenarios that never call the tenets of the Code into doubt. That’s hard to do, given the more jaded modern-day perspective, but well worth the effort to obtain the right atmosphere in the game.

SUPER SOCIETY POWERS

Here are a few examples of powers residents of a strange super society might possess:

Energy Cage: The character has energy powers that allow him to place tendrils of energy around a target (usually in the form of a cage, circle, sphere, or the like). If the target moves too much, he hits the energy and takes damage.

RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (90 Active Points); Targets Only Take Damage If They Touch Cage Or Move Into/Out Of The Affected Hex (-½). Total cost: 60 points.

Living Hair: The character's hair is extremely strong, and can move and lengthen at his command.

Extra Limbs (up to 10) (5 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½) (total cost: 3 points) **and** Stretching 3" (15 Active Points); Limited Body Parts (Extra Limbs/hair only; -¼) (total cost: 12 points). Total cost: 15 points.

Sense Weakness: The character possesses an innate sense of the flaws and weaknesses in any physical object, allowing him to target them with ease.

Find Weakness 14- with all attacks. Total cost: 45 points.

Silhouette Form: The character is a living shadow, though he retains some ability to affect physical objects.

Desolidification (affected by light-based attacks), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (80 Active Points); Always On (-½) (total cost: 53 points) **and** Affects Physical World (+2) for

INNER AND OUTER SPACE

The 1960s were also an era of exploration, during which the Space Race (a competition between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to determine which would be preeminent in near space) reached its peak. Television and the movies reflected this fascination with exploration by sending heroes off into unknown environments in stories which ran from the sublime to the (more often) ridiculous. *Star Trek* and *Lost In Space* let their protagonists visit distant worlds; *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea* explored the depths of the world's oceans; *The Time Tunnel* sent its heroes cartwheeling into the past and the future; *Fantastic Voyage* injected miniaturized explorers into the circulatory system of a dying man.

Exploration, too, was a theme for comic book heroes, as teams of supers not only investigated those dangerous environments but also the depths of the earth and alternate dimensions. At least one entire team, the Challengers of the Unknown, though more costumed human-level heroes than actual superheroes, devoted themselves almost entirely to exploration.

Incorporating Exploration Into Your Campaign

Exploration stories require a detailed environment to explore. First, of course, you have to decide what it is, exactly, the PCs will explore — outer space? the depths of the earth? the deep ocean? alternate dimensions? different eras of time? — and then begin to populate it with interesting cultures, compelling NPCs, and tasks only the PCs can accomplish (whether they are the primary motivators or merely catalysts tends to vary from adventure to adventure). This sort of campaign is definitely design-intensive; once the heroes have found a new area, discovered its secrets, and addressed its dangers, they are inclined to head off to the next unknown region rather than returning to a more comfortable known location.

Campaigns where the characters can't return to their homes tend to be frustrating in the long run for many players. Unless you're planning to run a limited-length series, you might prefer to stick to campaigns where the characters generally don't want to go home — maybe their home has been destroyed and they *can't* return to it, or perhaps an unfortunate chain of events back home has led to their being suspected of murder and they have to avoid the authorities.

Playing The Exploration Element

Here's some advice for players to help their characters fit into exploration-themed adventures:

Design Characters Who Need To Travel. Since the campaign revolves around constant travel, it's imperative that you design into your characters an appropriate motivation that keeps them on the road and away from home. A strong curiosity about the environment being explored is one good motivation, but not the only one. Others can include a desire to test one's self with new challenges on a constant basis, a desire to flee the complexities of the world, or a need for some sort of knowledge or

medical treatment that lies at some unknown point in the distance.

Design Characters Who Don't Want To Go Home.

Similarly, incorporate into your character's design a reason why he can't return home (or at least is reluctant to). Maybe he's been framed for a crime, had his heart broken, or been mystically barred from returning. Whatever the reason, it should ideally not only motivate him to travel, but provide other story hooks for the GM to use.

STRANGE SUPER SOCIETIES

In the '60s, it became more common to publish entire series about the homeworlds of some of the more exotic characters who had hitherto simply been powerful strangers from distant realms. Instead of leaving it at that, these new series followed these heroes back home, where many individuals like them also adventured. Three common environments for this were:

- the Lands of the Gods, where godly and demigodly characters got their start before discovering the pleasures of fast food and television

- the Hidden Lands — strange, forgotten valleys in the Himalayas, sunken realms, lost islands, and other "undiscovered" places where societies of superhumans live

- Alternate Dimensions better known just for spawning ultra-powerful world-conquerors and the occasional conqueror's relative with a more heroic attitude

This sort of series had a lot in common with the Inner and Outer Space campaign described above, but with a crucial difference. Though the campaign inevitably presents an environment as detailed and strange as a setting intended chiefly for exploration, mapping the place and assembling data on its creatures and cultures is not the primary goal of the campaign. Here, the heroes live and adventure according to the dominant local culture. If it's a society of showoff demigods, then the heroes should get into the action, competing with the natives in their endless games, monster hunts, and other struggles. If it's a dimension where giant stellar fleets led by superhumans in costumes wage war on one another, the heroes should get involved in the war, either to end it or to win it for their preferred side.

Incorporating Super Societies Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the super societies element:

Decide How Many Heroes Are Natives. There are two basic ways to run a super societies story (or campaign): either every PC is a native of this strange environment, or only a few are, with the remainder being "normal" heroes from mainstream Earth. The latter sort of story works best as a sequel of sorts to an existing superhero campaign. If one or more characters from that campaign came from an exotic otherworldly setting, once the players in the cam-

campaign need a break from more ordinary superhero versus supervillain action, the GM can contrive to send them to the homeworld of those aliens. This might be a limited series, just a multi-part break from the norm, with the heroes intent on accomplishing one mission and then returning home — or it may be the new, regular home for the campaign (perhaps mutant heroes have found a place where their mutations do not make them feared, so they have decided to stay; perhaps the heroes' last attempt to save the Earth went badly, and the Earth was destroyed, leaving the heroes nowhere to go but here.)

Design A Detailed Environment. This advice is similar to that for the exploration element described earlier, though you will not have to provide details at the rate you would have for an exploration story. The PCs either just visit the “new world” for a little while (in which case you don't need quite as much detail as for an exploration game) or settle there (in which case they'll learn things at a more relaxed rate, so you can do your creating at a more sedate pace). But it is important that the environment be detailed, majestic, and strange, with overblown architecture, curious environmental special effects, ancient unsolved mysteries, unfathomable technology or magic, distinctive terminology — any conceivable characteristic that makes it a unique experience for the characters who adventure there.

Playing The Super Societies Element

The best way to participate in a super societies story (or campaign) is to “choose your place and play your part.” Are you a native of the super-society returning home — and if so, in triumph, in disgrace, or something else? Or are you an outsider (perhaps an “ordinary” human from normal Earth society) — and if so, did you come to the “new world” voluntarily, or were you forced to by some circumstance back home? Answering questions like these helps you determine your character's role in the story/campaign, his approach to his new situation, and his reaction to the events of the game. A character who desperately wants to return home (but can't) is significantly different from one who doesn't care about going back to Earth.

TV SUPERHEROES

Superheroes — often, but not always, comic book characters adapted to a new medium — first began appearing on television during the Silver Age. Even during later “eras,” TV superheroes often had more of a Silver Age “feel” than the heroes portrayed in comics at the same time.

Superheroes as they have appeared on television, both in series and TV movies, are somewhat different than they are in the comic books, and gamers interested in a lower-powered sort of campaign may embrace those differences. Some of the differences include:

Superheroes Are Rare; The “Title Heroes” May Be The Only Ones. Most TV superhero movies and series assume the characters they feature are the only supers there are. (Later team-oriented superhero cartoons sometimes reversed this trend, though.)

Some admit to the existence of other superheroes, but other supers are so rare that they seldom if ever meet one another. Supervillains, on the other hand, may appear in every episode, particularly if the heroes have a rotating “rogues' gallery” of frequently-recurring villains.

Superhero Power Levels Are Low Compared To The Comics. A superhero who, in the comics, can lift a mountain or an aircraft carrier over his head, when translated to a TV movie or series, will at best be able to lift a tractor-trailer rig. Instead of thinking of STR values of 60 to 90, think 40 to 50, with Pushing necessary to accomplish the really difficult tasks.

The Campaign Superteam May Consist Of One Super And Several Friends. If the players in your campaign are sufficiently experienced not to feel unfulfilled by such an arrangement, you might choose to have only one of them be an actual superhero, built on normal *Silver Age Champions* standards, and have the rest be built on, say, Standard Heroic guidelines (75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantage points) — with nothing that can really be considered a superpower. The compensating factor here is that almost all the campaign's real woes descend on the superhero character, while the other PCs (the super's friends, allies, and support personnel) seldom find themselves hunted by bad guys, placed into excruciating moral dilemmas, or responsible for the lives of hundreds or thousands of innocents.

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30 STR (total cost: 60 points). Total cost: 113 points.

Thunderbolt Voice:

The character's voice contains tremendous energy, such that even the merest whisper causes terrible damage to the character's surroundings (and anyone in them). The character should either take an appropriate Physical Limitation to represent his inability to speak safely, or the GM should allow him to apply a modified form of the *Always On* Limitation to the power.

Energy Blast 20d6, Explosion (-1 DC/2”; +¾), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (250 Active Points); No Range (-½). Total cost: 167 points.



EXAMPLE SILVER AGE POWERS

Here are a few powers appropriate for various *Silver Age Champions* characters:

Enchanted Throwing Weapon: The character possesses a magical throwing weapon, such as a hammer or metal disk. When he throws it, it automatically returns to his hand after hitting the target, and no one but him can pick it up or wield it. (To simulate this in game terms, the power is bought without the *Focus* Limitation — thus giving the character's enemies nothing to grab or take away from him.)

Energy Blast 12d6. Total cost: 60 points.

Enter The Microverse! The character can make himself so tiny that he fits between molecules (or even atoms), and can thus enter the “micro-verse.” He enters the micro-verse at a point corresponding to his location in the normal-sized world, and exits it at a corresponding point based on his travels while he's there.

Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in the micro-verse). Total cost: 25 points.

Take That, Ivan! The character becomes so enraged by the evil of the godless Communists that he can really smash them.

Double Knockback (+¾) on up to 60 STR (45 Active Points); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½). Total cost: 30 points.

The Impossible Dream. A TV superheroes story or campaign may be driven by an unfulfilled quest. It's very common for a series to have as its basis some desire on the part of one character... and for that desire to be essentially impossible to fulfill (since fulfilling it would end the series). For instance, the supers might be werewolves or other monsters, all of whom seek a common cure for their condition. Once they're cured, of course, the series concludes. A super might have only one goal (to find the killer of his sister and avenge her death); when that task is accomplished, he either has to find some other crimefighting motivation or the campaign has to retitle itself to something like “Luke Austin, Formerly Superpowered Bookseller.”

Incorporating TV Superhero Themes Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the “TV superheroes” theme/element:

Set Low Campaign Standards: Allow players to build characters on fewer points than normal, with lower point/effectiveness ceilings (if you choose to impose such ceilings; see page 125) — for example, maybe only 100 Base Points + 100 Disadvantage points, and a 40 Active Point cap.

Limit The Numbers Of Supers. As mentioned above, you'll want to keep the numbers of superheroes worldwide very low. The minimum number is one in all the world (one of the player characters). A more likely number is for the player characters, two or three other superheroes, and a like number of supervillains to constitute all the costumed supers known worldwide. Over time, you can gradually introduce more costumed supers, as other supers debut or as their existence is discovered by the world at large, but you'll want to compensate for this by doing it as the campaign gets rid of other supers on a permanent basis (as they die, lose their powers, retire for good, and so on).

Keep The PCs Mostly In Civvies. The standard TV series superhero approach is to have the player characters do most of their investigating and adventuring in civilian clothes. (After all, superheroing requires the studio to spend more money on costumes, special effects, and the like.) Only in rare circumstances — such as a prearranged confrontation with an enemy, or an assault on an enemy headquarters at what is obviously the climax of a story — do the heroes actually put on their costumes.

Set Up Adventures For Supers And Normals. If you choose to follow the pattern of a campaign with one true superhero and a collection of aides and support personnel, plan adventures around human-scale tasks and problems (except for the occasional encounter that really does call for super-powers and super-costumes). Most encounters will involve investigative, conversational, scientific, professional, and deductive skills, which heroic normals can possess at the same levels as superheroes, which provides situations for characters of every power level to resolve.

Playing The TV Superheroes Element

Here's some advice for players to help them emulate the TV superheroes “feel” and themes:

Consider Only In Heroic Identity/Focus-Based Powers. Another way to give the campaign the sort of low-powered, mostly-in-blue-jeans approach called for by TV inspirations is for all supers to have the *Only In Heroic Identity* or *Focus* Limitations on most of their powers. This keeps them a little more vulnerable and better distinguishes between their adventures in civilian dress and those in costume.

Emphasize The Corny. Television superheroes often seem to emphasize the corny or “cheesy” aspects of superheroes in a form of gentle self-mockery. For example, consider coming up with a distinctive (but somewhat silly) catch-phrase or battle-cry for your character. When you talk with other characters, adopt a “heroically serious” tone.

THE BRONZE AGE

By most estimates, the Silver Age ended in the early 1970s. Towards the end of that period, the social and cultural issues so prominent in American society at the time — including the sexual revolution, the maturing of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam war, the rise of numerous countercultures, and the widening of the generation gap — began to make themselves felt in the stories being told in the comics. Comics writers began thinking about issues they had never considered before, and carrying trends and themes that started in the Silver Age — a focus on character's private (non-costumed) lives and romantic relationships, for example — to their logical creative conclusions.

By the early 1970s, this new perspective led to the ushering in of the *Bronze Age*, which ran until roughly the mid-1980s. In contrast to the comics of the 1950s and early '60s, this period was increasingly marked by use of the comics as a means to reflect the changing times. Superheroes went on cross-country journeys of self-discovery, confronted racism, suffered either directly or indirectly the effects of drug abuse, and even dealt with issues of mortality. Indeed, it is the death of a popular character — Gwen Stacy, in *Amazing Spider-Man* #120 — that is generally considered the dividing point between Silver and Bronze.

Superhero comics also adopted some of the characteristics of television soap operas and other episodic forms of entertainment. The characters' private lives became as important to the stories as their costumed action. Romantic relationships, instead of being tepid things that endured unaltered for years, progressed as they do in real life, sometimes solidifying, sometimes shattering. Characters acquired long-term enemies who were themselves heroes instead of villains. Supers wrestled with questions of family obligations, faith, ethics, and mortality.

Many of these characteristics have become so much a part of comic books that they're now the default approach to superhero storytelling, and

this book discusses them elsewhere in more detail. It is in combination with the societal turmoil of the 1970s (as derived from that of the 1960s) that they form the basis of campaigns set in the Bronze Age of comics. Because many of these concepts and themes were first articulated, if simply or crudely, in the later Silver Age, some of the elements and advice in this section apply to *Silver Age Champions* campaigns as well (though perhaps not with full force).

It's also important to note the influence of comics' maturity as a creative art during this period. Starting in the 1970s and continuing to the present day, comic book creators were in the enviable position that new times did not require them to come up with new methods of storytelling or communication. The basic tools of comic book expression were in place. Should a comic book provide a lighthearted escape from the grimness of the real world, or an analytical look at that grimness? Either way was acceptable. Should the art be traditional and clean, or more stylistic and individualistic? Take your pick, so long as the result was good. Should the stories conform to the Comics Code, or would it be better to venture into more adult themes and events? Again, there was no right answer, except that what was produced should be interesting.

Starting in the Bronze Age, the comics increasingly began to mix genres, cross characters over between settings that would have been considered incompatible, and showcase characters who would not have been considered able to sustain entire comic books in previous years. The two major comic book producers allowed some of their characters to meet (in a curious netherworld where the two universes' histories were assumed to be one) in adventures that were carefully managed to showcase both sets of heroes equally. Characters from fantasy settings with no connections to the superhero universe nevertheless showed up for guest shots. The protagonists of horror series increasingly interacted with superheroes.

Bronze Age Champions campaigns often concern themselves with these events, elements, and trends:

MUTANT HYSTERIA

The idea for the mutant hysteria story (or campaign) is simple: some or all of the PCs (or perhaps some of their close friends) have powers because they are mutants — humans with genetic characteristics not possessed by any of their ancestors. These powers make them superhuman or other-than-



human, and ordinary people fear the mutants. Still, the mutants acknowledge a responsibility to protect ordinary people from the dangers of the world; they must simply do so from a position of secrecy, hiding their strangeness from the world whenever possible, and working against the forces of fear and prejudice that threaten to alienate or destroy them.

One advantage to the mutant hysteria element, especially if used as the basis for a campaign, is this: the characters, hunted and feared by society at large, have to cooperate and bond with one another. In other words, the GM doesn't have to do much work to make the PCs form a superteam; mutant teams in such an environment tend to become tightly-knit groups.

A corresponding disadvantage is that it's easy for PCs to become overwhelmed by the paranoia that's a part of such stories. Knowing that the world is out to get them, that no matter how much good they do, most people will still see them as monsters, eats away at the enjoyment experienced by some players. It takes care and forethought to sustain a positive outlook under such circumstances.

Note that the label of "mutant" serves as a convenient stand-in for any sort of racial or cultural prejudice. You can substitute any sort of distinction that might lead to characters having both powers and subtle (or not-so-subtle) distinctions from the rest of humanity. They could be genetically engineered, or near-human aliens who have tried to settle peaceably in human communities, or the last survivors of Atlantis, for instance.

BRONZE AGE CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Bronze Age Champions campaigns are usually Standard Superheroic games, with player characters built on 200 Base Points + 150 Disadvantage points (sometimes fewer Disadvantages, earlier in the period, or in games focused on specific trends or themes). Characters typically have around 50-75 Active Points in most powers, CVs of 7-13, and SPDs of 4-8.

EXAMPLE MUTANT POWERS

In the comics, “mutant powers” can encompass just about anything. Here are a few examples:

Psychokinetic

Paralysis: The character uses his telekinetic powers to hold an opponent motionless.

Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½) (90 Active Points); Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Susceptible (Entangle dissipates instantly if character is Stunned, Knocked Out, or Killed; -½). Total cost: 51 points.

Shadow Invisibility: The character has a short layer of dark fur growing from his skin that makes him almost impossible to see in shadow or darkness.

Invisibility to Sight Group, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½ (30 Active Points)); **Bright Fringe** (-¼), **Requires A Stealth Roll** (-½), **Only Works In Shadows And Darkness** (-½). Total cost: 13 points.

Uncontrollable Eyebeams:

The character's eyes constantly emit beams of powerful energy, making him a danger to everything around him. He can control this power through the use of special high-tech glasses or goggles, but if they're taken away he's in trouble. (This power requires the GM's permission because of the way it partly buys off the *Always On* Limitation.)

Energy Blast 12d6, **Reduced Endurance** (0 END; +½), **Persistent** (+½) (120 Active Points); **Always On** (-½) (total cost: 80 points) **and buy off the Always On effect** (40 Active Points); **OAF** (special glasses; -1) (total cost: 20 points). Total cost: 100 points.

Incorporating Mutant Hysteria Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the mutant hysteria element:

Set Appropriate Campaign Guidelines. If the players are to design characters who are mutants — heroes with natural powers, rather than powers derived from Foci or training — they need enough Character Points to build a character whose powers have relatively few Limitations. (Of course, the point total also depends on how powerful you want the heroes to be; characters in some mutant hysteria campaigns may have just one or two powers each.) You should also consider establishing rules that reflect the characters' mutant nature — for example, maybe all PCs have to take a *Distinctive Features* Disadvantage because government agents can detect them with special scanners, or must all have a *Vulnerability* of some sort.

Let Character Actions Create A Subculture. From the start of the campaign, it's helpful to let the players see that their actions are helping create a sort of mutant subculture. They may help another mutant successfully hide in normal human society, and then run into him again and discover he's surviving and adapting well; he may even be able to help them from his position of comparative security. Normal people whom the mutants help may not be able directly to oppose the social or governmental forces that oppress mutants, but can covertly take action on the mutants' behalf. In short, though the culture in general may be as dangerous to mutants as occupied France was to Allied spies, the characters' own actions should help create the mutant-era equivalent of a French Resistance, which in turn helps the campaign world seem a less dark and forbidding place.

Consider A Campaign With A Conclusion. If there is some force other than simple human prejudice at work in making mutants a hated segment of society, a story arc or campaign could be designed as a mini-series or maxi-series with a specific conclusion — the defeat and elimination either of the mutants or of the conspiracies that have driven them into hiding. It could be, for instance, that another group of mutants has taken over the government and is trying to purge all potential rivals, or that when the PCs defeat a sufficiently awful menace (and do so before the eyes of the world press, with appropriate heroism and self-sacrifice), they turn public opinion away from the anti-mutant forces.

Playing The Mutant Hysteria Element

Obviously, you've got to create a character who's a mutant. Don't show up to the game with a character whose powers derive from a suit of powered armor, or who's a super-mage. The name of the game is *mutant hysteria*, so make sure your character fits the bill. Many characters should have a single overarching power — “I can fly,” “I can become invisible,” “I can shoot energy beams from my eyes” — perhaps with a *Multipower* or *Elemental*

Control to reflect various applications of that single power.

Once your mutant is in play, you need to maintain the proper attitude. It's easy to give in, and return hatred for hatred — but that's not the way heroes act. A hero needs to rise above that sort of thing and lead by example. Giving in to destructive emotions will only give the anti-mutant forces fuel for the fire of their own hatred, so PCs need to have appropriate *Psychological Limitations* (such as *Code Of The Hero*, page 67) that allow them to maintain the right frame of mind.

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

A *Bronze Age Champions* game can confront social and cultural issues more directly than through the metaphor of mutant hysteria, simply by concentrating on stories involving the troubles and changes experienced by society during this time. Such a campaign would naturally put its characters through a succession of moral quandaries and other dilemmas. Some examples:

■ Superheroes are asked to help with a covert military mission overseas, a mission that might involve killing (regardless of characters' *Codes Versus Killing*), lying (altering details of the mission's events and outcome to preserve morale and plausible deniability), and futility (attacking the symptom of an important problem rather than its underlying causes).

■ A sidekick, younger sibling, or friend of one of the player characters becomes addicted to drugs. Whether the addict NPC gets cleaned up, persists in his habit, or dies, the amount of drugs on the streets does not change. No matter how many sellers the heroes bust, there are always more. Even if they damage sites of drug production, there are always more. The heroes discover that only fundamental social changes can reduce this problem — despite all their powers, they are helpless.

■ Superhumans, unless they are of a particular age or born to the streets themselves, find themselves increasingly out of touch when fighting crime, and have to discover some way to get back in tune with things if they are not to become baffled dinosaurs spouting clichés while wearing out-of-fashion costumes.

■ The heroes find themselves drawn into some sort of social protest — for example, perhaps they covertly help a group of striking workers to emerge victorious from their confrontation with management, or help keep a civil rights rally safe from those who would cause the activists harm.

■ In the post-Watergate era, the PCs find themselves confronting issues of political corruption during their adventures.

■ Social advocacy groups — rightly or wrongly — decide the heroes' team is insufficiently racially integrated, discriminates against women, or exerts more force when capturing non-white suspects than white ones. The heroes may find themselves the object of public scorn, picket lines, or opposition from the government and socially aware

organizations, causing them endless trouble as they perform their crimefighting activities.

■ The heroes, in their private lives, find themselves confronting the consequences of their personal decisions. For example, a hero and heroine living together (but not married) may feel pressure from their families, clergy, and NPC friends to stop “living in sin.”

Of course, society has corrected few (if any) of these problems in the decades since comic books first began looking at them. They’ve just become such an ingrained part of our awareness that there is less motivation to showcase them in superhero adventures.

Incorporating Social And Cultural Issues Into Your Campaign

Here’s some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on social and cultural issues:

Assemble A List Of Issues. You’ll find it helpful to have a list of the social issues you’d like to address in the course of the campaign. Then, you can prioritize it into categories of issues; some will be themes that pop up throughout the course of the campaign, some will be the focus of plotlines that dominate the campaign for several episodes in a row, some will be subplots that affect, at most, one or two play-sessions.

Cut Up The Meat. Remember, no one likes to be lectured to. The purpose of offering up social issues in this sort of campaign is to illuminate rather than irritate. Use the social issues as the genesis of stories, and then remember that the PCs, not the social issues, are the most important element in your campaign.

Let The PCs Make A Difference. Most of the problems campaigns like this focus on are not ones superheroes can simply solve through the flexing of alien muscles or firing of plasma blasts. But if the PCs are not to feel completely useless (and that’s never an appropriate state of affairs for a *Champions* campaign), they must be able to achieve some successes — such as helping individuals, even when they cannot cure social ills in a comprehensive fashion.

Playing The Social/Cultural Element

Here’s some advice for players participating in campaigns emphasizing social and cultural themes:

Showcase Differences Of Opinion And Moral Quandries. Society as a whole is going through turmoil because there are many wildly different perspectives on societal problems, the media provides more opportunities than ever before for showcasing those perspectives, and most of those perspectives have at least *some* merit. The PC team should reflect this in part by having characters whose opinions, and approaches to problem-solving, also differ. As the PCs learn to work together, the changes within the group will mirror the changes they want to create in society.

Maintain Some Perspective. *Champions* is just a game, and should never be something that gets people overly upset about in-game events. Roleplay your character well, but don’t start insulting other PCs, or take offense when the presentation or resolution of an issue doesn’t agree with your personal opinions. A little perspective helps keep the game as entertaining as it’s supposed to be.

FAD SHOWCASE

Since the advent of comics, pop culture fads have always made their presence felt in comic books. But in the 1970s, fads tended to define the occasional title. For instance, as the West developed an awareness of and interest in Asian martial arts, entire series debuted dealing with martial arts superheroes. When disco dominated the music airwaves, a disco-singing mutant made series appearances out of proportion to her super-abilities or genuine story value.

Incorporating Fads Into Your Campaign

If you want your campaign to focus, in whole or in part, on the “fad” element, try to keep it light. When fads appear in comic books, the fact that they are destined to last only a short time tends not to be evident to the reading audience. But when they’re implemented in roleplaying campaigns, the participants know about their ephemeral natures. For this reason, if you want to run a story, character, or entire campaign centered around what is obviously a fad, there’s very little reason to make it a grim, serious one; everyone is going to participate with tongue in cheek. So, regardless of the era in which it takes place — whether the fad is poodle skirts, Hula-Hoops, high camp, bell bottoms, disco, break-dancing, ninjas, in-line skates, or even role-playing games — it’s best to play such campaigns for humor value, even if the characters are completely straight-faced and unaware of the comic potential of what they’re doing.

Playing The Fad Element

If you’re playing in a game that uses the fad element, consider picking up that particular ball and running with it. Choose a fad that’s always interested you — perhaps it’s become your own hobby, or maybe it simply appeals to you because of its silliness — and develop a character around that theme. It will certainly set your character apart! Thousands of gamers have played *Champions* characters based around concepts like “super-strength” or “incredibly skilled gadgeteer,” but how many can claim to have played characters with skateboarding powers or abilities derived from Rubik’s Cube?

REVISIONIST PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS

As comic book fans from the ’40s and ’50s became comic book creators of the ’60s and ’70s, there was an increased interest in establishing a more credible continuity in the comic book worlds. For instance, if a character had had two mutually incompatible origin stories, these continuity-minded creators released a story explaining the incongruity. If a superhero’s first comic book title was cancelled in 1949, and then had a new

ENDURING FADS

A disclaimer: Many fads do endure, though usually with a reduced audience or fan base. Some of the fads mentioned in the text are still with us and will continue to be; they constitute “fads” when they are at the peak of their popularity and attract the attention of the general population, then becomes “hobbies” or “subcultures.” So to describe, say, an interest in Asian martial arts as a fad is not to insult it, because there was a period of time when it was a fad. Now that most members of the general public have either lost interest or become so familiar with it that it no longer has any curiosity value, it has ceased to be a fad and has become a specialized interest.

’Nuff said.

EXAMPLE FAD POWERS

Interested in playing a *Bronze Age Champions* fad-based superhero? Here are a few ideas for you:

Get Down Tonight! With this power, a disco-themed character can project a deafening burst of pure disco music, backed by a blinding disco lightshow.

Sight and Hearing Group Flash 7d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½). Total cost: 60 points.

Rocketboard: A skateboarding-themed character might use this super-tech skateboard, which not only travels with microjet-assisted speed, but uses special tires to ride straight up walls! The GM may require a PS: Skateboarding roll if the character wants to perform unusual stunts, like wall-riding or jumps.

Flight 20”, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (50 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼). Total cost: 22 points.

IRON AGE CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Iron Age Champions campaigns are usually Standard Superheroic games, with player characters built on 200 Base Points + 150 Disadvantage points (sometimes fewer Disadvantages, earlier in the period, or in games focused on specific trends or themes). Characters typically have around 60-80 Active Points in most powers, CVs of 7-13, and SPDs of 4-10.

DARK CHAMPIONS

The term “dark heroes” used in this section differs from *Dark Champions*, the designation used by Hero Games for its modern-day action/adventure genre line. “Dark Champions” comes from the supplement that originally described this type of gaming, and the name was chosen because the supplement was conceived of as a sourcebook for *Champions*, rather than a separate genre book. The *Dark Champions* line does, in fact, cover costumed crimefighters such as Marvel’s Punisher or DC Comics’s Vigilante, and so the name remains an apt one; characters like that don’t receive too much coverage in this book for that reason. The *Dark Champions* line also delves into related subjects like espionage games, law enforcement games, technothriller games, and so on. Superhumans are rare, carefully defined, or nonexistent in such games. “Dark heroes,” in contrast, refers more to true superhumans who share some of the outlook and methods of *Dark Champions* vigilantes.

one begin in 1961, the creators concocted stories explaining where he was and what he was doing in the dozen years in between.

As time went on, these revisions became more and more elaborate. Were several characters who had their own individual titles active during World War II? The revisionist creators might put them together as a wartime superhero team and describe their exploits during those years. Did a character experience a personality or procedural change in 1969? The revisionist creators might explain that the original hero with that name had disappeared and been replaced by a lookalike — and now, decades later, the original has returned from suspended animation to reclaim his name.

These cleanups and elaborations on longstanding superhero settings are not precisely the sort of hook a GM should hang a campaign upon, but they might make a good basis for a subplot or story arc — and you can orient any *Champions* campaign around the sort of tone and attention to detail that sort of continuity requires.

Incorporating Revisionism Into Your Campaign

Here’s some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on this sort of revisionism:

Create A World With A Superhero History. Decide when the campaign will be set, then establish that the world has a history of superheroics going back twenty, forty, sixty or more years, whatever you prefer. This should be the sort of history one would derive from the superheroes’ own press releases and press conferences — upbeat, confident, with historical figures’ heroic motivations. However, it shouldn’t be extremely detailed (the characters might know, for instance, that the Crystal Duke helped people escape the famous Boston nightclub, the Cocoanut Grove, when it burned in 1942, but not what he was doing there, whether he was injured, or the like).

Create Layers Of Truth, Half-Truth, And Falsehood. Having established the publicly-known history as a skeleton for the campaign background, you can now go in and provide the truth behind all those details, and the truth should often be nothing like the events recorded in all the history books. Then, as the new generation of heroes — the PCs — begin their own adventures, they’ll gradually come across evidence that the shiny, happy world they know is not the truth, and that their lives and happiness rest atop a scabby layer of lies, mysteries, and sorrows.

Switches and mysteries you can throw at your players include: finding out that a character’s parents aren’t actually his biological parents; or that the mother is, but that the child is the result of an affair or a tragedy; learning a super-parent had a double life (hero by day, villain by night); discovering that an ancestor’s death, presumably an accident, was actually murder; learning that all the new heroes’ parents, a superteam of a generation ago, were involved in an adventure whose details are so painful or frightening that the few survivors won’t discuss it, and now the consequences of that adven-

ture are coming back to haunt them; discovering that powers defined as magical abilities are actually mutations, or vice versa; discovering evidence this reality is nothing but a virtual reality experience from another “real world;” discovering that one’s own memories are false, created in a lab and planted in a robot or synthetically-created human; and so forth.

Note that this sort of campaign is best-suited to players who like to have their emotional chains yanked; if that’s not the most common type of player in your campaign, the Revisionist Playhouse Presents approach is probably not best for your campaign.

Playing The Revisionism Element

If you’re playing in a campaign with a revisionism element, consider creating a second-generation superhero as your PC (assuming the GM doesn’t require that in the first place). Whatever your character’s special effects and powers, he should be a second- or third-generation super, inheriting powers or heroic motivations from an earlier hero (or even villain). Don’t build too much angst or anguish into the character’s emotional makeup; events of the campaign itself will provide those.

THE IRON AGE

All of this brings up to the modern era of comic books and superhero campaigns — the era, perhaps not coincidentally, in which superhero roleplaying appeared. Because *Champions* and other superhero roleplaying games first hit the market during the late Bronze Age, and became truly popular during the Iron Age, the Iron Age emphasis on continuity, detailed stories, and complex characters tends to influence the way gamers approach the genre.

The Iron Age, like the Bronze Age before it, continued the themes and trends shown in its immediate predecessor, pushing them further and exploring them in more detail. “Graphic novels” — lengthy, often serious, self-contained comics — first made their appearance, usually featuring elaborately-crafted stories light-years ahead of standard superhero comics in terms of sophistication and creativity. Whereas Bronze Age comics sometimes addressed somber social issues, Iron Age comics became *really* grim, emphasizing societal decay, excessive violence, amoral “heroes,” and other trends and themes dismaying to fans of more traditional “four-color” superhero stories.

But this wasn’t precisely a period of “anything goes.” Instead, the comic book creators were continuing a trend begun in earlier decades, one of creating worlds that observed continuity between characters and between titles more carefully than before. This trend observed a fairly simple logic: if something bad happened to the Golden Gate Bridge in one character’s comic book, then ramifications of that event should affect any other title taking place at the same place at approximately the same time. If one series made it clear the U.S. was experiencing a wave of mutant hysteria, then other



titles — even those that did not deal specifically with mutants — would make note of this important change in American society. By the same logic, if one comic book explored the adventures of vampires or vampire hunters in the publisher's main universe, then there were vampires and vampire hunters in that universe; they could show up elsewhere. The result was a setting that seemed bigger, more complete, more realistic — despite the presence of essentially unrealistic elements such as superheroes.

Iron Age Champions campaigns often concern themselves with these events, elements, and trends:

DARK HEROES

The modern era of comics featured the rise of truly “dark” heroes — many so dark that even referring to them as “heroes” sometimes becomes problematic. Some are vigilante crimefighters who pit intellect, gadgetry, skills, and an all-too-human body against the forces of crime... and, often, the law. Others are true superhumans, with the usual array of awesome powers, but whose attitudes and crimefighting methods have more in common with costumed vigilantes than purely four-color superheroes.

Some of the characteristics of these darker comic book stories include:

Ongoing Conflict Between The Supers And The Law. Dark superheroes become judges, juries, and sometimes executioners in their struggle with crime.

Even if the campaign is set in an era when superheroes are well-established and generally have good relations with the authorities, the vigilante hero tends to be an exception, someone sought by the law as much as the criminals he hunts.

Exploration Of The Concept Of “Hero.” Iron Age comics often delve into the subject of what constitutes a “hero,” and what it takes to be one and act like one. They often do this by showing that just wearing a costume isn't enough — Iron Age heroes may be rather pathetic, ineffectual, or mentally disturbed in either of their identities. It's often by rising above those difficulties, and even by ceasing to hide behind a mask, that they truly become heroic.

Small, Private, Hidden. Many Iron Age comic books concentrate on a single superhero. This isn't necessarily practical in a roleplaying campaign, but even so, it's helpful to keep the size of an *Iron Age Champions* dark hero team low — it's counterproductive to have NPC heroes in the team. All heroes in the team should be good at stealthy skills, and have a number of escape powers or gadgets ready so the law won't catch them.

Concentration On Crime And Society's Ills. Dark hero stories and campaigns often take place not in shiny supervillain bases or master villains' orbiting satellite headquarters, but in the city streets. There may be supervillains, but they're more likely to be predators or muscle for organized crime, or villainous agencies more like true organized crime groups or government conspiracies, than they are to be masterminds or world-smashers. Many of these dark stories should involve crime and its effects on the community rather than more exotic evils; the whole campaign may have a dark, moody film noir quality to it if the GM and players prefer.

Potential For Greater Violence And Lethality. Though some dark heroes have a Code Versus Killing (page 67), at least as many have a more practical outlook on the elimination of crime: a crimefighter with a .44 Magnum is somewhat more effective than one without, and a criminal with a .44 Magnum slug in his chest is less likely to harm an innocent bystander. Similarly, superheroes with powers like the ability to turn their hands and fingers into razor-sharp blades crop up frequently in the Iron Age, whereas they were virtually unheard of in earlier periods. If the GM and players like it that way, the campaign can feature hero-villain battles that are far more bloody and permanent than normal *Champions* campaigns; Iron Age stories often explore the theme of violence and its consequences (both for the heroes, and for the NPCs and settings around them).

Style Over Substance. In *Iron Age Champions* campaigns, particularly those with a darker orientation,

“FOUR-COLOR” VERSUS “DARK”

Iron Age Champions games often tend to feature characters who are grimmer, grittier, and more “realistic” than the heroes of the earlier periods (particularly Golden and Silver). They are generally referred to as “dark,” even though their costumes can be just as gaudy as earlier heroes, because of their harsher, more practical attitudes. This term also stands in contrast to “four-color,” a designation often applied to Golden and Silver Age heroes and deriving from the four colors used to print the comics of those periods. A four-color hero typically stands for the “Truth, Justice, and the American Way” sorts of ideals and approaching to superheroing that people so often associate with the genre (see *Code Of The Hero*, page 125-30), whereas the dark heroes of the Iron Age may scorn such ideals as foolish, and/or adopt more “realistic” methods of crimefighting.

EXAMPLE IRON AGE POWERS

Here are a few powers appropriate for many *Iron Age Champions* characters:

Bikerwear Costume: The character's costume consists, in whole or in part, of sturdy leather, bits of metal, spikes, and the like — all cut and shaped for the most flattering effect, of course.

+2 COM (1 Active Point); OIF (-½) (total cost: 1 point) and Armor (2 PD/2 ED) (6 Active Points); OIF (-½) (total cost: 4 points) and HKA 1 point, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (17 Active Points); OIF (-½), No STR Bonus (-½) (total cost: 8 points). Total cost: 13 points.

Distracting Costume: The character's costume is particularly flattering and revealing, making it harder for his opponents to fight effectively.

+20 PRE (20 Active Points); OIF (-½), Only To Make Seductive/Friendly Presence Attacks Solely For Purposes Of Causing Target To Delay His Actions In Combat (-1), Only Versus Targets Of Appropriate Gender And Sexual Orientation (-1), Only Works Once Per Target Per Scene (-½). Total cost: 4 points.

Haywire: The character can make computers malfunction just by touching them.

Drain INT 3d6 (30 Active Points); Only On Computers (-1). Total cost: 15 points.

Razor Fingers: The character can transform his fingers into razor-sharp blades.

HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR) (15 Active Points); Only In Heroic Identity (-½). Total cost: 10 points.

a character's style and attitude matter as much as his powers or actions. Costumes become even more revealing and overtly sexy than ever before, with leather, metal, and chrome appearing more and more frequently. Tattoos, piercings, mohawk haircuts, blades, spikes, and other such "fashion accessories" also become a part of the superhero wardrobe. Even those characters who have truly heroic attitudes tend to hide them behind embittered or callous facades.

Incorporating Dark Heroes Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the "dark heroes" element:

Consider Human-Level Origin Sources. You might wish to mandate that all characters take the *Normal Characteristic Maxima* Disadvantage (perhaps for no points). More characters than ordinary may confine their powers to martial arts and gadgetry.

Prepare For Lethality. Given the greater lethality in *Iron Age Champions* campaigns, you should plan to replace villains and enemies on a fairly frequent basis. In some cases, a villain identity may progress from one NPC to another (as one adopter of the identity dies, another person takes his place), but usually you have to create new villains and introduce them into the campaign.

Playing The Dark Heroes Element

Here's some advice for players to help them emulate the dark heroes "feel" and themes:

Ask About Codes Versus Killing. Before play begins, find out whether the campaign will be a bloody one or not. If so, it's best not to design your character with a Code Versus Killing, and to consider taking more Killing Attacks than Normal Damage-based powers.

Consider Skills As Much As Powers. Even if your character has superpowers, many *Iron Age Champions* supers focus as much on Skills as on Powers. You may want to design your character with this in mind.

Pay Attention To Your Character's Appearance. Come up with a costume that fits the aesthetic of the era. De-emphasize gaudy colors and capes in favor of darker hues, leather, and bits of metal.

Think Practical. Consider discarding the usual Silver Age-derived thought patterns about how superheroes act — abandon the four-color perspective for a darker, grimmer, more practical outlook. Approach crimefighting more like a soldier or renegade cop than like a funnybook character.

REALISTIC SUPERPOWERS

In past eras, comics creators often didn't worry too much about the "realistic" implications of, or explanations for, superpowers. By the Iron Age, more and more creators had begun to think about, and explore in their stories, what superpowers "would really be like." Superhero combats became bloody, with lots of collateral damage. If a superhero picked up a building, sewer pipes and gas lines get ripped up, causing floods and fires. When a

supervillain is killed, the coroner needs laser scalpels and buzzsaws to cut through his super-dense skin to perform the autopsy. The "realism" angle often appeals to gamers, since it allows them to make use of their own knowledge of sciences (both hard and social) when discussing or exploring issues related to superhumans.

Incorporating Realistic Superpowers Into Your Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want their campaigns to focus, in whole or in part, on the realism element:

Consider The Implications. When you design a supervillain, or use him in the game, consider the implications of his actions on the world around him. If he wants to build his secret headquarters on an artificial island in the Pacific, how does he obtain the materials, get them to the construction site, and hide the island from spy satellites? Instead of having super-battles in the city be fairly antiseptic, emphasize the damage done to the scenery and innocent bystanders — perhaps by requiring the heroes to use their powers for firefighting or ambulance detail after the battle's won.

Consider The Civilian Point Of View. Some of the best comics of the Iron Age look at superheroing not from the heroes' perspective, but from the perspective of the "ordinary joe" who sees or encounters the superheroes as they fight crime and save the world. In some cases, the ordinary joe even gets caught up in their adventures, perhaps to chronicle them or become "sidekick for a day." Find ways to impress upon the PCs how they (and their actions) appear to average citizens.

Playing The Realism Element

Here's some advice for players to help them maintain the feel of "realism" in *Iron Age Champions* stories.

Consider The Implications. Even more than the GM, the players should consider the implications of their powers and actions — since they are, after all, on center stage throughout the campaign. A little time spent during character creation to determine the nature and ramifications of a character's powers is a good start. Then just keep that information in mind when the characters enter play and fight crime.

Consider Lower Defenses. For games that want to emphasize the violence and bloodiness of many Iron Age comics, having lower than normal amounts of defense (particularly Resistant Defenses) may be appropriate.

MORE UNUSUAL PERIODS

The campaigns described above might all be considered “mainstream” superhero campaigns; they all take place in superhero worlds tied strongly to the history and culture of the real world, with super-events running parallel to largely unchangeable real world events. But other types of *Champions* campaigns — ones venturing further afield in theme and setting — are possible.

Other Historical Periods

Though many comic book creators and the designers of superhero RPG universes assume campaigns follow the standard model (superheroes first appearing shortly before World War II and more appearing in the years since so that there are few or no periods where no active supers exist), there’s no regulation saying you have to define your own *Champions* campaigns that way. If the GM and players are fond of a specific historical period, they can create a campaign in which supers first appear during that time.

VICTORIAN CHAMPIONS

The last quarter of the nineteenth century is a wonderful time to set a superheroes campaign. The British Empire was ruled by Queen Victoria, who lent her name to an entire era, and was in the last great period of its expansion. The United States was still recovering from the events of the Civil War, the period generally thought of as the Wild West was in full bloom, and American Indians were engaged in a losing fight with the forces of the U.S. government. Japan’s isolation had been broken only years before and that nation was still adjusting to greater interaction with the rest of the world. Fictitious characters such as Sherlock Holmes, Professor Challenger, Captain Nemo, Phileas Fogg, Dr. Jekyll, the Time Traveler, the Invisible Man, and Bram Stoker’s interpretation of Vladislas Dracula were appearing in print.

Running A Victorian Champions Campaign

If you want to run *Victorian Champions* campaigns, it pays to learn about the era — history, culture, costume, entertainments. (The same can be said, of course, about any other campaign firmly grounded in a specific historical period.) Since you’re trying to simulate a “dramatic reality,” it also helps to read the works of Doyle, Wells, and Verne, among others.

Victorian Champions campaigns typically feature Low-Powered Superheroic characters — often built on as little as 100 Base Points + 100 Disadvantage points. Characters typically have around 30-40 Active Points in most powers, CVs of 5-8, and SPDs of 3-5.

Playing In A Victorian Champions Campaign

Keep Anachronisms To A Minimum. Unless the GM is running a lighthearted campaign, anachronistic actions and speech detract from the period flavor of the campaign rather than add to the humor. Try

to create characters who belong to the setting rather than anticipate eras to come. For example, creating a gadgeteer character with “steampunk” technology is probably appropriate; trying to invent the Internet a century early is not.

If Your Character Has A Superpower, He Should Have Only One. Many *Victorian Champions* adventurers are like pulp heroes — more-or-less normal folks with the right attitude, skills, and equipment. But some are true superhumans, possessing powers beyond mortal ken; Dr. Jekyll and the Invisible Man both fit this description. You should keep in mind two things about such superhumans if you want to design a character like that. First, they tend to have just one superpower (or a group of very closely related powers), and often that power has severe Limitations or drawbacks. Hawley Griffin, the Invisible Man, didn’t have a list of “Invisibility Powers” — he was invisible, and that was all. Furthermore, only his body was invisible; anything he wore or carried remained visible, thus significantly hampering him at times. Second, their powers tend to be low-powered — no more than 40 Active Points, as indicated above.

GREAT WAR CHAMPIONS

World War I is another intriguing period for superhero emergence. It had many of the characteristics of World War II, including military clashes between mighty nations (and without the insane racial overtones that led to the Holocaust) and related espionage. It was an era of inventors and inventions, with the emergence of tanks, submarines, and airplanes as effective weapons of war.

The guidelines and advice for *Victorian Champions*, above, apply to *Great War Champions* campaigns as well.

Alternate Histories

Earlier, this chapter discussed characteristics of superhero campaigns as they would be if they followed the models shown in major comic books published over the last sixty years. But you can separate historical events from tone and style, and separate the type of campaign from historic period, anyway you want. Such a campaign is entertaining for a GM who likes to put his characters through adventures in a fantastic environment that is culturally very unlike our own, and for players who enjoy exploring “what ifs.”

For instance, instead of having a campaign set in the 1960s work as described above, you could have it be the dawn, rather than the second or third generation, of the age of superheroes. Instead of it being a time of social turbulence, the same events or forces that caused superheroes to appear in the first place could have a major effect on society, making it very different from what we experienced in the real world. The presence of superheroes could have led to the Vietnam War being avoided completely and could have allowed the cheerful *Father Knows Best* complacency of the 1950s to continue for decades, leading to a very different sort of 1960s campaign.

Or, a campaign set in the modern world could derive from the assumption that the first superheroes were the heroes of Greek mythology, and that there has been an uninterrupted history of superhero activity since then. By tradition, all superheroes are protectors or champions of specific cities, tribes, or races, warriors for their cultural identities rather than defenders of larger concepts of good or evil, and clashes between supers would be as common as conflicts between the cities they represent. Owing to whatever forces cause parallel universes to appear similar to one another more than they logically should, nations with the names of the United States of America, Iraq, and Zimbabwe could have developed, but they would be very different in government and temperament than the nations we know in the real world.

You should run an alternate history campaign in the same way you'd run the nearest equivalent mainstream *Champions* campaign. However, you should decide how your variations on historical events affect later events to come. For instance, you might decide to run a campaign based on the notion that England won America's war for independence. So, in the twentieth/twenty-first centuries, there is no United States. The former Colonies would have a different name and be another nation in the still-thriving British Empire. World history would be tremendously different than the history we know, and you'll have to spend a considerable amount of time and do a considerable amount of work as you decide where history has led up until the point the campaign begins.

Peculiar Settings

Finally, superhero campaigns don't have to be set within recognized Earth history at all. Some could take place in the far future, in realms of outer space so vast that Earth is an undistinguished player, or in other dimensions where Earth is unknown.

GALACTIC CHAMPIONS

Whether it is because the campaign is set in the far future or because the campaign's heroes have accepted the same responsibility toward galactic civilization that most player character groups only accept toward the Earth or their own cities, the heroes of a *Galactic Champions* campaign travel throughout the galaxy, protecting it from dangers.

Galactic Champions campaigns (sometimes also known as "C3K campaigns," for *Champions 3000*, since many tend to be set around the year 3000 AD) has some of the same strengths as the "Inner and Outer Space" element/campaign described above, in that it allows the GM to impart a sense of wonder by introducing the PCs to all sorts of new worlds and new species. But its primary purpose is not exploration — as with most *Champions* campaigns, a *Galactic Champions* game is about crimefighting, albeit on a much greater scale than normal.

Running A *Galactic Champions* Campaign

Here's some advice for GMs who want to run *Galactic Champions* campaigns:



Build The Skeleton For Your Galaxy. The task of creating an entire galaxy as a campaign setting may seem daunting, but it's not if you break it down into smaller tasks and accomplish them one at a time. The first thing to do is to design a general framework for galactic civilization; then, as players build their characters and you put them through adventures, you can begin layering in details. You may want to consult *Star Hero*, the *HERO System* genre book for science fiction gaming, for additional information and advice.

This framework should include these details:

The nature and size of the galactic "empires." In this context, "empire" doesn't necessarily mean something ruled by a despotic emperor, it indicates any large collection of planetary systems belonging to the same governmental structure. (Do note, however, that when they actually are empires, however wise or cruel their rulers may be, those rulers constitute really interesting NPCs for the player characters to encounter.) It's helpful to start with a rough political map of the galaxy, drawing in approximate borders for the frontiers of those empires. Then decide on such matters as what type of government each one has (tyranny? regulated monarchy? democracy? plutocracy?), how they interact with other empires, and whether they are dominated by a single species or bestow equal benefits to citizens of all species.

The key species. To make each empire more visually distinct, you need to create anywhere from one to three species who are most strongly associated with it. These would be either the most numerous or the most privileged species belonging to that empire, and each should have a distinctive appearance, a distinctive manner of speech, and a distinctive set of special effects for its preferred types of technology (*i.e.*, antimatter propulsion versus gravitic propulsion versus ion drives, laser beams versus missiles versus electromagnetic pulse weapons).

Standard levels of technology. How fast can spacecraft go? How much damage can their weapons do and take? How big can they be? You'll have to settle on the answers to these questions. As a basis for your decisions, remember that the Milky Way galaxy is about a hundred thousand light-years from edge to edge. Assuming you've set your campaign in the Milky Way or a comparably-sized galaxy, how long would you like it to take for a standard ship to go from one edge to the other? If you think that should be a lifetime's trip — say, 100 years — then ships should be equipped with 30 points' worth of Faster-Than-Light Travel (1,000 Light Years/year). If you'd prefer for characters to move around more briskly, with an edge-to-edge trip taking a year, then allow ships 44 points' worth (128,000 Light Years/year).

Mysteries of the galaxy. It's good to establish, early in the process of constructing the galaxy, some mysteries for the characters to know about (and to establish that they're of sufficiently low priority that the PCs don't immediately head off to explore them, leaving your planned adventures far behind). For instance, is there life in the areas where radiation is so high that

little exploration has been conducted? Who built all those buildings, which seem to be something like temples but apparently were never occupied, about 300,000 years ago at points scattered throughout the galaxy? Why are so many species obviously related to humans — did someone seed the galaxy billions of years ago, and if so, which planet is the origin of the humanoid races? And so on.

It's "Superheroes," Not "Super-Ships". One important thing to remember is that a campaign like this is still supposed to center around its player characters, so it's a bad idea to put together tasks that are most readily solved through application of a starship's weaponry. Design adventures that can only be resolved by individual superpowered heroes.

Think "Cosmic." Since the PCs are supposed to be powerful enough to stop galactic threats, take on the biggest starships, and deal with planetary problems, they need power — lots of it. The campaign standards should be closer to Very High-Powered or Cosmically Powerful superheroes than to standard point totals and guidelines.

Playing In A Galactic Champions Campaign

Think "Cosmic," Too. The GM is giving you a lot of points to work with, so use them appropriately! *Galactic Champions* characters are usually not only powerful, but "self-contained" — they rarely rely on Foci or the like, but instead have innate powers. Mutants, mutants, and naturally-powerful aliens are common; mystics, martial artists, and gadgeteers are not (though many characters have technical skills, since technology is an important part of the campaign setting). Many, if not all, can fly and survive unaided in the vacuum of space.

Stray Far From Home. Many of the PCs in a campaign such as this are aliens (*i.e.*, not Humans), and it is normally permissible to create the sort of character you want and then assume that his unusual traits are characteristic of one particular alien species. (The GM, charged with filling in the details of an entire galaxy, does not usually mind the players helping out by creating new species, so long as they fit within the tone of the galaxy.) Remember that your character is probably supposed to be a superhero even within the context of his own species. In other words, if you've put together a super-shapechanger with the notion that he comes from a planet of shapechangers, it's most appropriate for your character's level of shapechanging ability to be far superior to that of others of his kind.

FANTASY CHAMPIONS

"Fantasy Champions" refers to a sort of mix between *Champions* and *Fantasy Hero* — a fantasy-style setting in which superhumans/Superheroic-level characters exist. Many bodies of mythology that feature an extensive number of demi-gods and heroes descended from gods fit this description, as do some fantasy settings where magic is so extensive, powerful, and easily manipulated that virtually anyone can have a few "powers."

In a *Fantasy Champions* game, almost all superpowers will derive, to one extent or another, from

magic. “Mutations” will actually result from the experiments of mad wizards or gods, psionic powers will simply be a form of magic rather than a discrete type of ability, and artificers and enchanted items replace gadgeteers and gadgets.

Running or playing in a *Fantasy Champions* game is not that different from running or playing in a *Galactic Champions* game. The GM has to create a fantasy world setting for the PCs to adventure in (just like he has to create a galaxy for *Galactic Champions*), and travel and exploration are frequently involved. But instead of thinking “cosmic,” players and GMs should think “wondrous.” The emphasis here is not on awesome levels of power (even a Low-Powered Superheroic character is already much more powerful than a typical *Fantasy Hero* character), but on amazing magical abilities and the wonders found in a world where magic is prevalent. Adventure and epic quests are the themes, and the characters’ actions may very well affect the entire world.

MIXING AND MATCHING

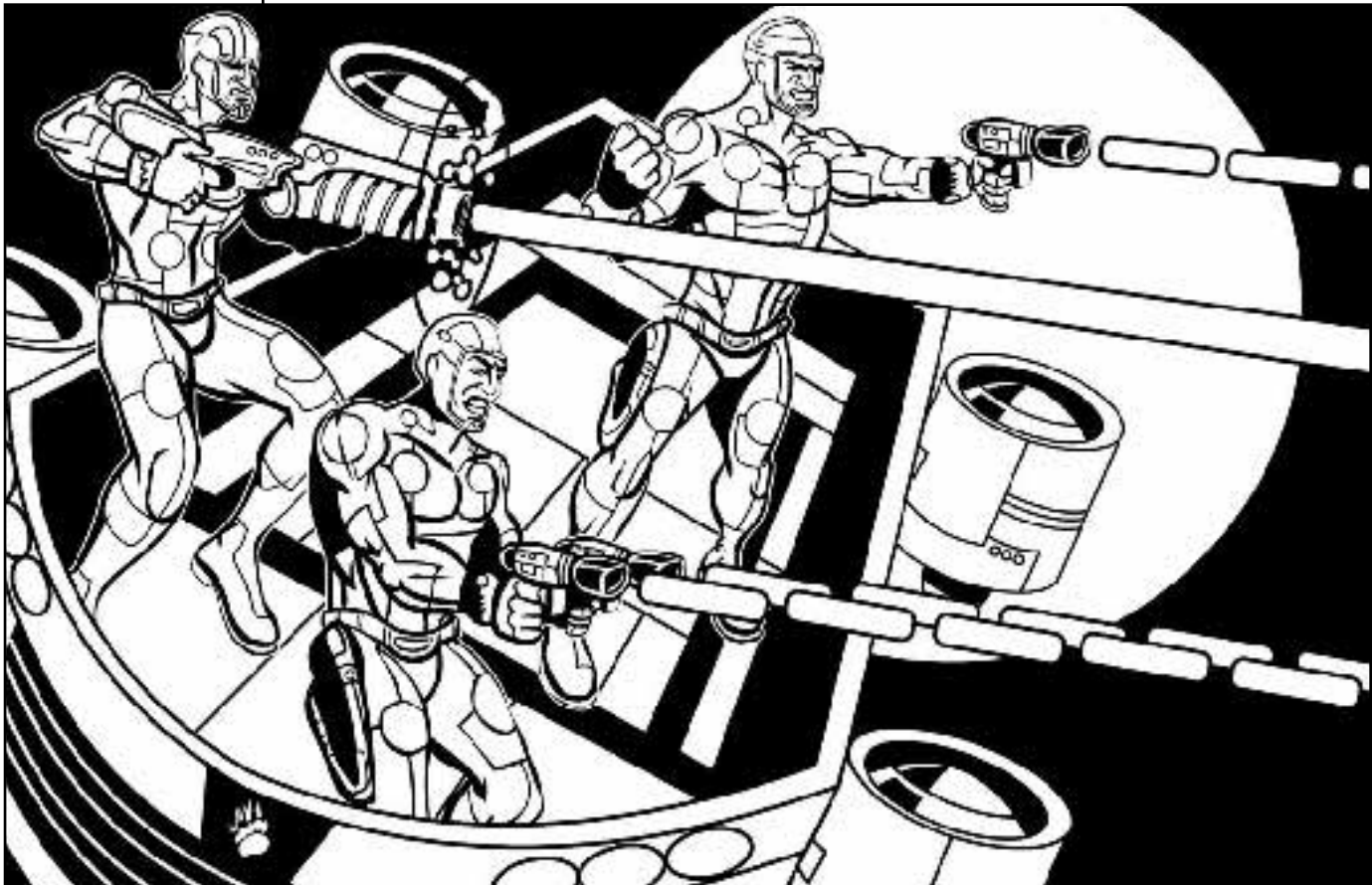
Having seen all these different periods and types of campaigns, you can also consider ways to mix and match their elements to please yourself. This is actually not a difficult process. All you have to do is decide on a set of traits from one period described above and decide how they would be implemented in another period. For example, it’s entirely possible to mix some of the elements of a Silver Age campaign into a *Bronze Age Champions* game, or vice-versa.

Let’s say you wanted to run a campaign set in the early years of the twenty-first century, but have that campaign be much more like the comics of the Golden Age. To do this, you’d probably want to establish that the very first superheroes began appearing in the 1990s.

Since the Golden Age comics were less cynical and more gung-ho than modern comics, you might want to establish that the appearance of these superheroes began to change things in modern world culture. The superheroes drew admirers by the thousands, causing the formation of endless numbers of fan clubs, and even a demand for more wholesome entertainments. By possessing enough power and inhuman versatility to pretty much ignore demands by the governments to serve them in covert ways, the superheroes remain free of morally ambiguous obligations.

The defining characteristic of Golden Age comics was the interaction of superheroes and World War II, and to simulate that atmosphere, the GM will probably want to plunge the Earth into another war. But the problem here is that no nation or group of nations today can really take the part of the Axis powers. It becomes easiest for the GM to have the war be a global defense against invaders from space, invaders with their own super-powered champions.

And so with a few simple steps — and a little work to implement them — you can successfully mix modern culture and history with Golden Age comic book atmosphere.



TIMELINE



Timeline refers not to the timeline of world history but to the events, particularly superhero and supervillain events, leading up to the start of the campaign. Having decided on the basic historical period in which to set his campaign, the GM must come up with timeline details pertaining just to superheroes and supervillains (since the real world doesn't give us very many of these). For instance:

- What sources do superpowers come from?
- When did supers first appear?
- How many supers are there?
- How have supers affected history and society?
- What super-related mysteries are still unsolved?

SOURCES OF SUPERPOWERS

Beginning on page 44, this chapter discusses the most common sources a campaign can use for the origins of its superheroes' powers. Since those may affect the development of the timeline (for example, mutations are rare before the development of atomic power), here's a list of them:

Alien Species
Extradimensional Energies
Genetic Manipulation
Magic and Mysticism
Mutation
Psionic Powers
Super-Science
Supernatural Forces
Training

THE APPEARANCE OF SUPERS

Having determined what sources provide powers to supers in your world, you can now decide when in your setting's history they first appeared.

The usual choices include:

- Now
- Recently (within the last few years)
- A generation ago, or more

A related question, if you chose the third option, is this: has the appearance of new supers been regular since the first ones appeared, or have there been long periods when no new ones debuted? If the latter, why?

First Supers Appear Now

This choice means the player characters are among the very first supers to appear in the world. The advantage to it is the PCs feel extra-special (and justifiably so). The characters know they're super, head and shoulders above common humanity. Their players know in addition that these characters are the first of their kind and will probably set the tone for generations to come.

But there's a downside, too. Since these supers are the first, there may be no logical reason for them to behave as supers in the comic books do. For every one of the following questions, the GM has to implement an answer if he wants these conventions to appear in the campaign.

Why do supers wear costumes? Dressing up in a colorful or revealing outfit to perform one's after-hours hobby is just a bit unusual, and you may need to give the players a good reason why their characters do it. Here's one possibility: a rich philanthropist (probably an NPC) notices early on that metahumans are appearing and helps organize some of them into a team. But he is, or is aided by, a savvy marketing and publicity expert who immediately comprehends the virtues of instant visual recognition by the public. (Alternately, he may recognize that a distinctive costume is something a hero can trademark and exploit through the sales of posters, action figures... and comic books.) It's worth remembering that in many cases in the comics, members of brand-new super-teams initially wore the same costume design, sometimes with slight variations, before eventually exerting their independence and choosing unique designs.

Why do supers use code-names? Code-names, in association with costumes, were originally intended chiefly to protect the superhero's identity, making it more difficult for villains, other criminals, and/or the agents of the law to track down the hero and punish him for what they consider misdeeds. For characters to do this in a campaign where there have been no crimefighters with concealed identities before, it must occur to them very early that this is a concern. If none of the characters figures it out before taking to the streets as a crimefighter, the GM may need to set up an adventure where the need for identity concealment is pointed out

to the characters. For instance, an NPC hero, also a novice, might be tracked down and assassinated in a very public way by organized crime, with the news reports describing how reporters were easily able to figure out who the hero was, meaning it was similarly easy for the crime syndicate.

Why do any of them fight crime? Each character needs to have a very personal, very direct reason to pit himself against the forces of crime and chaos, and that reason needs to be reflected both in his personal history and his Disadvantages. If the GM cannot figure out the character's crimefighting motivation from his Disadvantages, he should insist the player add an appropriate Psychological Limitation or two.

Why does anyone take them seriously? The answer to this question is not "Because they're superhumanly powerful." The public could recognize that individuals are superhumanly powerful but also believe them to be utterly insane. Why would the public begin to regard supers as a significant or worthwhile component of national or world culture? The answer is that even early on in their presence in the campaign world, they begin to make a difference, a positive difference, in the lives of normal people. Though the GM doesn't have to make the sudden presence of superheroes turn the world into a nice place to live, free of injustice, crime, and bad thoughts, the PCs should have some durable victories that establish their worth. On a small scale, heroes might turn a crime-ridden section of the campaign city into a neighborhood where people can actually walk at night, and/or inspire a fan club whose members, in emulating the heroes' training, stay free of criminal activities. On a more global scale, the heroes could save the world, on one occasion at least, and be remembered for that success.

For some of these questions, it may be enough to establish that this world, like ours, has had its own superhero comic books (just not any true superhumans) for many years, so that when people with similar abilities actually began appearing, their natural inclination was to behave like those characters do.

First Heroes Appeared Recently

This option is somewhat easier on a GM than the "First Heroes Appear Now" choice. It allows the GM to establish that the presence of superheroes on his world have begun to have an effect and have begun to take on definite trends, which means the PCs don't have to establish every detail of the interaction between superheroes and the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the GM may still need to provide some justification for the habits described above.

For example, if supers have been around for a few years, they can have already established the pattern of wearing costumes/using code-names. They might have set up a pattern of the way they deal

with supervillains — whether most villains tend to die in combat with the heroes or be captured and sent to prison, for instance. Laws trying to curb the activities of superheroes might have been enacted but would probably not yet be enforceable, and the public's interest in, and even adulation of, superheroes might not yet have been tarnished by the occasional bad apple.

First Heroes Appeared Some Time Ago

With this approach, superheroes began appearing on the campaign world a generation or more ago, and society has had a reasonable amount of time to adapt to their presence. This offers the GM the advantage that it allows him to design a world that follows the models of the universes of the major comic book publishers, but offers the disadvantage that the GM has more work to do — establishing the history of superheroing and supervillainy in his world and its resulting effects on society, technology, and so on.

Where Superhumans Appear

In addition to *when* superhumans appear, the GM should give some thought to the issue of *where* they appear. Are they evenly distributed throughout the setting's population, or do they tend to arise more in some places than in others? In campaigns designed to be similar to those of the major comic book companies, superhumans seem to be more common, and more active, in the more advanced nations and regions of Earth, such as the United States, Canada, and Europe, and less common elsewhere. If the GM wants to mirror this situation, he should give some thought to *why* this state of affairs exists; the answers may have intriguing implications for the campaign.

Similarly, the GM may want to explain why superhumans are especially common in areas where they'd otherwise be rare. For example, perhaps superhumans are uncommon throughout Africa as a whole, but arise with unusual frequency in the nation of Malawi — because, decades ago, a bizarre alien starship crashed there, and the strange radiations it gives off have led to the creation of superhumans of various sorts.

NUMBER OF SUPERHUMANS

The GM must decide approximately how many supers there are (known and unknown), whether the proportion of supers to the general population is on the rise, stable, or declining, and so on. The GM should decide how many costumed supers he thinks are active worldwide, and then try to figure out what this means on a "per capita" basis. Consider the following questions:

Out of every million people on the Earth:

How many are superhuman in some sense?

- Of those, how many act as costumed supers?
- Of those, what's the proportion of heroes to villains?

What other factors affect superhuman demographics?

Do the numbers derived above include alien visitors?

Does the number of costumed supers derived above include highly-trained normals, and normals using super-technology, who fight crime as superheroes but are not truly superhuman?

Is the population of superhumans increasing, remaining stable, or declining?

- Why?
- Has this trend been the same in earlier time periods?
- If not, what has it been, and why?

Example: Darren wants to create a campaign with comparatively few costumed supers in the world — approximately 20 superheroes, approximately 30 supervillains, for a total of 50. This world uses only a few sources for superpowers (mostly Genetic Alteration) and this keeps the number of “unknown supers” relatively low, so Darren establishes that for every one costumed superhero, there are no more than nine potential supers, for a total world population of about 500 superhumans of any sort. There may be some additional “costumed heroes” who aren’t superhuman; those aren’t included in these numbers.

Example: Jason wants to create a campaign with a lot of costumed supers in the world — a total of about 6,000, split evenly between heroes and villains.

That’s about 1/1,000,000th of the total world population, but that’s only the most noticeable portion of the superhuman population. Jason decides that for every costumed super, there are probably 1,000 people who are superhuman in some way — though those superhuman traits often aren’t powerful enough to let the super be competitive in the “big leagues,” the costumed-super world arena.

So Jason knows that approximately one person in 1,000 worldwide is superhuman in some sense, but the vast majority of such people do not become costumed supers — either out of disinterest (because they never realize they’re superpowered), because they choose to profit from their powers (legally or illegally) without acting as a costumed super, or for other reasons. Of those who are super in some sense, one in 1,000 becomes a costumed super.

Jason further decides that for every 10 true superhumans, there is another individual who, though not superpowered, uses advanced training or technology to “run with the supers.” That adds up to another 600 costumed “supers” in his campaign setting.

SUPERS AND SOCIETY

Having established when, in world history, superheroes and supervillains first began to appear, the GM can also establish their effects on history, culture, and society from that point until now. (Of course, if heroes have only just begun to appear, the GM can skip most of this step.)

Historical Events

The presence of supers would have to have some effect on historical events, but it will vary according to their numbers, the point in time when they appear, whether they were evenly matched against opposing supers, where they appeared in the greatest numbers, and other factors.

For example, if powerful supers began to appear in profusion just before the onset of World War II, it makes sense that they would have a dramatic effect on the outcome of the war. Looking at it logically, if most of the world’s superheroes appeared in one of the Allied nations, World War II might not have happened. Would Nazi Germany have invaded Poland in 1939, precipitating the war, if Hitler and his High Command had known that a handful of costumed individuals could kick his planes, tanks, and infantry right back across the border without raising a sweat? Probably not. But what if the distribution of supers was more even than that — what if there were as many supers in the Axis nations as in the Allied nations? The war might have taken place just as in our history, with there being an additional “superhero theater of war.”

So, what the GM needs to do is decide what effects he wants the presence of supers to have had on world history, and establish those details. It’s easy, when setting up the details of supers’ influence on history, to make that influence too great or too little. In the World War II example above, having the presence of supers prevent the war is “too great.” Eliminating World War II from history removes events that shape and define the world for generations to come, thus eliminating an important “touchstone” that helps the players understand and react to the campaign setting. It also forces the GM either to learn enough about pre-war world politics and sociology to construct a plausible detailed history in the absence of that war or to fabricate a history of the second half of the twentieth century that lacks detail and verisimilitude. But having Axis and Allied supers cancel one another out is “too little.” Their presence means nothing. They may have adventures, but their net effect on the world is nil.

The trick is to find specific places in history where the presence of supers makes a significant difference, while allowing the general flow of history to remain the same. Here are some examples:

In the real world, the Pacific theater portion of the Second World War ended after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In a comic book

HISTORY AND THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Don't forget to tie some of the campaign's player characters into the history you've established. With many players, it makes them feel that much more a part of the campaign setting; it becomes more important to them, and they become more important to it.

Some easy ways to do this include:

- Having one or more PCs be descendants of supers from earlier generations
- Having a PC's superpowers relate to or derive from the experiments of earlier scientists and mystics
- Having a technologically-oriented PC's gadgets come, at least in part, from earlier events and inventors
- Having one or more PCs descend from investigators, military personnel, explorers, scholars, or other personalities who would have been in a position to experience unusual events

world, plans for employment of those bombs could have been made, but President Harry Truman could have listened to an impassioned speech by the leader of America's wartime superheroes and allowed those supers to spearhead a conventional invasion of Japan. The net result might have been the conquest of Japan with the loss of very little human life — though possibly with the loss of many of those war-weary U.S. heroes — leading to a post-war Japan with someone different cultural traits (for instance, a lack of cultural dread regarding atomic weapons). Another, slight, difference might be that there was no glut of radiation-spawned monsters in the campaign world during the 1950s.

In the real world, Communist forces led by Mao Tse-tung took control of China in the 1949. Representatives of the former government, the Kuomintang, fled to the island of Taiwan and established themselves there. Since then, the existence of Taiwan has been a precarious one as the People's Republic of China has maneuvered to return that island to PRC control. In a comic book world, the forces of the Kuomintang might never have established a toehold there; instead, a collection of Chinese supervillains, taking advantage of the area's political chaos at that time, seized control of Taiwan. Today, Taiwan might be a rogue nation ruled by supervillains, a no-man's-land where personal power and wealth stand in for law, a place too strongly defended for any one nation to overcome. Its presence still destabilizes the area, but in a very different way from the real-world Taiwan's does.

In the real world, man first walked on the Moon in 1969, and has yet to establish a viable moonbase or large-scale orbital colony. In a comic book world, a rogue scientist could have built a device to take him to the Moon in 1957 (which is, of course, where he obtained his super-powers), and spent subsequent years assisting the space program, so that now, decades later, there are viable colonies in space and on the lunar and Martian surfaces.

The net change to the lives of the average citizen on Earth is very slight, but the change to history is significant.

Obviously, the earlier in history supers first appear, the more changes the GM can make to history. If the GM has no real interest in history, especially that of the twentieth century, he might want to establish the first appearance of supers as having been relatively recent.

Culture

The presence of superhumans must inevitably make the campaign world different from our own in both obvious and subtle ways. Here are some topics the GM should consider within his campaign:

Supers' Cultural Status. Just how does the general public regard superheroes and supervillains? Some options include:

Celebrity: Superhumans are the equivalent of Hollywood celebrities (supers' social activities, romantic affairs, petty feuds, hairstyle and costume changes, and more are as avidly followed as their crimefighting/criminal activities; fan clubs, web sites, and Internet newsgroups are devoted to them)

Lurid Fascination: The public views superhumans as it once did 1930s gangsters (the public follows their activities with a mix of admiration for rebellion and horrified fascination)

Condescension/Intolerance: The public reacts to superhero activities with a mix of appreciation, condescension, and rolling-eyes intolerance

Hatred/Fear: Superhumans are regarded more or less the same as serial killers (wanted posters appear everywhere, police forces pool their resources to capture these fiends)

Entertainment. Are there songs about superheroes? TV shows? Movies? If there are superheroes in real life, are there still superhero comic books? If so, do most deal with fictitious heroes, or are most of them licensed titles fictionalizing real heroes' exploits? If there aren't superhero comics, what are the most prevalent forms of comics?

Inspiration. Does the presence of superheroes inspire the common citizen to better himself and the world, or does the obvious superiority of the superhero dispirit the common man, increasing the prevalence of sloth, economic recession, and clinical depression? If the supers realize the latter situation is the case, what might they do to counter this dangerous state of affairs?



Law

The presence of superpowered people, some of whom ignore any law that inconveniences them in any way, some of whom ignore only the laws that keep them from being effective as crimefighters, inevitably has an effect on the way laws are written and enforced. The world of the law typically reacts to the presence of supers in one of three ways: Rejection; Acceptance; or Incorporation. In a world with a long history of superhero activity, the first reaction tends to be Rejection; after a few years, this may change to Acceptance; ultimately, this may change to Incorporation.

REJECTION

A world where the legal reaction to supers is Rejection tends to regard its supers, regardless of their individual motivations or histories, as criminals. Crimefighters have to stop crime and then flee one short step ahead of the police. Law enforcement agencies have arrest warrants out on known supers, even ones who've never harmed another person. If the news media follows the lead of the local and national authorities, the only press supers receive will be very negative. Campaigns where this sort of reaction is most appropriate include those where supers have only recently begun to appear in the world and campaigns where supers are, for some political or cultural reason, considered monstrous or evil (e.g., a world characterized by "mutant hysteria").



Some individual points of the relationship between supers and the law include:

Reaction of Peace Officers: Arrest superheroes on sight; prosecute without exception; reveal true identities to the press upon arrest.

New Laws: Equate use of most metahuman powers with discharging firearms in public and reckless endangerment, increase penalties for concealment of one's identity in the commission of a crime and for use of lethal/excessive force (*i.e.*, superpowers) during commission of a crime.

Federal Response: Governments of nations where superheroes appear tend to be panicky. They may create public or secret programs to duplicate the processes that create supers, or force captured supers to work for them (in a hostile "work for us or go to prison for life/be assassinated" environment). Alternately, harsh "superpowers registration laws," covering all superhumans or just some types, may be enacted and enforced (see accompanying sidebar).

Insurance Industry: Denies any claims made on the basis of superhero/supervillain interaction, classifying them in the same category as acts of war and acts of God.

ACCEPTANCE

A world where the legal reaction to supers is Acceptance tends to regard its superheroes as champions of the people and its supervillains as menaces to be dealt with as just like any other criminal. Crimefighters are often able to work hand-in-gauntlet with local and federal law enforcement authorities. The news media tends to follow its own agenda in reporting on the activities of supers, generally giving good press to supers (whether heroic or criminal) who are charming and make for good stories.

Campaigns where this sort of reaction is most appropriate include those where supers have been around for a generation or more, so that the initial shock of their appearance has long subsided, or (more rarely) those where the national culture is traditionally one of acceptance and tolerance to a degree that would be considered extreme (or unusually enlightened) by modern standards.

Some individual points of the relationship between supers and the law include:

Reaction of Peace Officers: Arrest supers with warrants issued against them, and

SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION LAWS

The law most powerfully and personally intrudes on the lives of superheroes when government officials in the campaign establish "superhuman registration laws." Used properly, these laws have lots of story potential for *Champions* campaigns.

As the name indicates, a superhuman registration law requires anyone with a superhuman power or ability to register with the government — typically the federal government, though states or provinces may have their own registration laws. Politicians in the campaign who support the registration law may make analogies to driver registration or gun licensing laws — like them, superhuman powers are potentially dangerous, so they need to be kept track of. Civil libertarians typically have other opinions, making pessimistic claims about invasion of privacy and governmental manipulation of superhumans.

In some campaigns, registration laws apply only to certain types of superhumans, such as mutants or characters with supernatural powers. But most registration laws cover *all* superhumans, or at least those with innate powers. Characters with technology-based powers probably have to register their weapons and gadgets in other ways, and characters whose powers result from intense training and personal development may not have to register at all.

The big question for the PCs, of course, is: will they register? Many superhumans object to registration laws, fearing the government intends to use the information to further invade their privacy, blackmail them, control them, or draft

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them into the military. If they get angry enough about it, these supers may form a “resistance movement,” one that might even unite some heroes and villains behind a common cause. Other superhumans, supportive of the law, won’t hesitate to register. Where the PCs fall within this continuum may define the course of the campaign, or at least an important subplot/story arc.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND SUPERHUMANS

In many comic book settings, the government gets involved in monitoring, controlling, creating, and/or employing superhumans. Sometimes the government creates a special bureaucracy specifically to deal with superhuman-related matters; sometimes existing institutions work with superhumans in their own spheres of authority. Here are some examples of possible relations between real-world government agencies and superhumans, using the United States government; for other nations, simply substitute a corresponding department, bureau, or ministry.

The Department Of Defense: The DoD would have responsibility for and/or control over all superhumans associated with the military, such as a squad of Marines with superpowers, or any super assigned to assist the nation’s forces with the prosecution of a war (or similar action). The DoD would usually have primary authority over all superhuman incidents in a war, or which threaten national security.

The Department Of Justice: The DoJ would have responsibility for

prosecute them as appropriate; acquire as much information as is possible about all supers in the region; exchange such information with other local, federal, and even international agencies; unofficially cultivate working relationships with the most professional and emotionally steady of superheroes; reveal true identities to the press only at a trial’s beginning. The “sanctioning” of superheroes by the government is possible, though relatively rare.

New Laws: Officially follow the letter of the law in matters such as use of powers in public, reckless endangerment, and the like, but enforcement of those laws tends to vary based on each individual city, the circumstances of each case, and other factors. Some jurisdictions may have special laws that take superpowers into account (e.g., use of any superpower on another person constitutes aggravated assault, registered and licensed telepaths can testify as to evidence gained via telepathy). The government may implement laws that permit supers to testify under their code names, so long as their real names are known to the government and law enforcement can positively identify them as the supers in question. The government almost certainly implements laws regarding how superhumans can be humanely incarcerated or otherwise incapacitated.

Federal Response: Governments have by now given up on the possibility of controlling all supers everywhere and have lost the edge of their panic. Government programs to create superpowered federal agents are common, and nations possessing many supers often have at least one official government superhero team (either publicly known as such or secretly working for the government). Such governments also may have other federal responses to the dangers rogue supers represent, including super-capturing apparatus or super-agent organizations. Superpower registration laws may still exist, but are often less draconian or restricted to certain types of superhumans (e.g., mutants or mystics).

Insurance Industry: Allows/recommends the purchase of superhuman damage insurance, which pays off when a policy holder sustains financial or personal loss from the actions of identifiable supers; an insurance company can reap tremendous profits over the years on such policies, but any truly destructive supervillain rampage (such as one that destroys a skyscraper) can force a company into bankruptcy.

INCORPORATION

“Incorporation” means society makes a greater effort to incorporate its supers as citizens — to fully and fairly integrate them into public life. Campaigns where this sort of reaction is most appropriate include those where supers have been around for two or more generations and are now considered not just an inevitable part of society, but an essential part.

Some individual points of the relationship between supers and the law include:

Reaction of Peace Officers: Many supers, either individual or organized, may be issued law enforcement credentials and authority so long as they meet a standard of behavior appropriate to peace officers. Peace officers tend to cooperate with other known

supers so long as they are not repeat-offense criminals and do not have warrants out against them; often, law enforcement agencies have the same sort of bristly, competitive relationship with supers as they do with one another. Individual police departments and federal agencies may have one or more supers working for them and may have agents specializing in relationships with (or cases involving) supers; that agent will be very up-to-date on the names and abilities of supers within his region. Special Weapons and Tactics units may resemble super-agent corps and may be able to cause trouble for most superheroes or supervillains; given enough time and motivation to concentrate their attention on an individual, they will have gear and tactics optimized to capture that individual.

New Laws: Laws tend to distinguish between government-sanctioned superheroes and unsanctioned supers (including vigilante heroes and supervillains). Criminal laws benefit sanctioned heroes, but impose harsher penalties on those who do not have sanction. Sanctioned supers may testify in court without difficulty, while unsanctioned supers may not.

Federal Response: Similar to the Federal Response listed above for “Acceptance,” but more so. The government and private industry may consider superheroes as just the advance wave of what humanity is to be in a few generations or centuries, and bend their efforts to distribute the benefits of superior genetics, training, and science to the general population — starting with their own agents, naturally.

Insurance Industry: Laws promoted by the insurance industry tend to obligate publicly-known heroes to carry liability insurance, which is as expensive and problematic as the malpractice insurance carried by doctors. This tends to make being a superhero more expensive than in previous generations, and some supers respond by behaving more like vigilantes of old, ignoring the efforts of society to dictate their behavior.

Technology

In any campaign where supers (either heroes or villains) possess technology more sophisticated and/or powerful than that of society as a whole, the GM has to address an important issue: can super-technology trickle down into the fields of ordinary science and the high-tech industries? In other words, to what extent does the existence of super-technology affect “everyday” technology?

For example, if Hardshell, the superhero identity of scientist/inventor Kyle Charteris, chooses to make the schematics of a much-earlier version of his armor available to the world at large, will there suddenly be a dramatic improvement in general scientific knowledge concerning his techniques? Will next year’s robotics become that much better than those of the real world? Can manufacturers sell comparatively inexpensive powered armor suits for use in industry and law enforcement?

The logical answer is yes. A more practical answer, though, has to take into account the GM’s “dramatic sense,” and incorporate his wishes concern-

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ing the level of technology in his campaign. If the world were to learn the technological secrets of all its high-tech superheroes, the result would change the world of technology practically overnight — and that may not be what the GM or players want.

So the GM has to ask himself these questions:

What Is The State of Technology In The Campaign?: In general, how advanced is the average technology in the campaign? Is it identical to that of the real world? Slightly ahead? Slightly behind? Far ahead? And are the differences uniform across the board, or do they differ in the fields of medicine, theoretical physics, applied physics, robotics, cybernetics, engineering, biology, genetics?

You should also ask: how advanced is super-technology? That's a much more difficult question to answer, but you can probably establish some vague parameters to guide the creation of the campaign and PCs. Does technology allow for time travel? direct probability manipulation? teleportation? telepathy and other mental powers?

Are There Any Factors Regulating The Advance Of Technological Knowledge?: The cost of R&D and/or production might keep the world's general state of knowledge behind that of superheroes. There might be other, more sinister, factors at work, though; these could include: secret government agencies that seize and classify potentially dangerous inventions as they appear; aliens who slow the advance of technology pending their own invasion; a godlike being restricting human knowledge either because he feels humans aren't ready or because he doesn't wish humans to become as powerful as he is; or the fact that using/creating advanced technology is a subtle superpower in itself, so ordinary people simply can't understand it or use it.

One approach that works for most campaigns is to assume that super-technology is, generally, a mere step or two ahead of the real world in most respects. There are factors in place that keep it from immediately surging ahead to equal that of the cut-

ting-edge technology-oriented superhumans — the most important being that the sort of gadgets used by superheroes are cutting-edge prototypes that cannot feasibly be mass-produced. To build and maintain a suit of powered armor, a time machine, or what have you requires the total efforts of numerous scientists equal to the inventors of the superheroes' equipment. Since superhumans (particularly PCs) are almost by definition exceptional and extraordinary, the number of "ordinary" scientists and engineers who can comprehend and duplicate what they do is quite small.

Once the GM decides

on the general state of technology in his campaign, he can also decide on specific differences between the campaign world's technology and our own. That largely depends on how much he wants the campaign world to diverge from the real world. For most GMs, the answer is "not too much," since that makes it harder for the players to understand and appreciate the setting. Differences that are interesting but don't change the world so significantly that they prove difficult to manage in a campaign include:

Extraterrestrial trade: This is as much a cultural concern as a technological one; the world could have regular contact with, and consequently trade with, alien worlds. (See page 52 for more discussion of this topic.)

Flying Cars: High-end vehicles might have a flight package as an option. This implies significant changes to the role of the FAA and like authorities, of course.

Giant Buildings: The mile-high skyscrapers predicted in the 1930s could be a practical reality. New York City and other skyscraper-heavy regions could have drastically-changed skylines.

Lifespans: Health improvements and genetic engineering could increase the lifespan of the average citizen to 100, 150, or more. This doesn't have an immediate effect on world culture — after all, a bullet or heart attack can still kill anyone at any age — but as people continue to be productive decades after they would once have left the work force, changes to the world economy will result. This can include a growing unemployed class made up largely of teenagers, twentysomethings, and thirtysomethings as the trend continues.

Robots and Artificial Intelligences: Can robots and computers in the campaign achieve the actual ability to think? If so, do movements rise to grant them citizenship? To oppose their use in the workforce where they will unfairly compete with humans?

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and/or control over all superhumans working for, or associated with, federal law enforcement (including those employed by the DEA, FBI, BATF, and like agencies). It would also have the authority (subject to executive review, if necessary) to extend federal law enforcement sanction to superhumans.

Department Of State:

If the setting features nations ruled by supervillains, or non-Human societies recognized as nations by the rest of the world (e.g., Atlantis), the Department of State would be responsible for interacting with them, maintaining diplomatic relations, and so on. It would also have to consult with Justice regarding issues pertaining to extradition, diplomatic immunity, and the like.

NASA: Primary authority for investigating incidents involving (or possibly involving) aliens would belong to NASA, which would also (in conjunction with the State Department) coordinate any formal relations with non-Human species.



Safe Atomic Power: Nuclear power plants might utilize fusion systems well in advance of ours, systems that do not endanger the environment and cannot be rigged to detonate.

Space Program: This campaign may have a far more advanced space program than the real world. The differences could be slight (large bases in orbit, on the Moon, on Mars, including vacation/recreational ones) or dramatic (Earth possesses faster-than-light travel technology, so our scout ships are out learning about the galaxy, and our trade vessels are out establishing economic alliances with other worlds). In the latter case, Earth could begin establishing colonies elsewhere, resulting in offworld migrations; will those migrations be dominated by scientists, engineers, and explorers, endangering the proportions of those professions on the Earth, or be more evenly spread across all human professions and social classes?

The GM may also want to consider technological differences within society. Does everyone on Earth have access to the same technology — or, as in the real world, do the “first world” nations have advanced technology, while “third world” countries generally lack it?

SUPER-MYSTERIES

The GM should also consider creating possible answers to some of the big historical mysteries that remain unsolved, and establishing others that pertain only to the world of superheroes and supervillains.

First, there are, of course, the questions that dominate supermarket tabloids: Are we being secretly visited by aliens from outer space? Who built Stonehenge and the pyramids at Giza? Was there an Atlantis, and if so, where, and what happened to it? Is there really something going on in the Bermuda Triangle? Naturally, in all of these cases, you can choose for the most likely answers to be true (no aliens, ancient inhabitants of the British Isles and Egypt built those structures, no Atlantis, and so on), but when you do choose an alternate answer, you set up a significant puzzle your player characters might someday solve.

Then, in the realm of superhero-specific questions, the GM can add mysteries such as whether humanity was genetically tampered with early in its evolution, the truth behind the emergence of some sets of superpowers (did he have a spontaneous magical accident — or did he become an agent for infernal powers?), the deaths and disappearances of supers in earlier generations, whether certain mythological gods and heroes were actually early manifestations of superpowers, and so on.

The answers to these questions can help add detail to the framework of behind-the-scenes information in your campaign world and can act as the springboards for many adventures to come.

MOOD AND META-GENRE



A campaign's "mood" is the general sense of emotion it's designed to impart to its players. Naturally, any adventure can depart from the campaign's main mood, but the players should have a sense of what the normal mood is going to be.

Related to mood is the concept of *meta-genre*. A "meta-genre" is a style or theme of storytelling/game play/campaign conception that could apply to any genre. Comedy, horror, romance, and tragedy are all meta-genres, whereas superheroes, Westerns, science fiction, and fantasy are genres. Thus, you could have a horror Western, or horror science fiction, or horror fantasy — horror isn't a genre, it's a *meta-genre*. (Of course, it's also possible to cross one genre with another — to have superheroes in a science fiction story, for example — which is a different but related thing.)

This section discusses several common campaign moods, and how to implement them in a campaign or just in a single adventure. Since this advice is in many ways as important for the players as for the GM — all the gamers in a group have to work together to maintain the mood — it's included here, rather than in Chapter Four. But before you read about specific campaign moods, it's important to understand one rule of thumb applicable to all of them:

The GM Should Reward Appropriate Actions

In every campaign, characters try to pull off unlikely actions, but how unlikely they are depends on part on the genre and mood of the campaign. For instance, in real life, most people don't swing across gaps on ropes very gracefully. Many fall off. Many land badly. So if a campaign were to simulate real life, "swinging across a gap on a line" would require a successful Skill Roll, probably at a minus.

But in a swashbuckling campaign, characters swing around on lines all the time. Ropes, shroudlines, cables and unusually tough cords are everywhere. In such an environment, an attempt to swing from point A to point B on a line would be simple — requiring, at most, an ordinary DEX Roll (perhaps with a bonus in the character's favor), and landing in a position to be able to do something useful would be an automatic part of the successful roll.

In short, the GM should reward, with an improved chance of success, just about any action attempt that is in character for the campaign mood,

particularly if it's performed as much to entertain the players as it is to gain an advantage for the character. Obviously, the types of actions that deserve such rewards vary from mood to mood, from campaign to campaign; the text below discusses appropriate ones.

Although the discussion in this section talks about "campaigns," it applies equally to subplots and story arcs within campaigns. A game with an Adventure mood could easily have a Comedy or Drama subplot going, or feature a story focusing mainly on Romance. Many campaigns mix and match these moods and meta-genres freely.

ADVENTURE

The most common mood for a superhero campaign is Adventure. Adventure means the characters decide to accomplish a dangerous task. In undertaking this mission, they risk injury and death; they experience pain, competition, and adrenaline rushes. Then the story concludes, probably with them victorious, possibly with them having failed in their objective.

GUIDELINES

The most important word in an Adventure-oriented campaign is "Danger." In every episode, one or more characters should find themselves in physical danger of some sort, whether it be an imminent attack from an enemy, a drop into a bottomless crevasse or a pool of molten lead, a deathtrap with a pendulum blade, or possible incineration during a spaceship's re-entry into Earth's atmosphere. Getting into and out of danger again and again are what characterizes adventure in the first place.

APPROPRIATE UNLIKELY ACTIONS

One of the most common activities in adventure fiction is for characters not just to accomplish something, but to accomplish it with style, so GMs should be on the lookout for players attempting to achieve a little extra something when performing Combat Maneuvers, using Acrobatics, and the like.

Extra Combat Functionality. The GM may allow a character to perform a Combat Maneuver that exceeds the description of that maneuver's effectiveness in a minor way.

Example: *The martial artist hero Graycat is in combat with Blood Groove, a sword-wielding villain. Graycat's pal, Black Swordsman, is nearby, being hard-pressed by another villain because Black Swordsman has lost his blade.*

Graycat announces, "I'm going to perform a Disarm on Blood Groove, but I don't just want to disarm him. When I'm in the middle of the maneuver, I want to announce, "Black Swordsman, look sharp!" and then spin Blood Groove's blade into his hands."

This being a very appropriate thing to do and a very cinematic maneuver, the GM decides to reward Graycat by not imposing any additional penalties on the maneuver, and by stretching the definition of the Disarm maneuver a bit to allow him to send the weapon in the direction he wants... if he succeeds with the maneuver in the first place, that is.

Some players, seeing that such a thing is possible, will try to perform it each and every time they perform a pertinent maneuver. Should this begin to happen, the GM should allow characters to continue, but impose a penalty on the characters' chances to succeed. He can later remove the penalty if the frequency of such attempts drops back to a more reasonable level.

Not Accounting For Minor Actions. On occasion, a character's action would count as his attack for a Phase, even though it doesn't really constitute an attack. The GM can choose to consider such an action as only a Half Phase Action instead.

Example: Freedom Fighter, flag-wearing American male hero, has had an ongoing subplot in which he has become romantically interested in Snow Leopard, a supervillainess working for the Z-Force criminal agency. She is likewise attracted to him, but not to the point he can persuade her to give up her life of crime.

In battle with members of Z-Force, Freedom Fighter ended his last Phase beside the abandoned stand of a street vendor. He decides to wait there for the villains' next charge. At the start of his next Phase, he asks the GM, "Is there anything in the vendor's stand I can use as a weapon, or for a tactical advantage?"

The GM says, "No, not really. It's a flower stand."

Freedom Fighter announces, "Then I'll toss one red rose over the heads of the oncoming bad guys to Snow Leopard."

Technically, tossing the rose constitutes an Attack Action, but since it demonstrates panache, is a charming moment related to an ongoing subplot, and doesn't gain him any sort of combat advantage, the GM decides this constitutes just a Half Phase Action, not an attack.

Adding A Skill Roll Benefit. When a player character has just announced he's performing an Action or a Combat Maneuver in a particularly colorful or cinematic way, the GM might allow him an additional, not-asked-for Skill Roll if the maneuver succeeds. The Skill Roll would be one the character had been attempting in earlier parts of the adventure, and

the GM would have to feel the character's recent performance somehow accentuated it or gave it an additional chance to succeed.

Example: In the same battle between Freedom Fighter and Z-Force, the badly outnumbered Freedom Fighter has, by bouncing all over the landscape, accomplished three things: kept himself from being Knocked Out; delayed Z-Force long enough for his own allies to accomplish their task (thwarting the villains' scheme); and made most members of Z-Force look like idiots. Now, as the tired hero drops from a building's ledge to one of its vertical flagpoles, he gives them all a mocking bow, offers one last smile to Snow Leopard, and then uses the flagpole as a diving board to bounce himself up onto an elevated train, with which he makes his getaway.

The GM decides this is a very affecting moment for Snow Leopard, another opportunity for her to weigh the worth of her professional associates against that of Freedom Fighter, so he tells Freedom Fighter, "Make a Persuasion roll." This roll becomes part of the sequence of efforts Freedom Fighter has made to persuade Snow Leopard to join him, even though Freedom Fighter has actually left this scene and is unaware that he may, at last, have succeeded where Snow Leopard is concerned.

Then, There's Presence. In the spirit of adventure, a GM might also allow a successful Skill Roll to be accompanied by a Presence Attack, even when the PC doesn't ask for it.

Example: Moments ago, Graycat disarmed Blood Groove and flicked his sword to the Black Swordsman. Black Swordsman, all his Combat Skill Levels restored now that there's a sword in his hand, can hold his own foe, Death-Weaver, at bay.

Black Swordsman says, "I'm going to back toward Graycat and Blood Groove and look uncertain. When Death-Weaver comes at me, I'm going to put all my Combat Skill Levels into DCV and do a blind reverse thrust at Blood Groove behind me. I'm hoping that if Death-Weaver lunges at me and misses, he'll end up where Graycat can punch him out."

They play out that Phase and it turns out just as Black Swordsman predicted, with a hole in Blood Groove's leg and Graycat's fist undoing years of Death-Weaver's orthodontics work.

Blood Groove's and Death-Weaver's teammate, Dementia, just awakening after having been Knocked Out earlier in the fight, witnesses this skillful teamwork. The GM has the Black Swordsman, the higher-Presence character of the two heroes, make a Presence Attack against her, and he rolls high enough to dissuade her from making a new attack against them.

COMEDY

The obvious purpose of a Comedy campaign is to get laughs. The characters might experience danger, but their first response when doing so (before drawing laser pistols, putting up their dukes, or pulling the pins out of grenades) is a wisecrack or act of physical comedy.

Comedy campaigns don't offer their characters as many opportunities to grandstand — well, not successfully, anyway — but can be just as entertaining as any other type so long as the GM and players are reasonably adept at wordplay.

GUIDELINES

Keep It Light. The first thing to remember about running a comedy campaign is that comedy tends to vanish when more serious emotions are invoked. If, for instance, a character is to die, make sure that it's not a tragedy. (The world is full of annoying characters, a comedy world even more so, and seldom do players mind their passing.) It's possible to have romances in a comedy world, but they should be attractions between comparatively shallow characters, often expressed in inconvenient places, at inconvenient times, and possibly complicated by the actions of romantic rivals.

Use Extreme Characters. This is advice for both the GM and players of such a campaign: it's all right to have characters whose costumes, special effects, and disadvantages (especially Psychological Limitations) tend to be more extreme than in a more normal campaign. A character who (in a normal campaign) believes in a specific conspiracy theory would, in a comedy campaign, become a muttering paranoid who believes in all such notions and has a grand unified conspiracy theory that relates every one of them to all the others.

Superhero = Loony. It's also worthwhile to remember that the very notion of dressing up in colorful skintight costumes and bounding around on rooftops is pretty strange, so it should be even more so on this world; the normal population will regard the superhero/supervillain subculture as an extreme and insane one.

APPROPRIATE UNLIKELY ACTIONS

Opportunities For Wisecracks. Remember to pace combat sequences and any other portions of the adventure so players who are adept at wisecracks have time and opportunity to issue them, and don't forget that NPCs can, and should, be just as amusing.

The Consequences Of Missed Rolls. There's a tremendous opportunity for humor in Skill and Attack Rolls that don't manage to succeed. Any time an Attack Roll misses, or a Skill Roll misses by



3 or more, the GM should choose some likely (and amusing) consequence for the miss.

The possible consequences for missed

Skill Rolls are too many to enumerate; there are dozens per Skill. As a rule of thumb, though, the attempted outcome should backfire. For instance, a character missing an Acrobatics roll could end up with his rear end stuck in a trash can or hanging upside down, his foot caught in a fire escape. Someone failing an Inventor roll could believe he has succeeded in creating the gadget he wanted, only to have it do something entirely unexpected when used in combat. A character failing a Combat Piloting roll would naturally crash into an unlikely obstacle, such as a billboard, paint factory, volleyball net at a nudist beach, the headquarters of an organization that hates him and all he stands for, and so on.

Missed Attack Rolls should have the same sorts of results. Gamemasters who would like a ready reference can use the Missed Hit Rolls Table on page 38.

The Consequences Of Successful Rolls. Another potential source of amusement is for a Skill use to succeed too well. Any time a character makes his Skill Roll by 5 or more, he uses the Skill successfully, but the success takes an unexpected turn that inconveniences him.

Example: A hero uses Combat Piloting to get himself out of a tight situation. The event is recorded and becomes national news. Suddenly, impressionable kids everywhere are attempting the same dangerous maneuver and have named it after our hero. The government and national media get involved, crucifying our hero for leading the world's children into danger.

Example: *A hero uses Persuasion to talk himself out of a jam with a powerful enemy. The enemy decides our hero is his new spokesperson/negotiator/best friend and insists that our hero stay with him always. Attempts to use this new position to infiltrate the enemy's organization will naturally end up as disastrously as the original Persuasion attempt.*

Example: *A hero succeeds with Seduction on an attractive NPC. All's well until the next day, when the NPC's family (an organized crime family, a band of aliens, the U.S. president, a clan diametrically opposed to the hero's politics or lifestyle, or the like) shows up in town to meet what they are certain is their new prospective in-law.*

MISSED ATTACK ROLLS TABLE

3d6 Roll	Consequences
3-5	Attacker becomes off-balance and falls down.
6-7	Attacker becomes off-balance and steps into/sits down on/falls into an undesirable substance — the residue of an enemy's Entangle, a mud puddle, fresh paint, a vat of batter....
8	Attacker spins around, slinging one or more of his Foci away, possibly into the hands of enemies.
9	Crucial buckle breaks, causing some of attacker's garments to fall down around his knees (-2 to all DEX Rolls involving the legs).
10	Attacker falls into the arms of unappealing person who considers him/her absolutely gorgeous.
11	Attacker hits himself (possibly on ricochet or rebound).
12	Attack hits target with no effect other than to irritate him.
13	Attack hits target and somehow helps/invigorates him.
14-15	Attack hits ally with amusing and inconvenient results.
16-18	Attack hits bystander with amusing and inconvenient results.

DRAMA

A drama is any type of storyline in which invoking and experiencing serious emotions is most important. A drama campaign is usually run for players who enjoy having their characters put through emotional wringers. Drama-oriented campaigns can include moments from other types of moods; there can be lighthearted moments, romantic moments, adventuresome moments, scary moments. But the majority of each play-session should revolve around the emotional lives of the PCs.

Running a drama-oriented superhero campaign can be tricky, because it means the GM has to move storylines along when the PCs are in their civilian identities, has to give each PC individual subplots as well as bringing them together for collective ones, and has to manage what may be a large number of NPCs. He usually can't draw on that staple of comic books stories, combat, as much, because combat is typically adventuresome, not emotionally wrenching.

On the other hand, one of the major conventions of the superhero genre — Secret Identities — provides the GM with an excellent tool for introducing drama into the game. The conflicts between the demands of superheroing and the demands placed on the character by his civilian life can lead to all sorts of pathos, angst, and wonderful roleplaying.

One good way to manage a drama-oriented *Champions* campaign is for the GM to insist that all PCs in their Secret Identities belong to a specific organization or company. The GM can then center storylines around that organization, bringing in PCs as the organization's activities require their involvement. For example, if all the PCs are members of one extended family or somehow associated with a corporation, the GM has a valuable tool for getting them wherever they need to be in their civilian identities.

GUIDELINES

Keep It Heavy. Most events in a drama campaign should be serious business — ever-growing disagreements that threaten to spill over into violence, a character's friends and family making bad choices in work and love, business turmoil, betrayal, stress. But too much of this makes the campaign unbearable for all but the most masochistic of players, so the GM should include regular situations where the characters can get away from their troubles. In a superhero campaign, this is probably when they're in costume — the heroes can flee into another identity to escape the emotional hardships of their mundane lives — or the occasional knock-down drag-out battle.

Tie Everything To PC Disadvantages. Every plotline, every challenge in the campaign should relate to at least one Disadvantage (usually a Psychological Limitation) of at least one of the PCs. The more Disadvantages and the more PCs a plotline can relate to, the more likely it is to be a main plot rather than one character's subplot. It's a good idea for the GM to keep a big list of every player character's Disadvantages so that, when considering new plots to introduce, he can decide who they best relate to and how.

Example: *The superhero named Inflictor has a DNPC — his high-school-age daughter. The GM wants to introduce a supervillain NPC who is, in his Secret Identity, a new vice president of marketing at the corporation where Inflictor works. The GM decides to have Inflictor's daughter take a romantic interest in the new supervillain, potentially setting up a large number of ways to agonize Inflictor.*

Find The Correct Torture Threshold. Even with a campaign full of players who like to have their characters put through an emotional stump-grinder, it's possible for a GM to allow his campaign to become too heavy, too depressing. The only solution to this problem is for the GM to keep a very close eye on the emotional reactions of his players. When the players begin reacting to each new painful plot twist with something less than enthusiasm, the GM should take it as a sign that it's time to introduce a few uplifting plot elements — the defeat of a long-running villain, success in a character's personal goals, or a humorous scenario, for instance.

APPROPRIATE UNLIKELY ACTIONS

Revelatory Presence Attacks. Before the campaign begins, tell the players that each each of them may, once (perhaps more) during the campaign, make a special kind of Presence Attack, one in which the attack is the revelation of a fact that is news to the recipient — and not particularly good news, at that. The player chooses when to make his Revelatory Presence Attack, and the GM has to run with it (though he can veto it if it's absolutely ruinous to the campaign).

Examples: *"You remember the hit-and-run accident where your boss was nearly killed? Your wife was at the wheel!"*

"Your son has gotten my daughter pregnant."

"No, Luke. I am your father."

The Revelatory Presence Attack follows the same general rules as the standard Presence Attack. A character uses his standard Presence, receiving 1d6 per 5 points in that Characteristic... and unless

a character has different PRE scores in his civilian and super identities, he should be just as effective with this tactic when he is out of costume. Modifiers to the Revelatory Presence Attack are listed in the accompanying table.

But sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander — important NPCs can make Revelatory Presence Attacks against PCs, as well. And regardless of who makes them, they're a great way to kick off new storylines.

HORROR

Horror is a particularly difficult meta-genre to introduce into a mainstream *Champions* game, due to the great power and extensive capabilities individual heroes, not to mention entire superteams, possess. Gamers refer to several types of stories as horror stories, but most of them really don't belong to the horror genre. Most common among these is the monster-hunting story. This is an adventures in which the good guys take it upon themselves to hunt down and exterminate evil monsters. It has some of the furniture of horror (creepy settings, supernatural monsters, and the like), but, especially in superhero campaigns, it normally isn't actually horror. Because the heroes are in the driver's seat, taking an active role against the monsters with the expressed goal of destroying them, the characters don't normally feel much helplessness, horror, or dread.

And it is, in fact, helplessness and dread that make a horror story. Without them, you have some other kind of story (normally adventure or drama) in which the bad guys merely have unusual special effects.

GUIDELINES

For a *Champions* campaign to be a horror campaign, you must have these things happen:

- The characters must not be as powerful as the campaign's horrors
- The characters must not understand the campaign's horrors
- The characters must be afraid of the campaign's horrors

The Characters Must Not Be As Powerful. This doesn't mean they're incapable of destroying one or more of the campaign's horrors at a time, but individually and collectively, the PCs must feel as though they are not a match for the things that go bump in the night. Being as powerful gives them confidence; confidence is destructive to a sense of dread. It is also helpful to have monsters who are intelligent enough to learn and exploit the heroes' weaknesses (which should often include Dependences, Susceptibilities, and Vulnerabilities).

Alternately, you can confront them with horrors their powers are useless against. All the Strength or Energy Blast dice in the world don't do a superteam much good when their foe is a helpless teenage girl possessed by a demon. They dare not harm the girl, but they have to stop the

REVELATORY PRESENCE ATTACK MODIFIERS TABLE

Modifier	Situation or Character's Action
-2d6	Speaker is unknown to target Target has Psychological Limitation that makes it hard for him to believe revelation —
-1d6*	Psychological Limitation is Moderate
-2d6*	Psychological Limitation is Strong
-3d6*	Psychological Limitation is Total
+1d6	Speaker has KS of his target and makes Skill Roll
+1d6	Speaker has SS: Psychology or Psychiatry and makes Skill Roll
+2d6	Target trusts speaker or knows he always tells truth

*: On the other hand, if the result of this Presence Attack is target's PRE +10 or more, the target believes the revelation and the GM can give him an NND attack of twice the number of dice shown here — e.g., if he had a Total Psychological Limitation, he sustains 6d6 NND from the pain resulting from his sudden shock.

demon. For once, they can't rely on their powers — they're going to have to be clever and inventive if they're going to save the world *this* time.

The Characters Must Not Understand. Having a real understanding of how the monsters work, what motivates them, how they think is just the sort of familiarity that breeds contempt — and undermines a campaign's sense of horror. The GM should work hard to make his monsters somewhat inexplicable. The best approach is to give them a recognizable *modus operandi* while keeping their true thoughts, mental processes, and abilities as secret as possible. Don't throw a normal vampire at them — every hero knows how to cope with one. Substitute a weird super-powered vampire with unpredictable abilities, or some bizarre extradimensional *thing* the heroes have never seen before and know nothing about.

The Characters Must Be Afraid. This is among the hardest things to enforce in a gaming campaign, particularly a superhero campaign, since most players are simply unwilling for their characters to be vulnerable — and without vulnerability, there can be no fear. The best approach to implementing this guideline is, of course, to run games for players who want to have their characters scared; the second-best is to have players who are good roleplayers and will abide by their characters' Psychological Limitations (and who'll make sure their characters have appropriate ones).

Given these guidelines, you may even want to consider requiring players to tailor their characters appropriately if you intend to emphasize horror in your campaign. Rather than allow the full range of superhero types, you might mandate that all PCs have to be mystics, psychics, occult investigators, or highly-trained normals without any true superpowers. Additionally, by setting low point and effectiveness ceilings (see page 125), you can cut down on the sheer power the PCs can bring to bear on the obstacles confronting them, which helps to emphasize feelings of dread.

APPROPRIATE UNLIKELY ACTIONS

Demonstrating Fear. Superheroes seldom suggest they're afraid or otherwise not in charge of a situation. The GM should reward appropriate demonstrations of fear or dread through awards of more Experience Points for good roleplaying.

Fleeing. In most superhero campaigns, the heroes would never consider fleeing from an enemy. In a horror-oriented *Champions* game, running away is a viable tactic and, until the heroes learn how to confront the enemy, a valid response. To persuade PCs to flee an enemy, it may be helpful to have them see a character of similar abilities cut down and devoured by the monsters. That's a definite demonstration of the fact the PCs don't yet stand a chance in a physical confrontation.

ROMANCE

A romance campaign is all about romantic relationships. Naturally, other sorts of moods may be present as well (adventure and drama are especially appropriate), but the establishment, development, and (sometimes) termination of character-to-character romances is the primary subject of such campaigns.

The mood of Romance may be best-suited to mini-series rather than a years-long campaign. This is because every romance goes through a "life-cycle" that its participants hope will result in a happy ending. When they do, the characters involved in that romance can no longer occupy center stage in the campaign. On the other hand, if they result in a relationship breaking up, the characters involved can be center stage of the next storyline (though with other romantic partners), but eventually the characters find long-term partners and have to stop being the campaign's focus. In short, a Romance campaign requires a constant rotation of primary characters, which puts a strain on a GM or players who'd like to play the same characters for an extended amount of time.

GUIDELINES

A Romance campaign should include two or three prospective couples occupying center stage at any given time. A couple can be two PCs or one PC and one NPC. The campaign can feature other PCs who are not involved directly in the romances at this time, but who have plenty to do with plotlines that are only indirectly related to the romances.

Every Romance in such a campaign goes through a series of stages of development. When a Romance gets to the last stage, its storyline is done, even if the characters' relationship remains intact, which means these characters need to move off center stage to permit others to take their place.

If a campaign features more than one Romance at a time, each one should be at a different stage of development (the GM can make an exception in the first episode or two of play, when two or more relationships may be in the first stage of development).

The stages of development, including necessary pre-storyline setup by the GM, are:

Character Design Or Modification. When building new characters, or revising experienced ones, to be part of a Romance plot, the GM and players should make sure each one possesses two traits: a reason to be attractive to the other; and a trait the other will find difficult or off-putting. With PCs, the first step in dealing with this is to have the player describe the character's ideal mate. Then, the GM can create NPCs or help modify existing PCs to make them somewhat more like the ideal mate. The key word here, however, is "somewhat." Romances should be rocky roads, but they're much less likely to be if each character is a perfect

template of the other character's ideal mate.

Example: Player character Black Swordsman is about to become part of a Romance-oriented campaign. At the GM's request, he answers the question of what his ideal mate would be. He decides that she would be intelligent and well-educated (if not downright scholarly), somewhat serious (to contrast with his own flippant nature), a student of fencing and/or the martial arts (to share a hobby with him), and a movie buff.

The GM looks over the female PCs and decides that no one is near enough to this sort of character to serve, so he'll create an NPC to act as Black Swordsman's love interest. He creates Lillian Hughes, professor of history and author, whose field of interest is the effect of infantry weapons on history.

But the GM slips a joker into the deck by deviating in a substantial way from Black Swordsman's "ideal mate" checklist. Not only is Lillian not a student of fencing or martial arts, she is a pacifist who abhors the effects of violence on society — one reason why violence throughout the ages, as expressed through an interest in history's small weapons, is her chief academic interest. Thus, in addition to having reasons to be attracted to Lillian, Black Swordsman also has reasons to come in conflict with her.

Likewise, at the moment, Lillian has only reasons to be in conflict with Black Swordsman, so the GM decides the hero's great appeal to her lies in his secret identity, that of Richard Gray, stock analyst and newspaper columnist. The GM establishes that Lillian is attracted to other writers and admires someone with mathematical acuity and a flamboyant nature, both of which Black Swordsman possesses in spades.

Meeting And Initial Attraction. It's no trick to set up a situation where the two parties of a Romance meet one another. The GM can choose to do so in a violent situation (one party saves the other from impending doom), another type of conflict (they meet on opposite sides of a business deal and each likes the way the other conducts himself), a social situation (a party), or some really unlikely event (both break into the same art gallery at the same time). The only thing the GM has to remember is to find a way for each PC to demonstrate one or more characteristics that the other person finds attractive.

Note that, in books, movies, and TV series, characters can meet, initially dislike one another, and eventually find romance. In game campaigns, this is not usually the case; whatever characters initially feel about one another tends to endure (if not worsen). So it's best not to set up a situation where the heroes initially find themselves in a disagreeable sort of conflict — the GM is most likely to torpedo the entire romance that way.



Establishment Of Romance. The GM now needs to find ways to continue to have the two parties of the romance encounter one another. Sometimes this is easy (such as when they work at the same place), sometimes more difficult (in which case the GM may have to rely on coincidence, or manipulations orchestrated by some NPC). It is during these events that the more ordinary plot details of the campaign reveal themselves — what supervillain is plotting a new takeover, what jewelry display is bound to attract thieves, what criminal investigation is yielding details about one of the PCs' Hunt-eds.

This stage of the Romance is complete when both parties acknowledge their attraction to and continued interest in one another. At this point, the GM can start complicating things.

Trouble Part I. Once the parties in a Romance are certain they're interested in one another, trouble erupts. Some examples of trouble include:

- A previously-thought-dead husband/wife/former boyfriend/former girlfriend turns up, hale and healthy and very, very attractive.
- The characters discover they are opposed in their super identities (*i.e.*, one hero, one villain).
- The characters discover mutual personality incompatibilities (mostly related to Psychological Limitations).
- The characters discover one did something potentially unforgivable to the other at some time in the past.

- The characters discover they belong to opposed families or organizations.
- The characters discover they belong to the same family and are too closely related for comfort. (This is usually eventually followed by the revelation that one or the other is adopted, which makes everything all right again.)
- The characters must oppose one another in business, and business turns ugly.
- One character achieves some result that leaves the other hurt and jealous (the GM must normally utilize Psychological Limitations here).
- One character discovers the other has a previously-undisclosed child.
- One character discovers he has a previously-unknown child.
- An NPC or another PC begins to court one member of the Romance.
- An NPC manipulates things so that evidence of any of the earlier Troubles appears, even if the actual Trouble has been falsified.

Note that these discoveries can come via a Revelatory Presence Attack, as described under “Drama,” above.

Trouble Part II, Part III.... Once the first wave of trouble has been beaten into submission, the GM can introduce a new one — assuming he hasn’t done so even before the first wave was quelled. The GM can keep this up so long as all parties are entertained; once the Troubles begin to wear thin as entertainment (or, even better, before they do), the GM can progress the characters’ relationship to the next stage.

Happily/Unhappily Ever After. Ultimately, after having weathered numerous Troubles, the couple decides whether to stay together or go their separate ways; either choice ends their Romance plotline. If they remain together, they can take on some other role in the campaign. If they go their separate ways, they can be retooled for a later Romance, perhaps with one another, perhaps with someone else.

Character Redesign Or Modification. Characters who have survived a Romance can go through a minor redesign to adjust appropriate Romance-related Psychological Limitations, Hunteds, and so on.

APPROPRIATE UNLIKELY ACTIONS

Vulnerability To Romance. Some players prefer to keep their characters unencumbered by romantic attachments — either because the players themselves are uncomfortable roleplaying romantic scenes, or because they’d rather have their characters do the “fun stuff” (*i.e.*, fighting) instead of boring roleplaying scenes. Players who are willing to open their characters up to romantic possibilities — who take lots of DNPCs (even if they get no points for them), who act like someone in love might act, who, in short, get in the campaign mood — should be rewarded for their participation.

TEEN CHAMPIONS

A sort of “meta-genre” or “subgenre” common to comic book superheroes are stories focusing on teenage superheroes. *Teen Champions* heroes (who often, but not always, face off against teen villains) have to deal not only with the usual travails of superheroing (risking their lives, maintaining a Secret Identity, and so on), but all the baggage that comes with being a teenager. In addition to saving the world on a regular basis, they have to get their homework done on time (and get good grades!), cope with teen romance problems, deal with family-related issues, get permission to use the family car and stay out late, and find a date for the prom.

GUIDELINES

School Daze. To run a *Teen Champions* game, first and foremost you need a proper setting. For some *Teen Champions* campaigns, that setting is a special school or academy for superpowered children. This has some benefits (all the heroes are in the same place most of the time, and they automatically form a team), but also some drawbacks (it eliminates a lot of the story-driving dilemmas that confront teen superheroes). Other games take place in a typical modern-day city, with the heroes attending one or more regular high schools.

Keep Power Levels Low. It’s fine for these teen supers to be able to be more powerful than their friends in high school, certainly, but they shouldn’t be able to carry City Hall around or blast Mount Shasta into a steaming crater. If they possess a high level of power, the PCs feel powerful and dominant — which runs contrary to what this sort of campaign is all about. It’s appropriate for the GM to impose significant point and effectiveness ceilings, such as 40 Active Points in powers, or no SPDs above 4 without special permission.

Make Secret Identities A Must. A teen campaign can never have an appropriate level of angst if there aren’t compelling reasons for the teen supers to keep their heroic identities secret from their parents and classmates. The reasons can be as simple or elaborate as the GM and players wish. For instance, assuming a somewhat paranoid atmosphere, you might establish that people who demonstrate superpowers are always inducted into secret branches of the armed forces, with their families sequestered for study by government scientists. If the teen hero doesn’t want that to happen, he’ll have to keep his real name a secret, and will have to dodge the occasional efforts by government representatives to unmask him.

Orient Stories Around Teen Interests. Most of the campaign’s stories should have at their core some sort of teenaged-oriented theme. Examples might include: the struggles of holding down a job (when one’s time is divided not only between it and school but also superhero responsibilities); young love (even more complicated for teen supers than ordinary teens, since their boyfriends/girlfriends might end up being possessed by demons, unknowingly being the offspring of the town’s villainous mad scientist, or hateing or fear-



ing superheroes); struggles for independence (if an ordinary teen that his parents are too restrictive, imagine the feelings of a teen who could fly to the Moon... if he weren't grounded for the next week); personal attractiveness (acne and braces afflict supers as well as normals); disapproval (from parents, relatives, and people in general who deride the heroes' music tastes, friends, clothes, and hobbies); and so on. Every menace can be a metaphor for one of the heroes' inner struggles — for instance, the 80' tall motorcyclist who crushes the neighborhood under his wheels is both a dangerous enemy and a reflection of what one of the heroes would really like to be....

APPROPRIATE UNLIKELY ACTIONS

Design The Person First. A campaign like this revolves more around the personalities of the characters than their powers. If at all possible, come up with the personality, history, and home details of a player character before worrying about his powers.

Create Unusual Powers As A Basis For Others. Teen superhumans usually start out with a small suite of narrowly-defined powers. For example, instead of being able to teleport at will, a teen hero might have the ability only to teleport between patches of shadow. Instead of being super-strong all the time, he might need to absorb solar energy to exercise his full STR (so he's much less effective at night or indoors). This reflects the relative newness of a teen hero's powers, and his relative inexperience in using them. As the campaign goes on, the character can spend earned Experience Points to improve his powers by buying off Limitations, adding more effect, and so forth. Eventually he has unrestricted Teleportation or can use his full super-strength at all times. (The GM might

even consider holding back some of the heroes' starting points, so he can hand them out in small lump sums throughout the game to represent character growth.) Players who design characters along these guidelines, and who roleplay the effects appropriately, should be rewarded with more "screen time," more opportunities for roleplaying, and hopefully more Experience Points.

Have Weaknesses And Vulnerabilities. For many players, the whole point of character design is to eliminate as many weak points as possible — after all, superheroes are supposed to be strong, powerful, and confident. But that approach runs contrary to many of the themes of *Teen Champions*. A teen super (whether hero, villain, or neutral) should have one or more points of vulnerability, places where he can be hurt or manipulated by ordinary friends, relatives, and authorities. It's especially appropriate for teen supers to have the *Only In Heroic Identity* Limitation on most of their powers, making them ordinary kids (vulnerable to school bullies and sports injuries as anyone else) when in their Secret Identities, or to have some obvious, unconcealable trait they're very sensitive about — so much so they'll be pained by or even flee taunting.

Make Inappropriate Choices. No experienced adult superhero is likely to fall in with a "bad crowd" because of peer pressure, or use his superpowers in irresponsible ways — but a teen superhuman certainly might. The temptation to show off their powers undoubtedly preys on the minds of many teen heroes, especially ones who are snubbed or bullied by their classmates. A player who roleplays these situations appropriately should be rewarded for doing so.

SOURCES OF SUPERPOWERS



In the standard four-color superhero campaign — one based on the genre characteristics of the massive, superhero-laden universes of the major comic book publishers — a tremendous number of events or resources allow for the creation of superheroes and supervillains. They include, but are not limited to:

Alien Species: The galaxy features other sapient races (perhaps countless numbers of them), and in some cases, representatives of those races are super-powered. It may be that all members of those races are super, at least on Earth; it may be that only a few are; it may be that intermingling of alien and Human DNA results in supers.

Extradimensional Energies: Quantum physics, high-order mathematics, natural energy fields in the body or completely inexplicable circumstances might cause a character to interact in a strange way with the very fabric of reality. Being able to slip partway or completely into another dimension is a plausible explanation for powers such as Desolidification, Teleportation, Damage Reduction, and super-speed.

Genetic Manipulation: Breakthroughs in gene replacement therapy, long theorized and now beginning to appear in greater and greater numbers, suggest a world in which superheroes not only appear, but are designed by geneticists in laboratories. Unlike many of the other power rationalizations here, the “designer genes” explanation doesn’t come with a long list of genre conventions or assumptions — when you say “psionics,” people think about a short list of powers, but in the comics there’s no short list associated with gene modification. So this power origin serves as a very broad one; players can use it for practically any power the GM permits.

Magic And Mysticism: In this world, magic really exists. Ordinary people (or, if the GM prefers, a select subset of people who possess some sort of magical ancestry) can learn sorcery, and there may be families that possess inherent magical powers or traits. Such campaign worlds are also usually characterized by the presence of remnants of ancient magical civilizations, connections to dimensions inhabited by the gods of various mythological pantheons, and the like.

Mutation: Much as with the Genetic Engineering option above, this campaign allows the notion of genes gone amok to explain the presence of superpowers, but in this case the genes are modified by nature and chance. Many campaigns explain these genetic alterations as being the result of radiation

released into the atmosphere during the August 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and atmospheric atom bomb tests by the Americans, Soviets, French, Chinese, and other nations since then.

Psionic Powers: Modern culture is steeped in an awareness of paranormal phenomena, and the many powers attributed to extrasensory perception — telepathy, telekinesis, distance viewing, pyrokinesis, astral projection, and so on — make psionics a good source for superpower origins.

Super-Science: The assumption that the technology of tomorrow (or of the campaign world today) will be smaller, faster, more powerful, and more energy-efficient than ours — not to mention capable of accomplishing tasks that ours simply can’t — provides rationales for a great number of superpowers. Build microminiaturized laser beams, ion thrusters, environment systems, communications, sight enhancement gear, and a force field into a device a human can step into and seal around him, and you have a set of powered armor — an instant superhero.

Supernatural Forces: The existence of the supernatural (ghosts, vampires, werewolves, curses, and so on) provides explanations for many possible superhero powers. What if someone were descended from a vampire, and possesses some of the vampire’s powers, only a few of his weaknesses? What if a scientific genius discovered that lycanthropy (the condition of being a werewolf) were a virus that caused specific physical modifications, and could be altered in the lab, resulting in a breed of wolf-man that was not cursed to mindlessly hunt and slaughter innocents during the full moon? (Note that “the supernatural” in the context of superpower origins is often distinct from “magic,” in that the supernatural is normally considered something unnatural, to be feared, so any association with it by a super is cause for normal people to regard him with suspicion or dread.)

Training: In the comic books, training and dedication can take a seemingly-normal person a long way, allowing that person to become competitive with true superhumans. Assume, for instance, that a genetically normal man or woman can train up to a STR of 20, providing 4d6 damage in combat. If that person learns a martial art with a maneuver that adds +4d6, the damage per attack becomes 8d6. If the person buys four Extra DCs, the damage becomes 12d6. This character can’t act in every way like a character with STR 60, but can do as much damage in combat.

Of course, the GM is free to add more sources not described above, or to “subdivide” these broad categories into more specific ones. Less common than the sources above, but equally valid in a superhero environment, include such choices as extraordinary luck, use of drugs (which would fall under Super-Science but is seldom seen in comics these days), manipulation of the body’s natural electromagnetic field, and so on.

The choice of which events or circumstances permit superpowers on your world is a very important one. The fewer events the GM chooses, the tighter the range of powers and special effects PCs can manifest.

UNLIMITED SOURCE CAMPAIGNS

Most *Champions* campaigns are “unlimited source” games. In an unlimited source campaign, the GM permits just about every conceivable origin for superpowers. This offers the advantage of giving the players a very broad range of backgrounds for their characters. On the other hand, this approach often risks the players’ willing suspension of disbelief, especially when several of those players are not comic book fans and aren’t predisposed toward this most unlikely view of the universe.

An unlimited source campaign presupposes a campaign setting that is (or once was) regularly visited by a number of alien races, has one or more traditions of magical training, was once dominated by the gods of legend (perhaps by several different pantheons, either concurrently or consecutively), experienced a wide variety of genetic mutations appearing primarily in the years after the use of the first atom bombs (and later duplicated and improved upon in the laboratory), features vampires and mummies and other thing that go bump in the night, all the while being the home of several martial arts traditions that allow the most devout students to achieve superhuman levels of ability... it’s a lot for some players to accept. It may seem more like a super-market tabloid world than a comic book world. Nevertheless, because it mimics established comic book worlds, this approach suits more *Champions* campaigns than any other.

LIMITED SOURCE CAMPAIGNS

In many cases where not all the players accept every source for superpowers, or where the GM has a specific type of setting or storyline in mind, the GM will want to use a subset of the available choices, relating them to one another whenever possible. In many cases, one of these sources defines the flavor of the campaign, and the others support it.

Example: *Morgan plans to have a campaign oriented around mutant characters. Obviously, he permits the Mutation source.*

He decides that, logically, various governments and medical cartels, as they discover the existence of mutants, will begin to try to duplicate and improve on those genetic patterns. Therefore characters are permitted to use Mutation and Genetic Engineering as the basis for their powers. Morgan decides to distinguish between true mutants and deliberately engineered mutants this way: engineered mutants do not show up on devices that scan for mutant powers (thus these characters cannot take Distinctive Features: Mutant, and are not as vulnerable to being Hunted), but only true mutants can take Multipowers, and only they can have powers with an Active Point value of 75 (engineered mutants are limited to 60 Active Points).

Morgan further decides Super-Science permits a small number of superpowers (defined as super-miniaturized implants and gadgets); these are limited to Enhanced Senses and a short list of other Powers.

Finally, Morgan says that Training, specifically Martial Arts, allows a character to attain superhuman levels of damage, but does not permit superpowers with martial arts rationale (for instance, using the manipulation of ch’i as an excuse to purchase Telekinesis or Damage Reduction).



Example: *Dean wants to run a campaign in which most of the PCs are sorcerous supers, so he chooses Magic and Mysticism as the principal source for origins in the campaign. As with Mutants in the campaign example above, he decides to offer this Source an advantage in character-building: only mystics can base powers on Variable Power Pools or Multipowers, and only mystics' powers can have up to 90 Active Points; all others are limited to 60. On the down side, mystics must have the Limitation Requires A Skill Roll on all their powers.*

Other origin Sources are available. Among them are Supernatural Forces (whose powers, though less potentially mighty than those of Magic and Mysticism, tend to be more reliable, since they do not call for Skill Rolls) and Training. In this campaign, Dean decides there's an important link between the world of magic and that of martial arts, so martial artists can buy some superpowers that seem appropriate to the mysticism surrounding the world of martial arts.

UNIFIED THEME CAMPAIGNS

Another way to define a campaign is to require all PCs to belong to a common theme. This does not mean a common source (though sources sometimes act as themes) or a common set of special effects (e.g., all characters possessing powers of fire or based on extrasensory perception). Instead, it signifies that all the characters have a common sort of background that sets them apart both from ordinary humanity and more other superteams where each hero has a different sort of superhero role and background. Alternately, the GM may decide that *all* superheroes in the world share the same theme.

Some examples of possible themes/campaigns include:

All-Alien. The PCs could belong to one specific alien race; perhaps they are extraterrestrials stranded on Earth, using their nonhuman powers to protect the inhabitants of this world. (Such a campaign could have them be favorites of the people, or passing for human, or feared by humanity.) An all-alien campaign could be played for laughs, with the aliens' oddball perceptions of Earth customs acting as the source for most of the humor, or could be deadly serious, with Earth government forces determined to hunt down and dissect/exterminate the alien heroes.

All-Aquatic. Every character in this campaign would have the ability to breathe water (or have convenient technology that supplied him with a breathable atmosphere while underwater), and most of their adventures would take place in the ocean depths. This sort of campaign tends to be similar to the "Strange Super Societies" element described on page 14, with an important distinction: all-aquatic heroes tend to interact with "surface people" on a regular basis (for instance, when surface activities like radioactive waste dumping or bomb testing endanger the

undersea environment, or when surface criminal organizations enact some scheme and send agents down into the watery deep).

All-Martial Arts. Every PC would have a distinct martial arts style (sibling teams and hero/sidekick pairings could possess the same martial art, naturally). The supers' powers would have martial-arts special effects; some might be based on martial arts notions such as *chi*, breath control, secret techniques, and so on. (See *The Ultimate Martial Artist* for plenty of ideas for such characters.)

All-Mercenary. The heroes in this type of campaign all belong to an organization that performs missions for money. They might be morally and ethically upright missions (performing an outer space rescue of endangered astronauts), or morally ambiguous and questionable ones (infiltrating a foreign country and kidnapping its leader to turn over to an intelligence agency). This can be especially fun for players who don't want to worry about the ethical side of power use; all PCs would need to be similarly disinterested in weighing questions of rights and consequences. Or the campaign could be set up precisely to explore these dilemmas, and the heroes must find some way to walk a moral tightrope on any mission where their objective falls a little too far on the wrong side of the line they'd prefer not to cross.

All-Monster. In this campaign, every character is some type of monster. They might all be of the same approximate type of monster (all vampires, all werewolves, all golems), or each character might be the only example in this group of his type of monster. In any case, All-Monster campaigns usually involve the heroes keeping out of the way of monster-slayers, from villagers with pitchforks to dedicated and proficient enemies of the supernatural, while combating even more secret forces that actually are powerful and evil.

All-Monster Hunter. The diametrical opposite of the All-Monster campaign is the one in which every character is a dedicated adversary of monsters. The degree to which these characters can be considered "superheroes" is debatable — they spend most of their campaign time tracking down and destroying, or sometimes curing, monsters — but when they interact with more customary superheroes, they can perform more normal costumed crimefighting tasks.

All-Mystic. Every character in this campaign is a student of the supernatural. Usually it's not enough for them to have powers that derive from magic in some way (for instance, a character possessing an enchanted ring that allows him to transform into an indestructible flying strongman); all must be students of magic, with their studies and curiosity leading them into adventures that chiefly deal with realms of magic and the supernatural.

All-Patriot. Every PC belongs to the same nation and is an evident symbol of that nation. Most wear costumes based around the nation's flag or figures from its folklore, the better to keep the affection of the people. The adventures of All-Patriot campaigns tend to revolve around the heroes' conflicts with supers and menaces from opposed nations, and are

best set during wartime.

All-Tech. In this campaign, every PC has powers based on technology. The group might include gadgeteers, powered armor characters, cyberkinetics, and many other types of heroes, but all of them are united by their interest in and use of super-tech. Most of their adventures revolve around technology as well — they have to stop industrial sabotage (or villains who want to steal their own tech), help the space program solve its problems, and so forth.

All-Teen. See *Teen Champions* on page 42.

All-Vigilante. In the comics, most supers, and almost all superhero teams, find some way to cooperate with the authorities. Some operate with official government sanction, some work out informal arrangements that allow supers and law enforcement both to operate without stepping on one another's toes too often. But in this sort of campaign, all the heroes act as judge, jury, and (possibly) executioner, distinctly putting them on the wrong side of the law. All PCs in such a campaign should take the Disadvantage of being Hunted by

various law enforcement organizations (and possibly by superheroes as well).

The advantage of running a unified theme sort of campaign is that the player characters tend to cooperate more readily — circumstances often force them to trust one another and become more dependent on one another. In addition, characters with common thematic backgrounds often have common elements in their background stories, meaning the GM doesn't have to create as many antagonists or villain organizations. For example, in a campaign based on normal four-color superhero team comic books, there needs to be one supernatural bad guy organization, one high-tech superspy organization, one villainous time-traveling organization, one intelligence agency led by a villain with a mysterious agenda, and so on, *ad infinitum*. In an All-Mystic campaign, you only need the supernatural bad guy organizations.



ELEMENTS OF THE GENRE



Superhero campaigns wouldn't be much like the comic books if they didn't implement certain genre conventions — things that don't normally happen in real life, and that often don't make sense, but that are all part of making comic books what they are. This section discusses many of them and how you can simulate them in a *HERO System* campaign.

The “rules” described here detail the way things work in the comic books, and players who are readers of the comics will probably expect these genre conventions to hold true for your campaign. If you choose to disallow any of these comic book conventions — for example, maybe you think the rule about any mask, no matter how small, being sufficient to conceal a character's identity is stupid — tell your players before the campaign starts so they'll know to take a different approach to that particular issue.

SECRET IDENTITIES

Most superheroes and supervillains maintain Secret Identities — when they use their superpowers, they do so while wearing a costume that conceals their true features and using a codename distinct from their genuine names. In *HERO System* terms, Secret Identity is a form of Social Limitation (see pages 338-39 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*).

In many superhero worlds, this habit came about in the era of the pulp heroes, described above, when heroes sometimes operated outside the law. Those heroes generally concealed their true features behind dark overcoats, floppy hats, and concealing masks or scarves, and used frightening-sounding code-names. These habits made it harder for organized crime or law enforcement to punish the heroes (or their loved ones) for their crime-fighting activities.

What The Secret Identity Is For

Any character who takes a Social Limitation: Secret Identity should inform the GM what he considers its primary purpose to be. The GM can then make use of the Secret Identity to generate plots and subplots for use in the campaign.

TO AVOID CONSEQUENCES FOR ILLEGAL/AVENGEBLE ACTIONS

The most common purpose for maintaining separate civilian and hero identities is to prevent

villains and criminals from taking revenge on the character (and his loved ones) for his actions. (Similarly, the character may not want to expose his civilian identity to arrest and prosecution by the authorities.) For this to be a concern, the character should have one or more other Disadvantages and background circumstances that interact with his Secret Identity — one or more Hunteds, DNPCs, or the like.

TO KEEP THE AFFECTION OF LOVED ONES

It may be that the character has a loved one who would react very badly — abandon him, have a heart attack, and so on — if he learned the character was a super. For example, a hero might have a girlfriend who loves him deeply but loathes his costumed identity due to some misunderstanding, and a sickly relative whose health might fail completely if he learned about the character's superheroic pursuits. Typically the loved one is a DNPC, but that's not required. The GM must remember to utilize the NPC on a regular basis, placing the secret of the PC's identity in jeopardy and causing him to have to jump through hoops to maintain it; otherwise the character receives his Disadvantage points for nothing.

TO GET MORE POINTS

Even if a player describes in a convincing way why his character has a Secret Identity, it may be that he has actually taken the Disadvantage primarily because his character needs 15 more Character Points. Here are some danger signs that this is the case:

- The character's Secret Identity is known to all his loved ones and teammates
- The character has no loved ones who might suffer if his identity were to be revealed to the world.
- The character has a job that causes him no inconvenience (he is a freelancer who can adjust his work schedule and location without consequence, the character is Filthy Rich, and so on).

If enough of these circumstances are in effect that the GM suspects the character is getting away with having a Secret Identity that does not disadvantage him, the GM should either require the player to buy off the Disadvantage or find some way to make the character suffer for having the Disadvantage. Tactics for the latter approach include having long-lost relatives suddenly appear, having the PC grow romantically interested in an NPC only to realize he is afraid of or antagonistic toward supers (either in general, or the character's superheroic identity in particular), or having the

character temporarily lose his dream job/personal fortune and suddenly have to work more at the behest of others.

Costumes

In the more modern eras of the superhero, the concealing garments of the pulp hero have become distinctive costumes, instantly recognizable and trademarkable combinations of clothes, accessories, and colors, often tight-fitting (and perhaps a bit revealing). In theory, each super designs his costume to leave a distinctive impression — to cause others to recognize his loyalties (such as costumes bearing patterns from a national flag), to fear him (costumes bearing symbols that cause dread, such as skulls, frightening animals, or weapons), or just to recognize him in any circumstance (very bright and distinctive color combinations).

WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?

One of the most enduring costume-related “bits” involves the sacred nature of minor facial alterations. In the comics, the smallest mask or most ephemeral of changes to a character’s appearance constitutes a change so dramatic that people who have known the character in both identities for years cannot penetrate the deception. Such minor facial alterations can include:

- A change in hair style (long rather than short, one lock of hair falling across the forehead in one identity but brushed back in another)
- A change in hair color (blonde for black)
- Addition or subtraction of facial hair (pencil-thin mustache versus no mustache)
- Use of a minor facial accessory (eyeglasses, false tattoo on one cheek)
- Wearing a mask, no matter how small or non-concealing
- Wearing a tinted faceplate over the entire face, allowing witnesses to see one’s features only in monochrome

DON’T WORRY ABOUT THAT DIET

The most common sort of costume found with superheroes is skintight, the majority of the costume being as stretchable as swimwear but much less prone to wrinkle. For this reason, any superhero character can choose to have a perfect body — one an ordinary active lifestyle maintains, one that does not gain pounds over the holiday feasting season, one that does not suffer severe metabolism changes as the hero ages — regardless of whether his powers and activities in the game seem to justify it.

Having a Perfect Superhero Body does not require the character to buy a high Comeliness or take a *Distinctive Features* Disadvantage. A player can choose for his character not to have a perfect body, but this doesn’t warrant any sort of Disadvantage, either.

DON’T WORRY ABOUT STRAPS OR GLUE

For reasons no one has ever adequately explained, superhero costumes don’t slip, bunch, or fall off, regardless of how they are stretched or abused. It is therefore safe for a male hero to flit about in a costume that is little more than a pair of brightly-colored briefs — no dive into a body of water, no matter how clumsy, will ever strip them from him. Female heroes can feel confident that their strapless tops will stay up. This is just a characteristic of the physics of a superhero world.

If a GM wants to be a little more realistic, he can say that among the many materials available to superheroes is a sheer skintight material that breathes, stretches without wrinkling, and can be dyed to match just about any skin tone. Consequently, when a costume appears to be mostly bare flesh, it is actually covered in part by this useful material, which serves as a base for the apparently-daring portions of the costume to be attached to. (Naturally, ice skaters and ballroom dancers will make extensive use of the same material.)

IT’S NOT FOR SALE AT THE CLOTH STORE

Related to the notion of the flesh-covered bodystocking above, another “bit” you can introduce in your campaign is the *Near-Magical Costume Material*. This is a type of cloth, plastic, force field projection, or other material normally found only in superhero costumes. Possible characteristics for the Near-Magical Costume Material include indestructibility (the costume doesn’t prevent damage from reaching the wearer, but it does not sustain damage itself, and so remains clean and untoned despite how badly its wearer is pounded), self-healing (the material does sustain damage, but then proceeds to fix itself so that, within minutes, it appears as though it has never been scuffed), or lightweight armor (it provides the character with armor that is much lighter, less cumbersome, and more breathable than any material known to law enforcement) (see accompanying sidebar).

The general public cannot buy Near-Magical Costume Material, but it tends to be readily available to superheroes. Superhero inventors help other heroes out by supplying quantities of the material, for instance, or the campaign may feature one or more NPCs who provide the material to a limited clientele.

TEMPORARY CONCEALMENT

It’s also important to remember that a superhero character, assuming he’s normal human size and doesn’t have extraordinary Distinctive Features (smells like a stockyard, trails tentacles out to a distance of ten yards behind him, or the like) can, under normal circumstances, throw a trench coat and a hat on over his costume and walk around on city streets without attracting too much attention. This is an especially appropriate technique for characters so mutated or scarred by their origins that they can’t even be mistaken for human, yet who, driven by loneliness, must occasionally pull on some heavy-weather gear and walk among humanity.

NEAR-MAGICAL COSTUME MATERIAL

Near-Magical Costume Material that is Indestructible or Self-Healing is normally bought as an *Instant Change Cosmetic Transform* (see the sidebar on page 238 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*).

With the GM’s permission, the character can apply the Limitations *OIF* and *Only To Keep Costume Undamaged* (-1).

Near-Magical Costume Material that provides protection to the wearer is bought as *Armor*, and is often referred to as “bulletproof spandex.”

Bulletproof Spandex:
Armor (6 PD/6 ED) (18 Active Points); OIF (-½).
Total cost: 12 points.

Characters may buy more (or less) armor if they wish (up to any ceiling established by the GM — 12 PD/12 ED is usually a good restriction), and add Limitations like *Activation Roll* (to represent only partial coverage of the body) or *Ablative* (if the armor gets worn away by repeated attacks).

See *Defensive Gadgets* on page 125-30 for other defensive options for stylish superhumans.

HOW TO DESTROY THE WORLD

The methods by which supervillains can destroy or conquer the world are myriad — the only limitations are the GM's imagination and what's plausible within the confines of the campaign world. Some examples:

Literally destroy the world — blow it up with MegaBombs, incinerate it with a MegaRay based on the Moon, have a Giant Space Amoeba eat it, and so on. Alternately, the villain can blackmail the world's leaders with such a threat, demanding money or power as the price for not unleashing his scheme.

Use psionic powers, magic, or orbital mind control satellites to take control of every human being (or at least the ones in power) (see page 123).

Open a gateway to a nether dimension, unleashing demonic beings that kill every living being on the planet.

Cause the Moon, or asteroids, to crash into Earth.

Unleash a super-plague that ends all life on Earth (or, even better, forces everyone to kowtow to the villain to obtain the serum that keeps the plague from becoming lethal).

Transform the air or plants into something that won't support higher forms of life.

Melt the polar ice caps to drown the world.

Crack open the planet's crust with an Earthquake Machine, causing devastating seismic activity and vulcanism (see page 118).

Take control of all Earth governments through secretive behind-the-scenes manipulation (or perhaps contrive the start of a true world war involving nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons).

Discovery Of The Secret Identity

Here's one area where a player has a certain amount of leverage on a GM: if an NPC discovers a hero's Secret Identity, but the player of that hero is unwilling to give up his *Social Limitation: Secret Identity* Disadvantage, the GM must find some way for the identity to remain secret — even if the NPC wants to publicize his discovery.

What this normally means is that an NPC who has discovered a hero's Secret Identity must be rendered harmless as a threat to that identity except for those occasions when he's an active part of a storyline involving that PC. Here are some ways to accomplish this:

"Who am I? What's going on?" Bad guys are just as susceptible to bump-on-the-head and traumatic-event amnesia as PCs, and the GM can solve any number of problems by having one go through some sort of memory-erasing injury... though of course, the NPC's amnesia fades whenever the GM wants to bring him back into the story, forcing the PC to find some way to re-induce the memory loss.

"I enjoy our little 'game' too much to end it so abruptly, MegaMan." There are many reasons why a villain might choose not to expose a PC's Secret Identity. For instance, if he exposes the PC's identity, someone else might choose to destroy the PC — a privilege the villain reserves to himself alone. A more complex situation might be that the NPC is in love with or has some other relationship with a friend or relative of the PC, and that individual might be hurt if the PC's identity is exposed. The NPC might even develop a grudging respect or other positive emotion toward the PC and decide to keep the secret of the identity out of a sense of friendship or fair play — there are honorable villains out there, after all.

"No one could have survived that!" The ultimate way to keep a villain from revealing a hero's Secret Identity is for that villain to die before he can tell anyone. This, of course, is what most players of heroes threatened with exposure hope for, and it happens on occasion. Though if published comics prove anything, it's that no truly memorable villain stays dead forever....

Captured!

The situation becomes a bit more complicated if a hero in a superhero-unfriendly environment is captured and tried by the authorities; he is certain to have his true identity revealed to the press as a matter of public record. This is a more difficult problem to resolve. Some ways to do it include:

"But he can't be MegaMan, I've seen them together!" The hero might find a way to convince the authorities and the public that they got it wrong — that they identified the wrong "innocent civilian" as his Secret Identity. (It certainly helps if the hero is able to set this up even before and during his trial, such as by having a ringer [or a robot] take his place in his civilian life.)

"Now I must leave my old life behind forever." The character can keep his Secret Identity even after that identity is revealed if he takes on a different identity.

Typically, he'll have to change his appearance and forge details of his new identity, and there is that pesky problem with fingerprints and perhaps DNA being on file, but it is in some cases a viable option.

"Maybe it's time to see if the public can accept both MegaMan and Clyde Carruthers." The PC could decide to accept the consequences of the revelation of his identity. He might buy off the *Social Limitation: Secret Identity* Disadvantage, making his identity un concealed — thereafter, people occasionally recognize him in his civilian face and dress. Or he might convert it to the *Public Identity* form of Social Limitation, suggesting that the notoriety of the revelation of his true name was so great he's now instantly recognized wherever he goes.

NONSENSICAL VILLAINY

Though the career of superhero may seem inexplicably strange, that of the supervillain or criminal mastermind is even stranger, and some of those expressions of strangeness — as impractical, counter-productive, or foolish as they often seem to tactically-minded gamers — are as intrinsic to a *Champions* campaign setting as strapless costumes that never slip.

Destroying The World

Some supervillains, not content with just causing damage or property loss in a localized area, decide to destroy the world. Horribly deformed mad scientists may wish to avenge their losses by taking out the entire world population; alien invaders might choose to kill everyone so they can terraform the Earth into something more to their liking; mad robots may decide to exterminate all organic life to satisfy their warped programming.

Of course, "destroying the world" doesn't necessarily have to literally mean destroying it. It can instead involve *conquering* the world, or otherwise transforming it into a place people don't want to, or can't, live in. One supervillain might wish to put the entire world population under mind control, another to melt the polar ice and make the world a better place for a secret race of aquatic humanoids, and so on.

If a *Champions* campaign is of a certain scale — that is, the characters are not just champions of local justice, but have powers enough to defend the world itself when it is threatened — then the GM will inevitably throw at least one world-threatening plot at the PCs. Over the years, the PCs might oppose several of them. (In other campaigns, "the world" simply becomes "the city" or "the nation," exposed to similar threats of somewhat lesser scale.)

Guidelines to remember when executing world-destroying plotlines include:

Match The Villain To The Threat. Villains who can threaten the world should be larger than life, even by the standards of a superhero campaign. Don't just put a planet-buster bomb in the hands of Dexter Maxwell, crime boss of Boise. Instead, transform Dexter into Megalopolis, the City Who Walks Like A Man, and give him grand schemes and plans forevermore.

Make It A Multi-part Story. Significant threats to an entire world shouldn't be solved and overcome in a single play-session. Put the destruction of the world on a timer and let the heroes sweat as the clock ticks down across several episodes. After all, any good plot to destroy the world probably has several sub-parts and consequences for the PCs to deal with... you just have to make sure their adversary achieves enough of his aims at each stage of the adventure that he can continue with his plans.

Demonstrate The Threat. The player characters won't necessarily feel the danger if it's simply an on-off switch (*i.e.*, the world is fine, the world is destroyed). Have the threat to the world be something that the villain can demonstrate (*e.g.*, he uses his Earthquake Ray on the New Madrid Fault as an exhibition of his power) or a process that gets worse and worse over time (the atmospheric temperature of the Earth increases day by day, causing the ice caps to begin melting, animal species to begin to die, national infrastructures to fail as they can no longer keep up with power demands and medical needs...).

Don't Forget The Rewards. In addition to keeping the world as a place where they can actually live, the PCs who defend the world might profit from an improvement to their reputations. Assuming the campaign is not set up to keep them in the roles of hated fugitives, the act of saving the world can turn a group of supers from costumed kooks to world-renowned heroes.

Don't Do It Too Often. If every storyline involves a threat to the entire world, the PCs rapidly lose interest in lesser dangers. Street crime may become something that is beneath them, and the notion of rescuing a kitten from a tree won't even occur to them. The threat to the world is something the GM should only invoke occasionally, and which will be better-appreciated for that.

There's no requirement that a *Champions* campaign feature threats to the entire world. A campaign might center around a single community and not operate at the scale where a world-destroying threat is appropriate. There's nothing wrong with this, and in such a campaign a threat to the entire community has the same basic emotional importance as a threat to the world would have in a larger-scale campaign.

Cockroach Durability

There's nothing as durable as a supervillain: beat him, lock him up, take away his powers, kill him, he'll probably come back for more. (If he's popular with both the GM and the players, he'll definitely come back for more.) Even if he truly, unquestionably is defeated/killed/cured, someone else will probably show up with his costume and *modus operandi* at a later time.

Among the ways a supervillain can return:

From Jail: Escapes; is paroled or pardoned (possibly through malfeasance, such as a bribe to the right person, or even through noble deeds, such as aiding the nation in a time of crisis); conviction overturned on a technicality.



Continued from page 50

Provoke a much more powerful alien or extradimensional species into attacking Earth. Increase the sun's energy output to fry the world. Buy a small game company, then parley it into a world-dominating economic entity. Shift the Earth into an alternate, hostile dimension.

TYPICAL SUPERHERO OCCUPATIONS

Actor
Architect
Artist/Craftsman
Astronaut
Athlete
Attorney
Businessman/Financier
Doctor
Fashion model
Law enforcement officer
Martial arts instructor
Millionaire playboy/
Dilettante
Musician
Occultist
Private investigator
Scientist/Inventor
Secret agent/Assassin
Test pilot
Writer/Journalist

From The Loss Of His Powers: Re-creates original accident/event that caused them; duplicates original powers through use of high technology or magic; “heals” from whatever caused the loss; has a cosmically-powerful entity give them back to him for its own inscrutable purposes.

From Death: Wasn't really killed (substituted a double; wasn't really him in that adventure, but a doppelganger; convincingly faked his death); raised from the dead by supernatural forces; a new villain, possibly an admirer or relative, assumes his costume, powers and identity; had a power/ability previously unknown to the heroes that saved him/resurrected him.

It's perfectly all right to keep bringing a villain back after every defeat, so long as you follow three simple guidelines:

First, don't make the villain the star of the campaign. No single villain (or NPC) should dominate a campaign; it's not his name on the front cover of the comic book, after all.

Second, note the difference between “hate” and “love-to-hate.” The PCs may hate a villain while the players enjoy storylines involving that villain; that's what's referred to as a “villain we love to hate.” But if the players actually dislike the villain, and become unhappy each time he returns, it's time to retire him — let his latest defeat be his last. (This has the additional advantage of showing the heroes that sometimes their victories are lasting ones.)

Third, make a villain's returns plausible. Don't just let him show back up, again and again, for no good reason. Have a coherent, reasonable explanation for each re-appearance — preferably one you've laid the groundwork for with some foreshadowing earlier in the campaign.

DAY JOBS

Most superheroes, even those without Secret Identities, have occupations that take up more of their time than their costumed antics. But most superheroes' jobs tend to be glamorous, interesting ones. (Roleplaying games tend to be about wish fulfillment, superhero games especially so — why not create a character with an interesting occupation?) The accompanying sidebar has a list of some of the most common ones seen in the comics.

Job Interference

Regardless of how glamorous a character's job is (and how much free time or control over his own schedule it gives him), regardless of whether he maintains a Secret Identity, a character's job should sometimes interfere with his adventuring. This is true even if the character has one of the *Money Perks* — when a character is wealthy, people tend to try to take his wealth away, by legal, extralegal, and downright illegal means. (Specious lawsuits are one favorite tactic.)

This doesn't mean a GM should punish his characters for having jobs, just that he should intro-

duce storylines involving each character's civilian jobs and lives, and those storylines should incorporate some reasonable demands made by the jobs on the character's time. No matter how flexible a character's work schedule, a job demands results. For example, a freelance songwriter may commit to writing the score for a movie, only to discover that a sudden crime wave keeps him hopping and unable to meet his obligations; a lawyer who specializes in research rather than court appearances may have an old friend or fellow superhero beg him to act as the primary lawyer in a trial, which temporarily turns his carefree work schedule into a difficult, regulated responsibility.

FAR AWAY PLACES

Many superhero settings feature strange and exotic locales for the heroes to visit, often inhabited by mysterious and powerful entities. The most common include outer space and alternate dimensions.

SPACE

Many superhero settings feature sentient alien species and inhabited planets other than our own — after all, the first true superhero in the comics, Superman, is an alien himself. Sometimes the heroes go into outer space to visit other worlds, perhaps to pursue an alien supercriminal or act as ambassadors from Earth. At other times, aliens come to our planet, maybe in a spacecraft crash or as part of an invading armada.

If sentient aliens exist in the campaign, the GM needs to consider several issues:

How Technologically Advanced Are They?: Typically, sentient alien species are depicted as having higher technology than Earth (that's how they get here, before we get the chance to go to their world, after all). However, that doesn't necessarily have to be the case. Nor does there have to be only one standard; some aliens may be more advanced (perhaps *much* more advanced) than humanity, while others are beneath us on the ladder of technological evolution. Some may even have “evolved” completely differently, with an emphasis on, say, biological technology instead of electrical devices.

How Much Contact With Earth?: How much contact is there between Earth and alien species generally (and important species in particular)? Do aliens occasionally visit our planet in secret to kidnap and impregnate women, or appear only to people on isolated rural roads to sow seeds of doubt and fear? Or have they established diplomatic relations and built embassies? Is there regular trade with alien species (and if so, how has it affected Earth's technology and economies)? Does the average human know of and acknowledge the existence of aliens, or do they remain supermarket tabloid fodder?

Similarly, the GM should determine each alien species's attitude toward Earth/humans. Are the aliens friendly or hostile — bent on peaceful interaction or invasion? Are they primarily interested in cultural and scientific exchanges, or do they want us

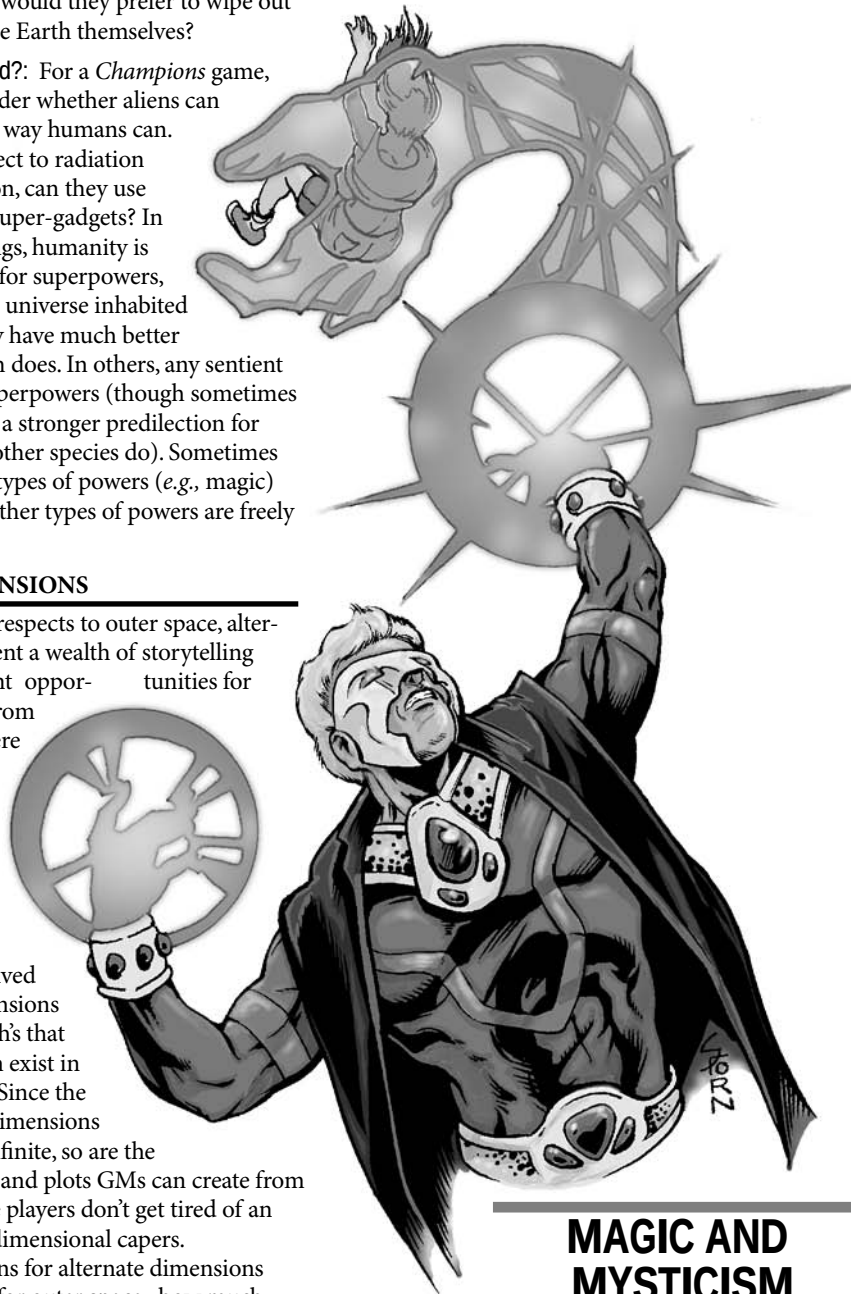
to buy their goods, or would they prefer to wipe out humanity and colonize Earth themselves?

Are They Superpowered?: For a *Champions* game, it's important to consider whether aliens can have superpowers the way humans can. Are alien species subject to radiation accidents and mutation, can they use magic, do they build super-gadgets? In some superhero settings, humanity is unique in its capacity for superpowers, giving it an "edge" in a universe inhabited by species who mostly have much better technology than Earth does. In others, any sentient race could develop superpowers (though sometimes humans seem to have a stronger predilection for acquiring them than other species do). Sometimes humans keep certain types of powers (e.g., magic) to themselves, while other types of powers are freely available to all.

ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS

Similar in many respects to outer space, alternate dimensions present a wealth of storytelling and plot development opportunities for the GM. They range from "alternate Earths" where most of the details are the same but a few crucial ones differ (the PCs are all villains, and their enemies are heroes; the Nazis won World War II; dinosaurs evolved to sentience), to dimensions so different from Earth's that it's surprising they can exist in the same continuum. Since the number of alternate dimensions is, at least in theory, infinite, so are the number of characters and plots GMs can create from them — assuming the players don't get tired of an endless diet of cross-dimensional capers.

The considerations for alternate dimensions are the same as those for outer space: how much contact is there; how do the heroes get there; what are the inhabitants of the other dimensions' intentions toward Earth? The main difference is that in the comics, dimensional travel tends to be more the province of mystics and manipulators of magic, rather than science. Dimension-breaching devices are certainly possible, but typically adventures that involve travel to alternate planes of existence allow the super-mage, rather than the gadgeteer, to shine.



MAGIC AND MYSTICISM

Most published comic book settings include as part of their background the existence of magic. In these worlds, magic is real, and characters can manipulate it. Some are powerful wizards, able to cast many types of spells based on natural talent and/or long years of study; other characters may have mystic superpowers bestowed on them by the gods, or obtained via a magical "radiation" accident, bonding with a spirit, or making a pact with a Higher (or Lower) Power.

The existence of magic implies certain things about a comic book superheroes setting, generally speaking. First, it implies the existence of alternate dimensions, possibly an infinite number of them, many inhabited or controlled by beings who can manipulate magic. Some of those beings (such as demons) may threaten Earth or its inhabitants from time to time; others are high-omnipotent dimensional conquerors able to take on entire squads of

SUPER-MAGIC

Magic spells in the superhero genre usually are very different from spells in fantasy or other genres. They have flashy names (often alliterative). They have even flashier effects; some of them make the gaudiest superhero costume look plain. Lastly, they are fairly easy for super-mages to learn (in game terms, learning a new spell usually just means adding a slot to, or defining a new power for, a Power Framework).

Although comic book spellcasters often wave their hands and spout mystic phrases when casting spells, this is as much for effect as anything; when push comes to shove, they don't *have* to Gesture or use Incantations. Thus, they don't usually take those Limitations on their powers, but they can if they wish.

Here are a few example spells; you can find some others in the discussion of the *Mystic* archetype on page 76 and in the Quick Superhuman Generator power packages.

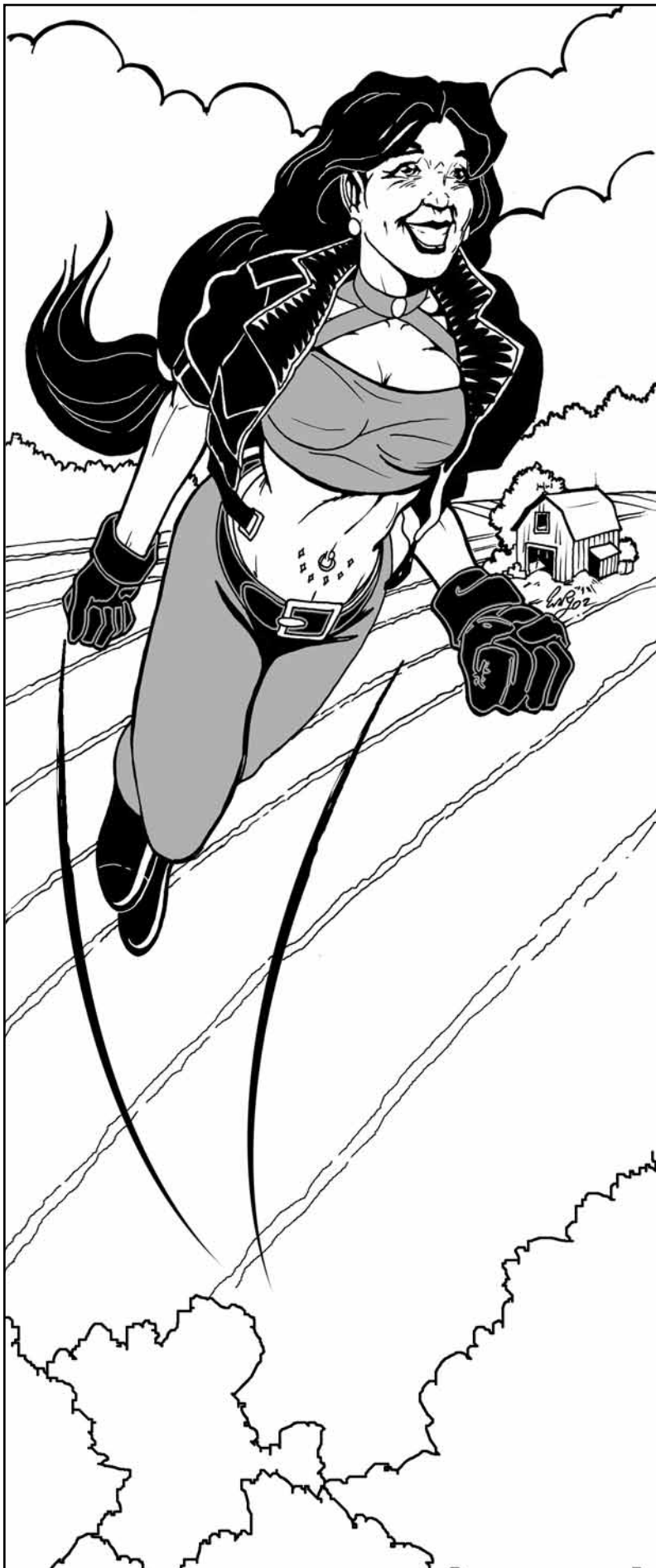
Iskari's Invoked Iridescence: Sight and Hearing Group Flash 7d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½). Total cost: 60 points.

The Lucent Lightnings Of The Loyal Larethian: RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing (+½). Total cost: 60 points.

Mantle Of Mastery: Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense); Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½). Total cost: 60 points.

Vigor Of The Valdar: Aid Magic 3d6, any Magic Characteristic or Power one at a time (+¼), Ranged (+½). Total cost: 52 points.

Winds Of The Zephirim: Flight 15", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½). Total cost: 45 points.



superhumans.

Second, it tends to imply that many old legends and myths — and the gods and heroes who inhabit them — are real. While mundane scientists may scoff at such tales, the PCs know the truth. This opens the door for ancient cults with insidious agendas, PCs who are pagan deities with avatars in the modern world, and long-lost talismans to be a part of the campaign.

When deciding whether magic exists in his campaign, and if so how it functions, the GM should consider the following issues:

Does Magic Really Exist? If the answer is “No,” you’re shutting off a lot of possible character origins, plotlines, and story hooks, but this option may lead to other interesting avenues for the campaign to explore. For example, if there’s no magic, what’s the source of superpowers for characters who *think* they have magic powers?

If the answer is “Yes,” the GM needs to consider the remaining questions in this section.

Where Does Magic Come From? Is there just one source of magic — does it involve gifts of power from higher beings, or the tapping of some weird extradimensional energy, or drawing on reserves of personal magical energy innate to every sentient being, or always require talismans (*i.e.*, Foci)? Or are there multiple possible sources of magic? If there’s just one source, that does a lot to help the GM define what magic-using characters in the game are like, but it cuts off many possibilities. Multiple sources make for a more diverse Magical World, but may not make mystic abilities seem distinctive from plain old vanilla superpowers.

Who Can Learn Magic, And How? Does all magic involve chanted spells, learned only by certain naturally talented persons (perhaps from the same family or bloodline) after years of study and practice? Or does every sentient being have the ability to learn and use at least some magics fairly easily? The easier magic is to learn and use, the more of an effect it has on the campaign — it’s possible to envision a *Champions* game set in a world where high technology never developed because magic took its place, for example.

In most comic book settings, magic is a rare thing, learnable only by a relatively few people with special gifts, a particularly high amount of personal discipline, or the like. As such, it’s a very secretive thing; its existence is not bandied about casually, for people are superstitious and fearful. Mystic heroes often have to go to extreme lengths to keep the mind-warping secrets of magic from the populace, who couldn’t stand the eldritch strain.

Who Are The “Big Players” In The Magical World? A comic book setting with magic almost always features some major-league villains with mystic powers. Some are human sorcerers with decades (perhaps centuries) of learning and experience under their belts. Others are extradimensional entities, often inimical to Earth or humanity

for some specific reason (perhaps they want to tap the vast magical energies that make Earth a special place, or they're infuriated by humanity's continued success at resisting their attempts at conquest).

SECRET SOCIETIES

A superhero world is full of secret societies — some heroic, some villainous, many straddling that fence as they pursue specific agendas. In adding detail to a campaign world, the GM can add any number of secret societies. Since they are, in theory, secret, the GM need reveal their existence to the players only as the PCs discover them; at any given time, any number of such societies can await discovery.

Some examples of secret societies:

Remnants of ancient civilizations. Atlantis may have fallen, but its descendants could live in a domed city at the bottom of the ocean, a cavern system beneath North Africa, or a mercy shelter in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Other appropriate civilizations, real, mythological, or entirely fictitious, include Sheba, Lemuria, the Lost Tribes of Israel, the Kingdom of Prester John, New World Vikings, Amazons, Neanderthals, dinosaur-men, ancient Egyptians, the Hittites, the Maya, the Aztecs, the Olmecs, the Scythians, and so on.

Modern-era continuations of ancient orders. The Templars, the Scholomance school of sorcery, the Teutonic Knights, priesthoods of various mythological gods, the Inquisition, and so on. (In some cases, such as the Knights of Malta or the Jesuits, there are modern-day continuations of such orders, but a GM can create splinter groups with more extreme histories or agendas.)

Seekers of mystical knowledge. Occultist groups that wish to learn the universe's magical secrets can be as common as Boy Scout troops; some could be benign, some malevolent, and some neutral but with an unfortunate tendency to accidentally release ancient horrors on the world.

SUPER-AGENCIES

Supervillains and criminal masterminds who need some additional muscle often dedicate millions of dollars to building up small private armies of super-agents. Almost invariably, they equip these super-agents with garish costumes (distinct from superhero costumes in that they are all alike) and weapons that can inconvenience (and, in circumstances involving massed attacks) even overcome superheroes. (Similarly, governments in *Champions* settings often create super-agencies of their own.)

For the most part, it's not really important to delve into the psychology or individual identities of criminal super-agents. You can assume they're recruited from the nation's prisons and criminal underworlds and paid enough to overcome any possible reluctance to work for someone who pits them against superheroes and might even kill



one or more of them just to make a point.

See page 165 for more discussion of villainous agencies, and page 177 for some "generic" agent writeups you can use in your *Champions* campaign.



Once the GM has dealt with all these questions, details, and concerns, he should have a basic template for his *Champions* campaign.

At this point, it's time for him (not to mention the players!) to turn to the question of creating characters to populate it.



CHAPTER TWO: IMPROBABLE ORIGINS: SUPERHERO CHARACTER CREATION

Superhero characters fall into a number of types that have become recognizable to us from the comics. This makes it easier for us to recreate them in roleplaying games — and, by fiddling around with player/reader expectations, to create interesting new variants on familiar types. This chapter talks about the fine art of creating characters who are simultaneously appropriate to a superhero setting (that

is, often based on familiar archetypes) and also distinctive (remaining unique to the campaign and to the player who creates them).

Additionally, this chapter discusses many other subjects relating to superhero character creation, including appropriate game elements for superhumans, what it means to be “superhuman,” the different types of origins used by superhumans, and the like.

BEING SUPERHUMAN



Over the years, the *HERO System* and *Champions* rules have defined and redefined what it means to be superhuman — especially in comparison with so-called “normal humanity.” Questions have arisen about the hard lines separating humanity and superhumanity, only to yield answers that the lines are actually rather blurry. If, for instance, the Normal Characteristic Maximum for STR is 20, is someone with a 21 automatically superhuman? A 23?

In each campaign, the GM decides where “normal human” ends and “superhuman” begins, but he should make that decision in conjunction with the players, since their characters are the ones most strongly affected by the rules.

You need to consider several factors when making this decision. These include:

How realistic is the campaign?: Some games make an effort to simulate “real world” reality as closely as possible. In games like this, the range of Characteristics and abilities is limited: almost no characters exceed 20 in their Primary Characteristics, and those above 15 are fairly rare. On the other end of the extreme are campaigns that use the “dramatic reality” of the highest-powered comics and movies, where even the seemingly “normal” people one encounters may have a Primary Characteristic or two above 20. The range of variations in between these extremes is infinite.

How specific are superpowers?: In some campaigns, a superhuman’s powers, and their effect on his Characteristics, are tightly defined; in others, superhuman Characteristics don’t necessarily have to relate to one’s powers. For example, a psychic character might have higher-than-normal INT and EGO, but just having superhuman powers wouldn’t suffice to give him higher-than-normal STR or DEX. But in a typical four-color superheroes setting, having any sort of superpowers often gives a character license to also have superhuman STR, a high COM, innate Resistant Defenses, and the like.

What classification do PCs fall into?: Take a look at the Character Ability Guidelines Table on page 28 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook. It provides good guidelines for “average” ranges of Characteristics (and the like) for Low-Powered, Standard, High-Powered, Very High-Powered, and Cosmically Powerful superheroes.

What races does your campaign include?: In most campaigns, humans predominate, making it relatively easy for you to determine ranges for Characteristics based on your own experiences. But if

your game has unusual alien or fantasy races, that may skew things — what counts as “superhuman” for a human may not for a dwarf, a merman, or a Rigellian.

What Characteristics define superhuman?: Not all Characteristics are the same. It’s fairly easy to deduce or extrapolate the normal/superhuman divide for physical Characteristics like STR, DEX, and PD. But for INT, EGO, PRE, and COM — Characteristics which represent far more subjective qualities — it’s not that simple. Thus, what amounts to “superhuman” for one Characteristic may be too limiting for another.

RATING CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISTICS

For purposes of analyzing characters and their Characteristics, the *HERO System* uses seven categories: Weak, Challenged, Average, Skilled, Competent, Legendary, and Superhuman.

Characteristics in the Weak range usually represent infants, the extremely aged, persons suffering from terrible diseases or poisons, and the like. Challenged is one step up from that; it represents some children and elderly people, persons suffering from illness or handicaps, and the like.

Average is just that — the range of Characteristics for the typical people encountered during the game, from children to senior citizens. One step up from Average is Skilled. Characteristics within the Skilled range can still represent more or less normal persons without any special training or benefits. For example, many ordinary people have Skilled-range STR from exercising, INT, EGO, or PRE due to genetics and personality, and so forth.

Once you get into the Competent range, though, things become a little different. Normal people can sometimes edge into Competent, but usually Competent-level Characteristics result from intensive training, truly rare genetic gifts, or the like. Many heroes, even in Heroic campaigns, have a majority of their Characteristics in this range or higher — that’s one of the things that makes them heroes.

Beyond Competent is Legendary. Few humans reach this lofty plateau; generally speaking, ordinary people can *never* attain it. Only truly exceptional individuals — heroes and superheroes — have Legendary Characteristics. The upper limit of Legendary is the upper limit of normal human attainment.

SUPERHEROIC POINT TOTALS

The “Standard” Superheroic character defined by the guidelines on page 28 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* is the “default” approach for *Champions* campaigns, including the *Champions Universe* setting depicted in many Hero Games products. That category describes the values these rules regard as most common throughout starting superhero campaigns. In the remainder of this chapter, if examples indicate power levels and point values for powers and do not indicate some other power level such as Cosmically Powerful or Low-Powered, the text means Standard superheroes. For more information on point total options, see pages 125-30.

ADJUSTING
NORMAL
CHARACTERISTIC
MAXIMA

The Characteristic ranges in the Champions Universe Characteristics Standards table mesh with the standard definition of Normal Characteristic Maxima, which assumes a typical ceiling of 20 for Primary Characteristics, with costs doubling beyond that to reflect the rarity of higher attributes. If you're running a game with a higher (or lesser) degree of realism, or where Legendary or Superhuman characters are even rarer (or more common) than usual, you may want to reflect that by adjusting the NCM breakpoint.

For example, to achieve greater "realism," you might make 15 the threshold at which Characteristic costs start to double. That allows PCs to become Competent, but not too Competent. On the other hand, if you'd like all the PCs to have at least one or two Legendary-level Characteristics, you might bump the NCM breakpoint up to 25.

At the pinnacle is Superhuman. A character cannot have even a single Characteristic in this range unless superpowers and/or a related explanation (such as magic, mutation, super-technology, or the like) exist.

Each GM determines for his own campaign what numbers fall within these ranges. In one game, an Average person might have Primary Characteristics in the 6-10 range, and Superhuman ones in the 31+ range. In another game, Average might be 10-15, and Superhuman 51+. It all depends on GM and player preference, the nature of the campaign, and many other such factors. Naturally, each GM should distribute copies of his own "Characteristics Standards Table" to his players when they begin creating characters for his campaign.

A 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 that threshold. For example, look at Sapphire on page 189. None of her Primary Characteristics fall into the 31+ range for "Superhuman" in the Champions Universe. And yet, she's clearly superhuman — she can fly, fire energy bolts, and so forth.

EXCEEDING THE LIMITS

There is one way a player character can exceed the limits for a particular Characteristics category (especially Superhuman) without actually entering that category: Limited Characteristics (and related methods, such as the *Lightning Reflexes* Talent). With the GM's permission, a character can buy Characteristics (or inches of movement) with appropriate Limitations and define them as Skills, technology, or special abilities, rather than as true "powers" that make him Superhuman (or Legendary, or whatever).

For example, look at Defender on page 182. Defender's overall STR of 40 clearly boosts him into the "Superhuman" category for the Champions Universe (see below). But his STR has a Limitation — it's bought through a Focus (his suit of powered armor). Defender himself, James Harmon, is an exceptional individual, certainly, but by no means Superhuman in any respect. Thus, even

though he has some Superhuman-level attributes, he does not count as Superhuman for campaign purposes. The same result would apply to using *Lightning Reflexes*, extra inches of *Leaping* that *Require An Acrobatics Roll*, or other such abilities to verge into the Superhuman.

Each GM should decide for his own campaign, and perhaps even on a character-by-character basis, just how far characters can take this principle. At some point, no matter how Limited, a Characteristic or ability may become "Superhuman." For example, enough *Lightning Reflexes* may represent "Superhuman reflexes," even if the character's normal DEX remains well within the Competent or Legendary range, and the character tries to define his *Lightning Reflexes* as "lots of training." Just be careful not to let characters strain the "feel" of the campaign and genre too much, and you should be fine.

Example: The
Champions Universe

To give you an example of how to determine the difference between normal and superhuman, the accompanying table describes the Characteristic ranges for the *Champions Universe*, the setting detailed by several books in Hero Games's *Champions* product line. Since the Champions Universe is a typical four-color, high adventure sort of superhero setting, GMs can use these standards for similar types of campaigns if they want to. Gamemasters running other types of games can use these standards as guidelines, varying up or down depending upon the tone, degree of realism, and nature of the campaign.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE
CHARACTERISTICS STANDARDS

Char	Weak	Challenged	Average	Skilled	Competent	Legendary	Superhuman
STR	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
DEX	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
CON	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
BODY	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
INT	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-50	51+
EGO	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-50	51+
PRE	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-50	51+
COM	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
PD, ED	0-1	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-10	11-15	16+
SPD	1	1-2	1-2	2-3	4-5	6-7	8+
REC	1	1-2	2-4	5-6	7-10	11-13	14+
END	2-4	6-10	11-20	21-26	27-40	41-60	61+
STUN	3-4	7-11	12-20	21-27	28-40	41-60	61+
Run	1"	2-3"	4-6"	7-8"	9-10"	11-13"	14"+
Leap	0"	1"	2"	3"	4-5"	6-11"	12"+
Swim	0"	1"	2"	3"	4-5"	6-9"	10"+

WITH GREAT POWER



Character Origins

The way a character obtains his powers is of at least as much importance to a campaign as the powers themselves. If, for instance, they are magical, this means there's magic at work in the campaign — a non-trivial consideration for the GM. If they're technological (for example, built into a high-tech suit of armor), the GM must deal with (or at least take into consideration) the existence of super-technology in the hands of at least one scientist (the builder of the suit). In game terms, the origin of powers can dictate the use of specific Advantages and Limitations in the construction of the powers, give the GM ideas for story plots, and cause the GM to create a great many related non-player characters (for example, super-level martial arts may suggest the existence of other martial artists at a similar level of ability, a history and tradition of superpowered martial arts competition, and so forth).

ORIGIN CATEGORIES

In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare wrote that “Some are born great, // Some achieve greatness, // And some have greatness thrust upon them.” That statement actually serves to define the three categories of superhero origin stories.

Born Great

Here are some of the common origins involving being born with or inheriting powers:

Alien

This character is from another planet or dimension where everybody is physically superior to Earth humans. If a superhero has this as the basis for his powers, the GM has to deal with an important question: what would happen if several people from this place, or several thousand, showed up on Earth? Typical approaches to dealing with this problem include destroying that place so our hero is the only survivor, or one of a very few survivors; setting up some environmental circumstance that makes it impossible for a typical person from that place to survive on the Earth, though the one hero in question can; or setting up circumstances that make it impossible for natives of that place to leave their home except when the GM thinks there's a good adventure in it.

Of course, many alien species will be like humans — mostly normal. But perhaps their

members could become superheroes through radiation accidents, mutation, training, or any of the other means available to humans. The GM needs to decide whether only humans can become superhumans (or humans somehow become superhuman on an unusually frequent basis), or if the ability to gain superpowers is a universal phenomena.

Godly Ancestry/Bestowal

A character with this type of origin is the descendant of a god, and has powers appropriate to that god. In the typical arrangement, a super-strong hero would be the descendant of a super-strong god such as Thor or Heracles; a clever hero would be descended from someone like Athena or Coyote. A variant on Godly Ancestry is Godly Bestowal — one of the Powers That Be has decided the character is especially worthy and has bestowed tremendous powers upon him (or imbued him with those powers by “merging” with him somehow). Occasionally there's even a character who simply is a god, one of the rare ones who decides to walk the modern world instead of staying in the land of the gods where there are no taxes, cell phones, or bad sitcoms.

Mutant

The character's genetic code is a little different from that of ordinary people. Though the change is subtle, it grants the character superpowers. In the campaign, perhaps some people feel that these mutations, as they result in the creation of more and more superpowered people, represent a fundamental change in the genetic code of humankind, and could be leading to the next evolutionary step in mankind's development. But sometimes, unfortunately for mutants, people and governments interpret this trend to mean mutants are forerunners of a new species whose inevitable goal must be the destruction, displacement, or enslavement of “true” or “pure” (*i.e.*, non-mutant) humanity, and they seek mutants in an effort to control or destroy them.

Mystic Family/Race

The character belongs to a family or race, normally a subset of humanity, that is imbued with magical or psychic power. This may result from ancient pacts with powerful gods, complex magical rituals performed by one of the character's ancestors, or a “mystic mutation” of some sort. Everyone who belongs to the group has some power, though a player character destined to be a superhero normally has an unusually high degree of it.

Achieve Greatness

Here are some of the common origins involving characters who learn or build their superhuman capabilities:

Build Gadgetry

Some people, unable to acquire superpowers by other means, retire to the laboratory to create machinery to do the same thing. One typical expression of the “build gadgetry” origin is “powered armor,” an all-in-one gadget that provides its wearer with protection and an array of superpower systems (see page 78). Related to this origin is “know someone who builds gadgetry” — *i.e.*, the character is the friend, employee, or other beneficiary of someone who builds superpowered gadgets rather than being the builder himself. The fellow hired to test the gadgets often ends up as a superhero or supervillain.

Mental Training

Some powers can be rationalized as being a very high level of scientific knowledge. Mind Control through hypnosis, Teleportation and Extra-Dimensional Movement through extraordinarily high-end mathematics, and so on are all expressions of this origin, but Mental Training acts as the rationale for a small enough set of powers that it usually does not act as the origin story for all of a hero’s abilities. Mental Training also includes many of a superhuman’s non-powered skills.

Mystical/Magical Training

The character has learned to cast magic spells. He possesses and/or can direct magical energy, allowing him to do many remarkable things. Magic, as a rationale, can conveniently include every power in the book, so it’s a popular choice among players creating characters.

Physical Training

This origin category includes all the martial arts- and athletics-related origins, and many Skills. For example, you can associate numerous powers with martial arts training; examples include breath control (Armor/Damage Resistance), healing (Healing), *ch’i-kung* (Telekinesis), Leaping, and more.

Have Greatness Thrust Upon Them

Here are some of the common origins involving accidental, unintentional, or involuntary acquisition of superhuman abilities after birth:

Radiation Accident

The traditional form of the comic book *radiation accident* is a mishap in which a subject is exposed to an unhealthy amount of hard radiation. This causes him to experience a sudden non-fatal mutation that gives him superpowers. The term comes from influential Silver Age comics, many of whom featured characters with origins involving radiation (*e.g.*, bitten by a radioactive animal, bom-

bardment by “cosmic radiation” in space, or exposure to strange forms of radiation in a weapons test). Over the years, the term itself has mutated to include just about any of the weird sorts of accidents that create superpowers — a “radiation” accident could involve mutagenic chemicals, magical energy, transformative diseases, genetic engineering, lightning strikes, and any other situation that might cause an unexpected transformation in the character. (For example, “chemical accidents” were a much more common explanation for powers in the Golden Age, and “genetics accidents” are more common in the Iron Age, based on the current state of science in those periods.) Radiation accidents are much-beloved of GMs and players alike because their results can be very dramatic and unexpected, and because few people demand a consistent set of consequences from them.

Subject Of Experimentation

This origin signifies a character who has either volunteered to be the subject of some new scientific or mystical technique, or who’s been subjected to the technique without his approval. It covers everything from the noble young test subject who agrees to undergo dangerous, painful experimentation so he can be transformed into a superhero during times of crisis to the hapless kidnap victim who’s just the latest test subject of a villainous organization’s research and development lab. Whatever the reason for the experiment, the result is a superpowered individual — though one who may be physically or psychologically scarred by his transformation.

Combinations Of The Three

In many cases, heroes and villains combine two or more origin rationales in their characters. A character might be the child of a god, but even that would not allow him to be competitive in the world of superheroes and supervillains if he had also not received exceptional mental and physical training. A character might be a mutant, but would still be an easy target for a thug with a handgun if he did not also wear body armor and use gadgetry.

SUPERHERO MOTIVATIONS

When you design a superhero character, it’s important to decide why he does what he does. Fighting crime, especially in the form of superpowered villains, is not the best choice for most people — particularly not when they could obtain fame and money by exploiting their unusual abilities. So, why does a character become a *superhero* instead of remaining just a *superhuman*?

Some classic superhero motivations are described below. Each one lists one or two representative Psychological Limitations. Of course, over years of adventuring, a character could lose or overcome whatever reason originally inspired him to be a hero, meaning he must then find a reason to continue... or retire.

Conditioning. The character might have been trained for this lifestyle since he was a child — for instance, because one of his parents was a superhero, because he belongs to a family with a strong sense of *noblesse oblige*, or even because he's a programmed robot. No other course of action occurs to him. Over time, the conditioning may fade, leaving the hero in a quandary about whether his "choice" of a superheroic lifestyle is the correct one.

Representative Psychological Limitations: Must Live Up To Family Reputation For Achievement (Uncommon, Moderate; 10 points); Noblesse Oblige (Uncommon, Strong; 15 points).

Desire For Money. This character may fight crime, but he does so chiefly to keep himself in front of the cameras, the better to sell his free time at exorbitant rates. When not confronting evil, he might endorse products, work construction sites in difficult environments, carry sensor packages to orbit the sun, and so on. Even less wholesome versions of this motivation lead to the creation of mercenary supers, individuals who only use their powers for pay.

Representative Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Very Common, Strong; 20 points).

Feeling Of Fellowship. The character may not feel welcome, or as though he belongs, with anyone but a group of heroes. His friendship with them is real, but he truly only fights crime because he wants to stay with the group; the effect on the people he helps or saves is really of little (or much less) interest to him.

Representative Psychological Limitation: Desperate For Acceptance (Uncommon, Strong; 10 points).

Hunger For Justice Or Revenge. The character or someone he loves has been wronged (typically, this means "horribly wronged"), and he now seeks vengeance. He may choose for his revenge to be legal (*i.e.*, he turns villains over to the authorities) or illegal (he punishes them, perhaps even kills them, without consulting the legal authorities). He may want to punish only those responsible for the crime that first motivated him, or he may extend his anger to anyone with a similar motivation or *modus operandi*.

Representative Psychological Limitations: Obsessed With Crime-fighting (Very Common, Strong; 20 points); Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong; 10 points).

Need For Recognition. This character has a desperate need to be noticed or recognized as somehow exceptional. This need can be a pathetic one (the result of lack of sufficient attention and support as a child) or an obnoxious one (the character is "on stage" all the time — an amateur, comedian, or prankster who becomes sulky when ignored).

Representative Psychological Limitation: Showoff (Very Common, Strong; 20 points).

Obligation. This character fights crime

to pay a debt or to fulfill another's wish. Someone whose life was saved by a superhero may need to pay back the debt of his life by donning a costume. A sympathetic supervillain might turn to a life of crimefighting as a condition of his parole. One of the hero's relatives may have asked for this with his dying breath. Whatever the reason, until the hero feels he has met his obligation, he continues in the life of the superhero.

Representative Psychological Limitation: Feels Obligated To Fight Crime (Common, Strong; 15 points).

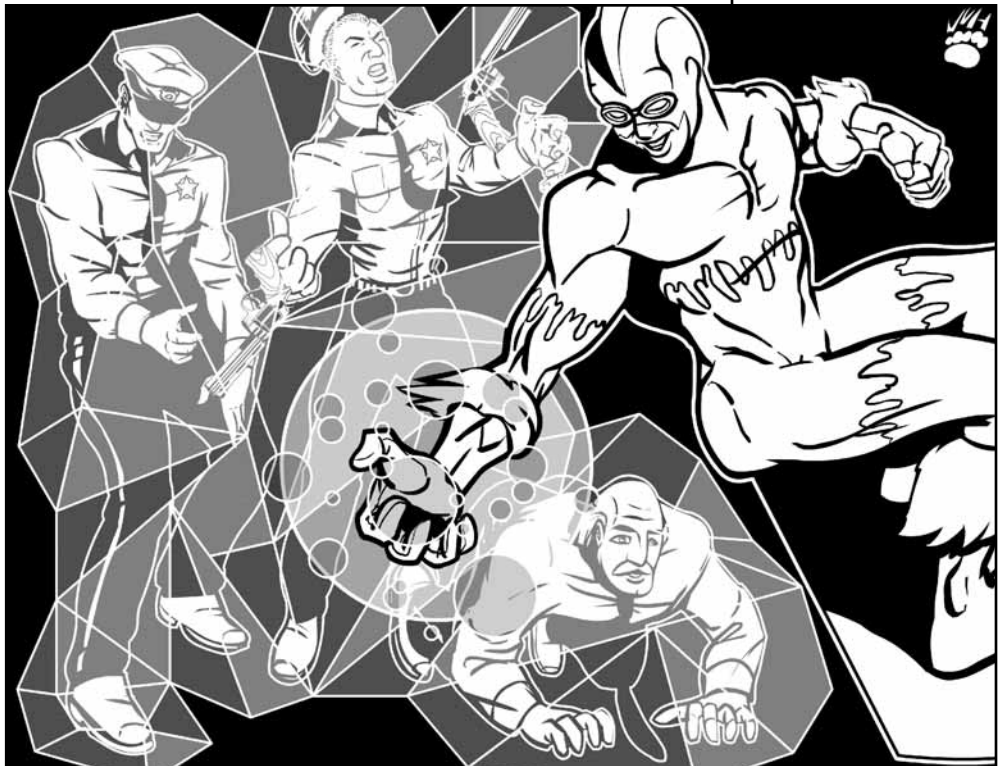
Sense Of Responsibility. The character, typically because of his personal code of ethics, believes that "with great power comes great responsibility" — that he has an obligation to utilize his superpowers for the benefit of others. He does not necessarily have to have experienced tragedy in his life, nor does he have to have any emotional problems; he just feels that it's his duty. Someone with this mental orientation usually finds himself in disagreement (whether serious or humorous varies with the characters) with characters who take the "Thrillseeker" or "Need For Recognition" motivations, and is often not on good terms with those who have "Desire For Money" as a motivation.

Representative Psychological Limitation: Code Of The Hero (Very Common, Strong; 20 points) (see page 67).

Thrillseeker. This character is only really alive when he's in danger, and can't find anything much more dangerous than facing a powerful supervillain.

Representative Psychological Limitation: Thrillseeker (Common, Strong; 15 points).

For more Psychological Limitations common to superhero characters, see page 67.



MORE POWERFUL THAN A LOCOMOTIVE



PLAYING THE ORIGIN STORY

Most characters are built with the assumption that their origin stories have already occurred, even if it was a very recent event. You should consider making the actual origin events part of a play-session. They are, after all, often some of the most dramatic and important events in a character's life.

There are two ways to do this: the GM can take the player aside and discuss doing this; or the GM can allow the player to come into a game under the assumption that the origin has already occurred when it has not. In either case, someone has to create a character sheet for the pre-origin version of the character. And — this is important — unless the player is comfortable with running a normal character around in a violent superhero environment, it's best for the origin events to occur very early in the adventure, so the character has his powers through most of the play-session.

Creating Superhero Characters

With the advice from this book and the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook in mind, you should now find it easier to construct the superhero you want to play. Here are a few ideas and examples to help you build just the right hero. You'll probably also want to refer to the *Superhero Archetypes* section (beginning on page 69) for additional ideas.

General Suggestions

Find out What The Campaign Standards Are Likely To Be; Find Out Again When All Characters Are Built. The GM should have an idea of what the campaign standards for character power levels, OCVs and DCVs, and other factors will be when the campaign starts. The PCs will be built or modified based on that estimation. Once all the characters are built, the players should have an opportunity to revise their characters if they are too far out of line, particularly if their DEX and SPD scores are well below those of their fellow players. Having a comparatively low DEX or a SPD that's 2 or more lower than that of the other PCs leaves a player feeling frustrated and useless when combat occurs.

Prepare To Have To Scale Your Character Back. When using the rules to create a character as imagined, or to duplicate a character from the comic books, players often discover the character costs too much — he cannot be built as envisioned with the points available. This is normal, since comics writers don't have to justify things with points, and many published superheroes have years (or decades) of experience beyond them. Be prepared to build your character at a lesser level of power or versatility to begin with, and then improve to that preferred level through expenditure of Experience Points.

Review The Available Perks And Talents. These low-cost features permit characters to do a lot of entertaining and interesting things, often functioning as low-level powers and giving characters many points of distinction.

Compare The Character's Attacks And Defenses To Other Characters' And To NPCs. The GM should tell each player in general how his character rates in terms of the amount of damage he can do and how much he can take. A player would definitely appreci-

ate knowing, for instance, that "Your character can probably last a few Phases in HTH Combat with the average supervillain, but he's not likely to win; he should be able to Knock Out a talented normal martial artist in two or three Phases; and he's nothing more than a one-shot target to someone like Doctor Demolisher."

Be Wary Of Complicated Multipowers. There's definitely a temptation to use Multipowers to construct a character who can do everything. But this is bad for two reasons. First, characters who can do everything irritate characters who can't do everything, and make life harder for the GM. Second, complicated Multipowers take too much time to manage during combat; the player is constantly comparing slots to available Active Points, comparing Fixed slots to Flexible slots, constantly adjusting things... and slowing down the game. The same applies, to an even greater extent, to many Variable Power Pools. So, if you use these Power Frameworks, construct them in a reasonable manner so they enhance game play rather than detract from it.

Don't Forget Enhanced Senses, Life Support, And Esoteric Powers. It's easy to concentrate on Attack, Defense, and Movement Powers to the exclusion of all others, but it's often the others that give a character his distinctive identity.

Visual And Personal Style

Before, during, or after you've settled on the character's point-based traits, you should also settle on the character's visual and personal characteristics. Design the character's superhero name, his costume, his appearance; settle in your mind details such as how he moves, how he interacts with others, whether he's "on" all the time or whether he reverts to his true personality when the cameras go away; whether he speaks with a distinctive accent (and whether it's the same accent from identity to identity); whether his body language changes from identity to identity; and so on. All these details, once established in your mind, let you roleplay the character with greater authenticity, and allow others to interact with him in a more natural way.

SUGGESTED GAME ELEMENTS

Most *HERO System* genre books have a lengthy section that reviews Skills, Perks, Talents, Powers, Power Modifiers, and Disadvantages,

describing ones that are particularly appropriate, or discussing optional modifications and variants that apply to that genre. *Champions* is different, primarily because it's such a wide-ranging genre that virtually *anything* is possible — so the full *HERO System* character creation rules almost always apply, and apply in just about any way you care to use them. (Additionally, both the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook and other parts of this chapter provide plenty of suggested powers and abilities for superhumans.) So, this section is a fairly short one, containing just a few additional suggestions on various game elements that are particularly common to, or stereotypical of, the superhero genre.

Skills

CHAMPIONS KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

The following KSs are particularly appropriate for *Champions*:

KS: Superheroes or Supervillains: This KS represents knowledge of one class of superhumans (the good guys or the bad guys). It includes what their powers (and sometimes weaknesses) are and how they function, where they congregate, who belongs to what team, which supers are archenemies or staunch allies, and so forth. Unlike KS: Superhuman World, it doesn't include cultural information about superhumanity; KS: Superheroes(villains) is limited primarily to the sort of data law enforcement organizations and governments would track about superhumans.

KS: The Superhuman World: In many campaigns, superhumans form their own unique subculture. They tend to spend social time together (often in special places), have romances only with other superhumans, and so forth. Normal humans often find it difficult to penetrate this world, lacking as they do the "membership card" — superpowers.

Knowledge Skill: The Superhuman World represents knowledge of the superhuman culture. A person with it knows about different superhumans, what their powers (and sometimes weaknesses) are and how they function, where they congregate, who belongs to what team, who various superhumans are romantically involved with, which supers are archenemies or staunch allies, the history of superhumanity, and so forth. It's a common Skill not only among superhumans themselves, but their die-hard fans as well.

KS: Superpowers: A character with this Skill has a special knowledge of the various types of superpowers in the campaign. He may have gained this knowledge through experience, study, or experimentation. He knows what types of superpowers are common and which are rare, the nature or origin of various types of powers, potential ways to counteract some powers, and so on. It's a common Skill for scientists studying superhuman phenomena as well as for supers themselves.

NAVIGATION

The *Dimensional Navigation* subskill, mentioned on page 65 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, is appropriate for *Champions* games featuring dimension-hopping mystics, invaders from Dimension Zeta, and the like.

POWER

The *Power Skill* gets used in more ways in *Champions* campaigns than in games set in just about any other genre, due to the wide variety of powers superhumans possess. Some of the more common forms it takes include: Gadgeteering; Magic; [Special Effect] Powers (the name changes based on the special effect of the character's powers — Fire Powers, Weather Powers, and so on); Speedster Tricks (also called "Speed Stunts"); Strength Tricks (also called "Brick Tricks"); and Stretching Stunts.

Perks

Any of the Perks are suitable for *Champions*, but some are particularly common or appropriate.

FOLLOWER

Particularly in the Golden and Silver Ages, one type of Follower is quite common: the *sidekick*. As discussed on page 10, sidekicks are the "junior" partners of more powerful (and usually better-established) characters. Most are younger than their partners — in fact, it's not uncommon for a sidekick to be a "kid sidekick," a teenager or other young person. The sidekick's costume usually mimics his partner's, though not so closely the two can't be told apart easily.

Typically a sidekick is built as a Follower with 50-100 points less than his partner, and sometimes even fewer points. His powers and abilities usually mirror those of his partner in some way (though this isn't required). However, they usually have fewer Active Points or DCs in their powers — about one-fourth to one-third less. On the other hand, they may apply the powers in slightly different ways, which both distinguishes them and makes them effective in situations where their partner might not be.

FRINGE BENEFIT

The most common Fringe Benefit in many superhero campaigns is Police Powers (either Local, Federal, or International; in a *Galactic Champions* campaign, a GM might even establish *Intergalactic Police Powers* as an 8-point Fringe Benefit). This represents a hero (or superteam) who's "sanctioned" with law enforcement powers by the appropriate authorities. A hero with sanction can function much like a police officer — he can make arrests, testify in court while maintaining his Secret Identity, easily arrange for villains he captures to be detained in jails and prisons, and so on.

Supervillains that rule their own nations should have the *Diplomatic Immunity* and *Head Of State* Fringe Benefits. Alien potentates visiting Earth, diplomats from Atlantis, and extradimensional visi-

tors may all have Diplomatic Immunity as well.

MONEY

Money is a common Perk in many *Champions* campaigns, despite the fact that characters have to pay Character Points for all their equipment and abilities. The “industrialist/millionaire playboy who’s secretly a superhero” is one of the oldest “bits” in the genre, and PCs can represent it with this Perk.

Disadvantages

Any of the Disadvantages are suitable for *Champions*. Some of the Disadvantages that occur frequently in superhero campaigns include:

ACCIDENTAL CHANGE

Popular among werewolves, super-strong characters with no control over their heroic identities, and other such superhumans, Accidental Change isn’t as common as Hunted or Psychological Limitation, but does appear in *Champions* campaigns occasionally.

Quickness Of The Change

In superhero campaigns, it’s often important to know how long it takes for an Accidental Change to go from start to completion. (When you’re sitting in a restaurant with your date and abruptly begin to transform into Kylax the Vampire Prince, the amount of time you have available to make an excuse and dash off to the bathroom is crucial.)

As a default rule for *Champions* campaigns, Accidental Change takes a full Phase to complete. If the character can get out of sight of witnesses before the current Segment is over, no one will see any visible signs of the transformation... though they may be curious about his abrupt departure. The GM may, of course, alter this default time to suit his campaign.

Depending on what the GM establishes as the default time for an Accidental Change, he may wish to alter the value of the Disadvantage — +5 Character Points for every step up the Time Chart (*i.e.*, for every step quicker the change occurs), -5 Character Points for every step down the Time Chart (*i.e.*, for every step slower the change occurs). Of course, there should be some practical limit on this process; an Accidental Change should rarely take less than a Phase or more than 1 Minute.

Optionally, the GM may allow a character an EGO Roll to slow down his transformation. A character who’s changing makes his EGO Roll, and for every full 2 points by which he succeeds, he gets an extra +1 Phase (or Turn, or Minute, as appropriate) before his transformation occurs. The GM may choose to allow an EGO Roll only for characters who accept a -5 Character Point value for the Disadvantage.

Nature Of The Change

When you take the *Accidental Change* Disadvantage for you character, you must decide whether it constitutes the normal identity turning into the super identity, or the super identity turning into the normal identity. In most cases, it’s the normal

identity changing into the superhuman one. (Other variations are possible, such as a character with three or more states of existence — for instance, a person who has a normal human form, a human form with some wolfman powers, and a full wolfman form. See page 211 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, under *Multiform*, for more information.)

Accidental Change is only a Disadvantage when the transformation puts the character at a disadvantage, and you should weigh the chosen circumstances not only against their frequency of occurrence but also the frequency with which they inconvenience the character.

Example: Henry Tweed, mild-mannered CPA, is also Earth-Mover, gigantic strongman. He suffers a physical transformation when turning into his super identity, becoming two feet taller and adding 250 points of muscle and bone. He can normally change at will back and forth between forms, but, when enraged or injured to the point that he sustains BODY damage, Henry also changes involuntarily.

Henry’s player thinks that being enraged and/or sustaining BODY damage are Common circumstances, so he builds the Accidental Change as Frequently (11-), Common, for a Disadvantage value of 15 points. But in reviewing his character sheet, the GM notices that the Henry form doesn’t have all of Earth-Mover’s Psychological Limitations; he is far less likely to get into physical danger, become injured, or be enraged. So he rules that it’s an Uncommon condition, for a Disadvantage value of 10 points.

Changing from a normal form into a super form typically endangers a character’s Secret Identity, though it may pose some threat to nearby persons as well. The alternate use of this Disadvantage, changing from a super form to a normal form, typically threatens both a character’s Secret Identity and his life — it’s very dangerous for a character to be flying along with an Abrams tank in his hands and suddenly begin to transform into a powerless soda jerk. Purchase of a super-to-normal Accidental Change is separate from a normal-to-super Accidental Change, and is worth the same amount of points as the more common form of the Disadvantage. A character could theoretically have two *Accidental Change* Disadvantages, one in each direction, if the GM permits.

AGE

The Age Disadvantage is inappropriate for most *Champions* PCs — after all, even the ones who *look* aged don’t really act that way, or suffer any significant impairment of their capabilities. A superhero character should only be allowed to take Age if physical frailty is an important part of the character’s concept. Age becomes somewhat more appropriate when a superhero is built with Multiform, or some similar power construction, with the idea being that he is an aged (or too young) character in his Secret Identity and a superhuman in

his superheroic identity. If nothing else, Age brings the character in this situation one slight advantage: who would believe that kindly old Uncle Joe is also studly young Captain Dimple?

DEPENDENCE

The use and effects of Dependence as set out in the *HERO System 5th Edition* rules apply as written to most superhero campaigns. Aquatic heroes who can only breathe and remain strong out of water for a few hours at most, “regional guardian” superhumans who can’t leave particular areas of the world without suffering debilitating weakness, and powered armor heroes who need a constant supply of spare parts and maintenance work are all classic examples of how Dependence works in this genre.

DEPENDENT NON-PLAYER CHARACTER

The following types of DNPCs occur frequently in the comics, and thus in *Champions* campaigns as well:

The Boss: If the character has a job, his boss may somehow get involved in his adventures from time to time. Boss DNPCs are usually irascible, temperamental, and annoying, and often have an intense dislike for the character’s costumed identity. The Boss is usually a Normal, possibly has a useful noncombat position or Skills, and normally is unaware of the character’s costumed identity.

The Frail Relative: The character has a loved one who’s old and/or sickly. He can’t tell his relative about his costumed identity, because the shock could cause the relative to suffer a heart attack. So, the hero has to sneak around and go to great lengths to maintain his Secret Identity... and occasionally rescue his relative from maniacal supervillains, collapsing buildings, and what have you.

The Frail Relative is typically Incompetent, has no useful abilities (other than home cooking skills, perhaps!), and is unaware of the character’s superhero identity.

The Love Interest: The Love Interest differs from the Significant Other (see below) in that he or she has no existing romantic relationship with the hero. Instead, the hero simply has strong feelings for him or her, but hasn’t expressed them yet (or perhaps has expressed them and been rejected). In either case, the character has the dilemma of trying to attract the Love Interest’s attention even though his costumed identity (to which the Love Interest is often attracted to some degree) is more impressive, braver, and so on. It doesn’t help matters that the character often “runs away” or “disappears” in dangerous situations so he can change into costume and protect the Love Interest....

A Love Interest is typically Normal (though possibly Slightly Less Powerful than the PC), may have a useful noncombat position or Skills, and is unaware of the character’s superhero identity.

The Nosy Coworker: A particularly common DNPC for characters who are reporters or news photographers in their Secret Identities, the Nosy Coworker is either actively trying to find out that the character is really MegaMan, or through his nosiness

manages to stumble into trouble again and again (or both!). In either case, the hero constantly has to find ways to trick the Nosy Coworker into believing his guesses about the hero are wrong, rescue him from thugs and natural disasters, and so on.

A Nosy Coworker is typically Normal (though possibly Slightly Less Powerful than the PC), may have a useful noncombat position or Skills, and is unaware of the character’s superhero identity.

The Significant Other: The Significant Other — a boyfriend or girlfriend, in other words — differs from the Love Interest in that he or she is involved in a romantic relationship with the player character’s Secret Identity. In some cases, the Significant Other actively dislikes the character’s superhero identity; in others the S.O. seems at least slightly attracted to the costumed persona, meaning the character has to compete with himself for his or her affections!

A Significant Other is typically Normal (though possibly Slightly Less Powerful than the PC), may have a useful noncombat position or Skills, and is unaware of the character’s superhero identity.

Occasionally the Significant Other mutates into the Spouse following a strange arcane ceremony that typically takes place in a church or cathedral. Unlike an S.O., a Spouse usually *is* aware of the character’s superhero identity — after all, since the character and his Spouse live together, it becomes mighty difficult to hide the six MegaMan costumes in the closet, the secret crimefighting lab in the basement, or the supervillain trophy collection tucked away in the cupboard. The Spouse may support the character’s superheroing, or dislike it, but in either case he or she worries incessantly about the danger the character puts himself in on a regular basis.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

In a genre where most characters wear costumes that help them stand out in a crowd, you have to go to some extra effort to justify taking Distinctive Features. Distinctive Features are most appropriate when:

- They cause NPCs to react badly to the character, and by extension to the character’s allies and teammates (for example, when the character is a big, scary monster, hated by the public and small children even if he lives an exemplary superhero life)
- They inconvenience the character both in super identity and in Secret Identity (this, for instance, is where a bad body odor Distinctive Feature makes sense)

Although in some genres a uniform constitutes an “Easily Concealed” Distinctive Feature, in *Champions*, a superhero costume ordinarily should not be the basis of a *Distinctive Features* Disadvantage (except for the minions of master villains and villainous agencies, who are easily identified as targets for superhero attack by their colorful uniforms). Distinctive Features should be some intrinsic part of the character’s being.

Campaigns featuring characters who are mutants often require such characters to take the Distinctive Feature *Mutant* (Not Concealable, Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses; 10 points). That way, villains and government agents with special scanners can identify the character as a mutant. In games focusing on the “mutant hysteria” element (see page 17), the value of the Disadvantage might rise to 15 points if the reaction to the feature is more intense.

ENRAGED/BERSERK

Enraged/Berserk is fairly common in the superhero genre. Characters who are huge, nearly mindless brutes, afflicted with some sorts of supernatural curse, or so alien that normal terrestrial behavior can send them into attack frenzies all have precedent in the comics.

Other types of Enraged/Berserk are appropriate, based not on a character’s ferocity or mindlessness, but his inability to control his actions in certain circumstances. For example, a robot character might Berserk when hit by electrical attacks. This doesn’t represent ferocity on the character’s part; the Berserk is actually nothing more than a malfunction of his electrical system. Similarly, an alien might be Enraged or Berserk when it accidentally consumes specific chemicals that are rare in its normal diet but common on Earth (in essence, the Disadvantage represents a sort of “allergic reaction” in this case).

The *Enraged/Berserk* Disadvantage makes a character more likely to be hated and feared by the public, and Hunted by the authorities. If a PC has it, it had best show up in Uncommon Circumstances and on a low (8-) roll, and it’s also best if his teammates know about it and are trained in techniques to restrain him.

HUNTED

The following are some examples of classic Hunteds in the superhero genre:

Archenemies: Many superheroes have a single foe who best represents all they strive against, or for whom they have the deepest hatred and fear (and vice-versa). Typically an archenemy is an As Powerful Hunted, since that makes for the best match and most tightly-contested, drawn-out struggle between the two characters, but a few are More Powerful (especially if they’re also master villains). Archenemies, being individuals, don’t usually have Non-combat Influence (NCI) (though it is possible), and aren’t normally confined to a Limited Geographical Area.

Evil foreign dictators: Many comic book settings feature one or more fictitious (or real) nations ruled by a ruthless dictator against whom the PCs strive from time to time — and who returns the favor by sending minions after them to seek revenge. In some cases the evil foreign dictator may even be a superhuman himself. Most evil foreign dictators are More Powerful than the supers they hunt, since while they’re not able to stand up to a PC in single combat, they have vast economic, military, and diplomatic resources to call upon in their quest to make the PC’s life miserable. For the same reasons, they also have NCI. On the other hand, most are also restricted to a Limited Geographical Area, though they do sometimes send out squads of assassins or mercenary supervillains to take on the PC on his home turf.

Government conspiracies: Shadowy cabals of powerful government figures sometimes find a reason to go after a superhero (or heroes). They may believe that all superhumans represent a threat to national security, or they may want to co-opt the PCs to serve in the conspiracy’s private army, or they may think the PCs pose some danger to the conspiracy itself and so choose to eliminate them. A government conspiracy usually counts as an As Powerful Hunted (its power is balanced by its need to maintain secrecy); it has NCI, and usually doesn’t suffer from a geographical restriction.

Law enforcement agencies: Superheroes who somehow find themselves on the wrong side of the law may end up Hunted by the police department, the FBI, the DEA, or even fictional law enforcement organizations like the Champions Universe’s UNTIL and PRIMUS. Although most individual officers are markedly less powerful than your typical four-color *Champions* superhero, almost any law enforcement organization counts as a More Powerful Hunted because of the investigative, paramilitary, and public relations resources it can bring to bear against the PCs. A character who scoffs at the cops as a Hunted may quickly find them digging into, uncovering, and revealing his Secret Identity, freezing his assets, and so forth. Law enforcement organizations have NCI; while they are nominally limited to the geographical area in



which they have jurisdiction, they can call on other law enforcement organizations for aid, effectively giving them almost unlimited reach in many circumstances.

Master villains: Master villains — major super-criminals capable of threatening the world — make dangerous Hunters. They're More Powerful than any given hero (and sometimes even than his entire superteam!), and thanks to their far-flung webs of criminal influence and power usually have NCI. They make dangerous Hunters, for they aren't hobbled by the bureaucratic, diplomatic, and legal restrictions that often govern the police or the like — and they have power that should scare even the most jaded superhero.

Villainous agencies: Many *Champions* campaigns feature large criminal organizations whose members wear uniforms not that different from superhumans' costumes. These villainous agencies often Hunt superheroes, and can pose a major threat to them. While no one agent is as powerful as a PC, the organization as a whole is usually More Powerful, and typically has NCI because of its connections to corrupt politicians and businessmen, the illicit wealth it can throw around, and so on. It may also have police-like investigative resources, making it an even greater threat. (See page 165 for more about villainous agencies.)

PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITATION

The following Psychological Limitations all occur frequently in the comics, and so are perfectly appropriate for *Champions* superheroes:

Broadcasts Intentions In Combat (Common, Strong; 15 points): More a favorite of certain villains than of heroes, this Psychological Limitation signifies a character who can't resist telling his victims what he's about to do: "Tremble in fear, MegaMan, as I blast you with my Nucleonic Bolt!" Unless the character can make an EGO Roll to resist doing this, his opponents always know when they should Abort to a Dodge, and may even in some cases get DCV bonuses against the character's attacks, at the GM's option.

Code Of The Hero (Very Common, Strong; 20 points): The "code of the hero" refers to the collection of personality traits that signify a character who's molded in the traditional four-color superhero fashion. He always fights fairly. He treats everyone, particularly women and authority figures, with respect, and always keeps his promises. He does his best to fulfill any request for help made to him, even if it's just to rescue a kitten trapped in a tree. He doesn't hesitate to risk his life to stop crime, save disaster victims, thwart supervillains' schemes, rescue hostages, and perform other heroic actions.

This Psychological Limitation sometimes goes by different names, but they all mean essentially the same thing. Other ways of referring to the Code Of The Hero include *True-Blue Hero*; *Fearlessly Heroic* — *Risks His Life In Even Obviously Lethal Situations*; *Four-Color Hero*; and simply *Heroic*.

Code Versus Killing (Common, Total; 20 points): A character with this Psychological Limitation refuses to kill others, even in the heat of battle, and takes affirmative steps to ensure that he's not using lethal levels of force against his foes. For example, when first fighting a strange foe, even often starts out using attacks with fewer DCs than his maximum, so that he won't accidentally hit his opponent with dangerous force before he knows how much injury his opponent can withstand.

Honorable (Common, Total; 20 points): Honorable is similar to Code Of The Hero in many ways, but it's more personal. A hero with Honorable isn't necessarily driven to fight crime in a certain way, or act a certain way towards others, but to live up to a personal code of honorable behavior. The player should specify exactly what his character's personal code of honor entails; typically Honorable characters are scrupulous about keeping their word after they give it, are reluctant to lie or act in a deceptive fashion, don't take advantage of situations, are loyal to one or more authority figures, and the like.

Hunting (Specific Character) (Frequency varies, Strong): This is the flipside of the *Hunted* Disadvantage; in cases of a personal quest for vengeance or justice, it is the Disadvantage of the character doing the Hunting. The character is driven to persecute or prosecute another, and may do so tirelessly and relentlessly, even at the cost of other personal goals and relationships.

Typically the Frequency of a *Hunting* Psychological Limitation depends on the target's *Hunted* roll: an 8- is an Uncommon Psychological Limitation for the character; an 11- is Common; and a 14- is Very Common.

Note, however, that a character can choose a villain as his *Hunted* without the villain having a corresponding *Psychological Limitation: Hunting* in his list of Disadvantages. The villain may have the Disadvantage without getting any points for it, delegate a lot of the hard work to minions, or the like.

Needs To Prove Self (Very Common, Strong; 20 points): A character with this Psychological Limitation feels he must make up for some earlier mistake or other perceived inadequacy by doing something dramatically successful or important. The player should work with the GM to decide exactly what the earlier failure or inadequacy was, and exactly how it influences the character's behavior at present.

Noblesse Oblige (Common, Strong; 15 points): Due to his status in society — and, typically, his wealth — the character feels he has an obligation to help those less fortunate than himself. Though it's often tinged with touches of condescension, arrogance, or even racism, this is still at heart a worthy motivation for a hero (and one that often betokens a complex personality and many story hooks for the GM to use).

Novice Hero (Very Common, Strong; 20 points): This Disadvantage is appropriate for a character who's very new to superheroing. Since he hasn't had any formal training or mentoring, he's prone

to making mistakes — he employs bad combat tactics, accidentally blurts out a teammate's real first name, and so forth. Any time the GM perceives the character doing something that suggests experience or superhero worldliness, he should ask the player, "With your *Novice Hero* Disadvantage, would you really be doing that?" If the player thinks the answer is "Yes," the GM should have the character make an EGO roll at a minimum -4 penalty. Obviously, this is a Disadvantage the character should buy off with Experience Points (or, with the GM's permission, replace with another Psychological Limitation), since no hero remains a novice forever.

Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate; 15 points): It's hard not to gain an overweening sense of confidence when one has the strength to juggle Mack trucks, the ability to fly at hundreds of miles an hour, or the power to read minds. A superhero with this Psychological Limitation is likely to bite off more than he can chew in a lot of situations.

Protective Of Innocents (Very Common, Strong; 20 points): A superhero with this Psychological Limitation goes out of his way to protect innocent people from harm. If it's a choice between pursuing a fleeing supervillain and saving a troop of Girl Scouts from the truck that villain just threw at them, the hero will make sure the girls are safe every time.

Showoff (Very Common, Strong; 20 points): A superhero with this Psychological Limitation is a compulsive extrovert who takes every opportunity to demonstrate his skills or powers, especially the flashy ones. Doing so costs the hero time (he has to be dragged away from crowds), causes him to sustain extra damage (the GM can give him PER Roll penalties to reduce his chance to see incoming attacks or concealed enemies while he's showing off), annoys NPCs who might otherwise have been helpful, focuses supervillain attention on the character, and so on.

SOCIAL LIMITATION

The *Secret Identity* Social Limitation, as discussed on page 48, is extremely common in the superhero genre, whether it's a Golden Age story, a gritty modern-day crimefighting drama, or anything in between. A few heroes have Public Identity (*HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 338 sidebar) instead, and some have neither (meaning an NPC who works at it can uncover the hero's identity, but it's not well-known to the public in general).

Other than Secret Identity, no Social Limitation is particularly common in the typical *Champions* campaign. Heroes who work for the government, or who have official sanction, may be Subject To Orders. More than one hero (or villain) has a Harmful Secret besides his true identity.

SUSCEPTIBILITY

You may want to check with the GM to see if his game uses the optional "contact with substance" rules for Susceptibility, or the rules for applying effects other than damage, both described on page 158. Some Susceptibilities (not using those rules) common to the superhero genre include:

Counter-Power: A character with powers associated with a particular element, substance, or the like may experience pain when exposed to his powers' "opposite" — a fire-based character may be Susceptible to Ice/Cold Powers, a light-using character may be Susceptible to Darkness Powers, a character with green energy powers may take damage from yellow energy powers, and so on. The commonality of a counter-power varies; you can check the Vulnerabilities Frequencies Table on page 159 for some guidelines, but ultimately the GM has the final say. Counter-power Susceptibilities usually take the "effect is instant" modifier, but in the case of Constant Powers, the effect may linger instead.

Sensory Overload: A character with extensive or sensitive Sensory Powers may suffer harm when he encounters intense sensory input (including Flashes) — loud noises or bright lights cause him searing pain (though perhaps only for a few seconds, until his senses adjust). In most campaigns, intense sensory input is a Very Common condition, and the effect is instant.

Strange Alien Mineral: A character whose powers result from his alien physiognomy, or who gets his powers from weird alien substances, may be Susceptible to bits of his home planet (or the planet from which his powers derived). Most strange alien minerals are Uncommon, but when they do show up, the effects are severe (2d6 or 3d6) and long-lasting (every Segment or every Phase).

Teleportation: A character who can Teleport, or who has an odd body structure, may take damage when *other* people Teleport him — it wreaks havoc with his physical form. In most campaigns, being Teleported is an Uncommon condition, and the effect is instant.

Of course, one question the GM must consider is: how do NPCs (villains or otherwise) find out about the Susceptibility? If the character keeps it such a well-guarded secret that no one ever uses it against him, it's not much of a Disadvantage, so he should receive fewer points for it (perhaps none). The Susceptibility should either be something that at least a few NPCs can deduce or guess (maybe because of the nature of the character's powers), or something that's revealed (to a reasonably significant degree) early in the campaign.

SUPERHERO ARCHETYPES



In the more than sixty years since the first costumed superheroes began appearing in comic books, many standard superhero types have developed, and *Champions* players often plan to play characters similar to their favorite types. This section talks about many of those types and how to construct them with the *HERO System* rules.

In addition, on page 81 you'll find a Quick Superhuman Generator, a set of character-building components a player or GM can use to construct a character in just a few minutes. It's arranged by archetype and includes many example superpowers.

The information about each of the following Archetypes discusses the following character traits:

Skills. Most superhero archetypes have Skills related to the type of super they are. A Weaponmaster, for instance, can probably build weapons, while a Mentalist is more likely than most characters to be acquainted with the field of parapsychology.

Perks and Talents. Not all superheroes possess these little personal advantages, but some do relate to certain superhero archetypes.

Powers. Naturally, no discussion of superhero archetypes can really cover the topic thoroughly until the subject of superpowers is included.

Disadvantages. Finally, some Disadvantages do lend themselves to specific superhero archetypes. For instance, if a superhero is super-strong, there could be a material or methodology to make him temporarily weak... and you can be sure the bad guys will eventually discover and exploit it.

BRICK

A *Brick* is a superhuman whose main attributes are super-strength and resistance to damage. One of the earliest costumed superheroes, Superman, is one classic image of the Brick, and his many imitators set the stage for the Brick becoming a superhero archetype: an individual who can pick up naval vessels, leap great distances or fly, bounce projectiles (bullets, explosive shells, sometimes powerful missiles) off his skin, and so forth.

With the earliest comic book Bricks, all these powers were intrinsic to the character, but later Bricks introduced the notion of someone who was super-powered only when he needed to be and spent the rest of his time in a physically normal Secret Identity — the original Captain Marvel (he of the magic word “Shazam!” which transformed him back and forth between his super form and the body of unpowered teenager Billy Batson) was an early example of this type. The Hulk, who transforms back to his “puny

Banner” normal human form when he calms down, is another classic embodiment of this concept.

The Brick is probably the most popular archetype. Because of his versatility and durability, he's often the cornerstone of a superhero team, though not necessarily its leader. Because the Brick is thought of as a normal person who is just more, in some sense, than normal people, Bricks are often looked on by normal people as one of their own, and are expected to be decent, comparatively well-adjusted heroes; when they turn out not to be, they are even more feared than many other archetypes (and with good reason, thanks to their almost unparalleled ability to wreak havoc and cause property damage).

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Bricks aren't often expected to have a specific set of Skills. This doesn't mean bricks are necessarily unskilled or stupid, just that there's no consistent set of Skills they as a group possess. (Some Bricks, particularly those who act as muscle for supervillains, do tend to be unskilled or uneducated, which contributes to the brick-as-simpleton stereotype.)

Bricks are often good in combat (they buy Combat Skill Levels with HTH Combat). Few take Martial Arts to improve their fighting ability, though some low-level bricks (those with STR scores of 40 or less) choose to do so, and a high-STR brick who supplements his fighting skills with Martial Maneuvers that do no extra damage but grant greater fighting versatility can be frightening in a scrap. Some Bricks take a *Strength Tricks* Power Skill to simulate their ability to occasionally pull such stunts as squeezing diamonds out of coal with their super-strong hands (as usual, if a character wants to use a “trick” like this frequently, he should pay Character Points for it).

Bricks are among the flashiest and best-regarded of supers, so it's not unknown for them to have the *Local Police Powers* Fringe Benefit (representing their excellent relationship with local authorities) and the *Reputation* Perk.

No Talents are specifically better-suited to Bricks than to other supers.

POWERS

Obviously, the most important power to a Brick is high STR. A character is most likely to be regarded as a Brick if he has a STR of 40 or more. Typically a Brick's STR is as high as the campaign standards allow (e.g., STR 60 in a game with a 12 DC cap on Attack Powers — remember, STR's function in the game is mostly as an Attack Power).

Many other powers are appropriate to the Brick. Armor or Damage Resistance allows him to duke it out with villains armed with Killing Attacks. Flight allows him to get to the scene of the action.

POSSIBLE BRICK SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain brick powers include:

- Exposure to radiation super-energizes all of the character's cells, granting him prodigious physical powers.
- The character builds a suit of powered armor that enhances his STR and resilience.
- A god of strength or war (Hercules, Thor, Huitzilopochtli...) imbues the character with phenomenal might.
- The character is an alien (or has alien blood) and is super-strong on Earth (even though he's just an ordinary person back home).

EXAMPLE BRICK POWERS

Shockwave: The Brick slams his fists into the ground with such force that he creates a small, but high-powered, seismic shockwave around him.

Explosion for up to 60 STR, Hole In The Middle (the one hex the brick is standing in when he uses the power; +¼) (45 Active Points); Only Affects Targets On The Ground (-¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Only Does Knockdown, Not Knockback (-0). Total cost: 26 points.

The Big Wrap-Up: The Brick uses available materials — I-beams, a chain-link fence, even rolled-up asphalt — to bind and confine a foe. The effectiveness of this tactic depends largely

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on the strength of the materials used. As a useful side effect, the Brick can also employ this Entangle to create walls of whatever scrap materials happen to be lying around.

Entangle 6d6, up to 6 DEF (60 Active Points); OIF (appropriate materials of opportunity; -½), No Range (-½), Extra Time (at least a Full Phase, and often longer, depending on how long it takes to get the materials; -½), Defense Depends On Materials Used (-½). Total cost: 20 points.

Optionally, you can apply the *Entangle Has 1 BODY* Limitation, representing the fact that anyone who loosens the materials a little can wiggle out of the Entangle easily.

Thunderclap: The Brick claps his hands together so forcefully that the resulting sound deafens anyone nearby.

Hearing Group Flash 8d6, Explosion (-1d6/3"; +1), Hole In The Middle (the one hex the brick is standing in when he uses the power; +¼), Does Knockback (+¼) (60 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 40 points.

The Finger Of Unconsciousness: The Brick flicks a foe in the head with his index finger, knocking him out without inflicting any serious harm. But if the Brick miscalculates, the target takes the Brick's full STR damage (not multiplied by Hit Location modifiers).

EB 6d6, NND (defense is Lack Of Weakness on defenses covering the head, or any innate rPD protecting the head; +1) (60 Active Points); No Range (-½), Requires A Strength Tricks Roll (-½), Side Effects (if roll is failed, opponent takes character's full STR damage; -¼). Total Cost: 27 points.

Enhanced Senses allow him to detect danger at a distance. Anything else a player can reasonably justify as a reflection of a super-strong body — Life Support (super-strong lungs), Telescopic for the Sight Group (super-strong eye muscles), and the like — could qualify as a proper power for a Brick.

Beyond these standard choices, it is also appropriate to have powers that simulate really unusual uses of superhuman Strength. For instance, an Energy Blast with the *Explosion* and *Personal Immunity* Advantages and the *No Range* Limitation simulates the ability of some supers to hit the ground and cause a minor earthquake (see sidebar).

Sample Brick-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Brute Strength, Density, Growth, and Strength Projector sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

For Bricks that have alternate forms (such as the Hulk and Captain Marvel), *Accidental Change* makes for an interesting Disadvantage. The character's efforts not to have his Secret Identity revealed by an impromptu change of identity, or his efforts to hold back the transformation until innocents can get to safety, make for some great (and often humorous) scenes.

Enraged/Berserk is a fairly common Disadvantage among Bricks, particularly those with relatively low intelligence. *Berserk In Combat* is a favorite of many villainous Bricks — though not necessarily of their allies.

Other than that, few Disadvantages are specifically suited to Bricks, but one such is:

Physical Limitation: Doesn't Know Own Strength (Frequently, Slightly; 10 points). When the character interacts with delicate or fragile items — or people — the GM occasionally calls on him to make a DEX Roll. (The GM may choose to make the roll for the player without informing him of the fact, the better to surprise him with possible consequences.) On a failed roll, the character accidentally exerts his Casual STR on whatever he's holding, possibly damaging it.



AD ESCHESNE
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ENERGY PROJECTOR

An *Energy Projector* is a super whose primary expression of superpower is the use of high-powered energy at range. An Energy Projector (also called a “Blaster”) might shoot lasers from his eyes, flamethrower-style fire from his fingertips, plasma from his mouth, beams of ice/cold from his hand, or any other type of power from any appropriate part of his body.

Energy Projectors are perhaps even more spectacular in their use of powers than Bricks, though they don't have quite the Everyman appeal Bricks do. On the other hand, Energy Projectors are vital to a superteam, since they provide “artillery support” and allow the team to make attacks at great ranges.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

It helps Energy Projectors to have Combat Skill Levels with their attacks and Range Skill Levels to diminish the effects of the Range Modifier. Similarly, the Talent *Absolute Range Sense* is very apt for Energy Projectors.

POWERS

Energy Projectors tend to have Energy Blast and/or Killing Attack (Ranged) powers, usually bought as a Multipower so they can have different slots reflect the varying ways they apply their powers (one slot is a full-power EB, several others are EBs with various Advantages, and so on). But that's far from the limit of their abilities. They can project or manipulate energy in such a way to propel the character (Flight, Faster-Than-Light Travel), to open holes in reality (Teleportation, Extra-Dimensional Movement), to stand as a barrier between the hero and incoming damage (Force Field, Force Wall), to hold an atmosphere around the hero (Life Support), to move objects at range (Telekinesis), and even to affect the environment (Change Environment, weather-based Telekinesis and Darkness, and so on).

Some Energy Projectors, rather than just using or controlling energy, are actually *made of* energy — they have bodies of pure light, plasma, or the like. Such characters (and even some “normal” Energy Projectors) may have energy-based powers like Absorption (the character “feeds” on incoming energy), Energy Damage Reduction, or Desolidification.

Since so many of their powers are designed to operate at Range, it's often helpful for an Energy Projector to have Enhanced Senses — particularly since several Enhanced Senses can be defined as involving energy emissions (Radar and Active Sonar, for instance).

Sample Energy Projector-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Mega-Blast, Modulated Blast, Sniper Blast, Trick Ammo Specialist, and Very Big Gun Wielder sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

Energy Projectors tend to interact with energy sources in odd ways, and this may give rise to Disadvantages. Such a character might take extra damage (as a Vulnerability) from an energy type thematically opposed to the one he manifests, or may even take extra damage from the same type of energy he uses. An Energy Projector composed of or suffused with pure energy may suffer harm (Susceptibility or Vulnerability) when physical objects (especially metal ones, like bullets and knives) enter his body and significantly disrupt its energy matrix.

POSSIBLE ENERGY PROJECTOR SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Energy Projector powers include:

- The character is doused with a mysterious chemical, and somehow gains energy powers thereby (for example, if soaked in a super-fuel, he develops fire powers).
- The character's body takes in and processes solar energy, allowing him to manipulate it in various ways.
- The character taps the energy of the atoms in his body and can use it for various effects.
- A bizarre accident involving enormous amounts of electricity grants the character energy powers instead of simply frying him.

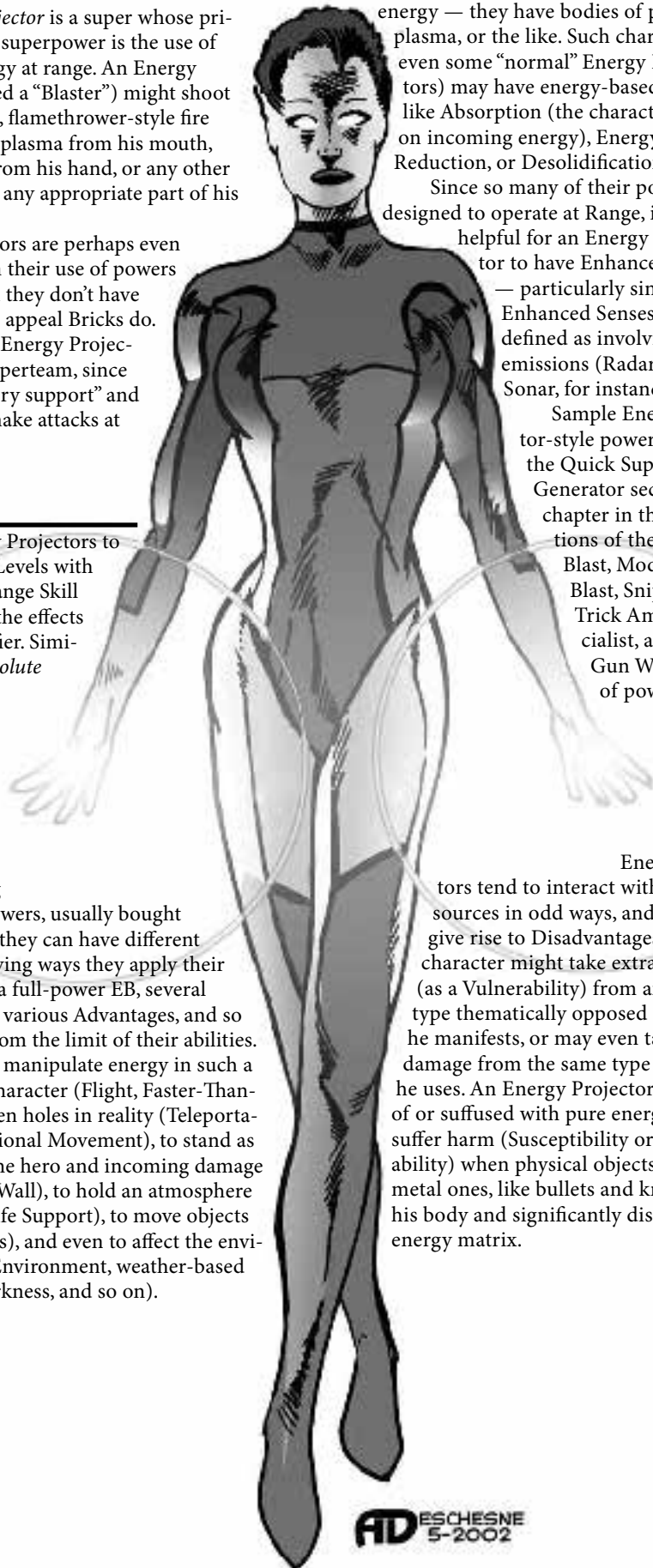
EXAMPLE ENERGY PROJECTOR POWERS

Fire Blast: RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½). Total cost: 45 points.

Sonic Blast: Energy Blast 9d6 (total cost: 45 points) **plus** Hearing Group Flash 5d6, Linked (-½) (total cost: 10 points). Total cost: 55 points.

Radiation Blast: Energy Blast 9d6 (total cost: 45 points) **plus** Drain CON 1d6, Ranged (+½) (15 Active Points); Linked (-½) (total cost: 10 points). Total cost: 55 points.

Magnetic Manipulation: Telekinesis (30 STR) (45 Active Points); Only Versus Ferrous Metals (-½). Total cost: 30 points.



POSSIBLE GADGETEER SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Gadgeteer powers include:

- The character is an incredibly learned and gifted scientist/engineer/inventor.
- The character is a mutant with an instinctive grasp of how technology works, though he's never studied the subject.
- The character stumbled into an arsenal of gadgets built by someone else; he can't build new ones, but has so many mix-and-match possibilities with the components available to him that he's not very limited by that lack.
- The character can't build gadgets himself, but has the support of a patron who can.

EXAMPLE GADGETEER POWERS

Gravity Globes: These tiny flying spheres (they come in groups of four) surround a target and generate a gravitic field that prevents him from moving.

Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF, Indirect (+¾) (70 Active Points); OIF (difficult to grasp spheres; -½), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 28 points.

Pogo-Boots: These boots have electronically-augmented springs, allowing the wearer to leap prodigious distances.

Leaping +20" (20 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 13 points.

Power Helmet: This device provides a gadgeteer with a variety of minor but useful sensory and defensive powers. Other devices may also be installed.

Infrared Perception (Sight Group), Ultra-

GADGETEER

This character builds high technology devices to act as superpowers. Instead of having natural laser-emission powers, he builds a laser gun; instead of having innate powers of flight, he constructs an antigravity device. Of course, a character who uses gadgets doesn't necessarily have to invent them himself — he might hire someone to make them for him, steal them from a criminal gadgeteer, or find them abandoned in an alley. The following advice applies solely to characters who both invent and use their own devices.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

A Gadgeteer character should have a wide selection of Skills related to his chosen "profession," including Computer Programming, Demolitions, Electronics, Inventor, Mechanics, and Systems Operation. In particular, he should have one or more Science Skills for the specific fields his powers relate to. For instance, if he uses poison darts, he would have SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology, SS: Botany, and/or SS: Biology. If he creates energy-emission powers, he might have SS: Physics. If he climbs into a large robot that moves and attacks, he would have SS: Robotics, SS: Mechanical Engineering, and SS: Cybernetics.

Take a look at the Technician Set of Skills under the Quick Superhuman Generator section for examples of Skills appropriate for Gadgeteers.

POWERS

There really is no limit or focus to the type of powers a Gadgeteer can possess (except those deriving from any GM-imposed campaign restrictions on the extent and nature of super-science; see page

32). In fact, Gadgeteers often imitate other archetypes of super-heroes, with the sole difference being that their abilities are based on gadgets rather than innate powers. Multipowers and Variable Power Pools are extremely appropriate power structures for a Gadgeteer.

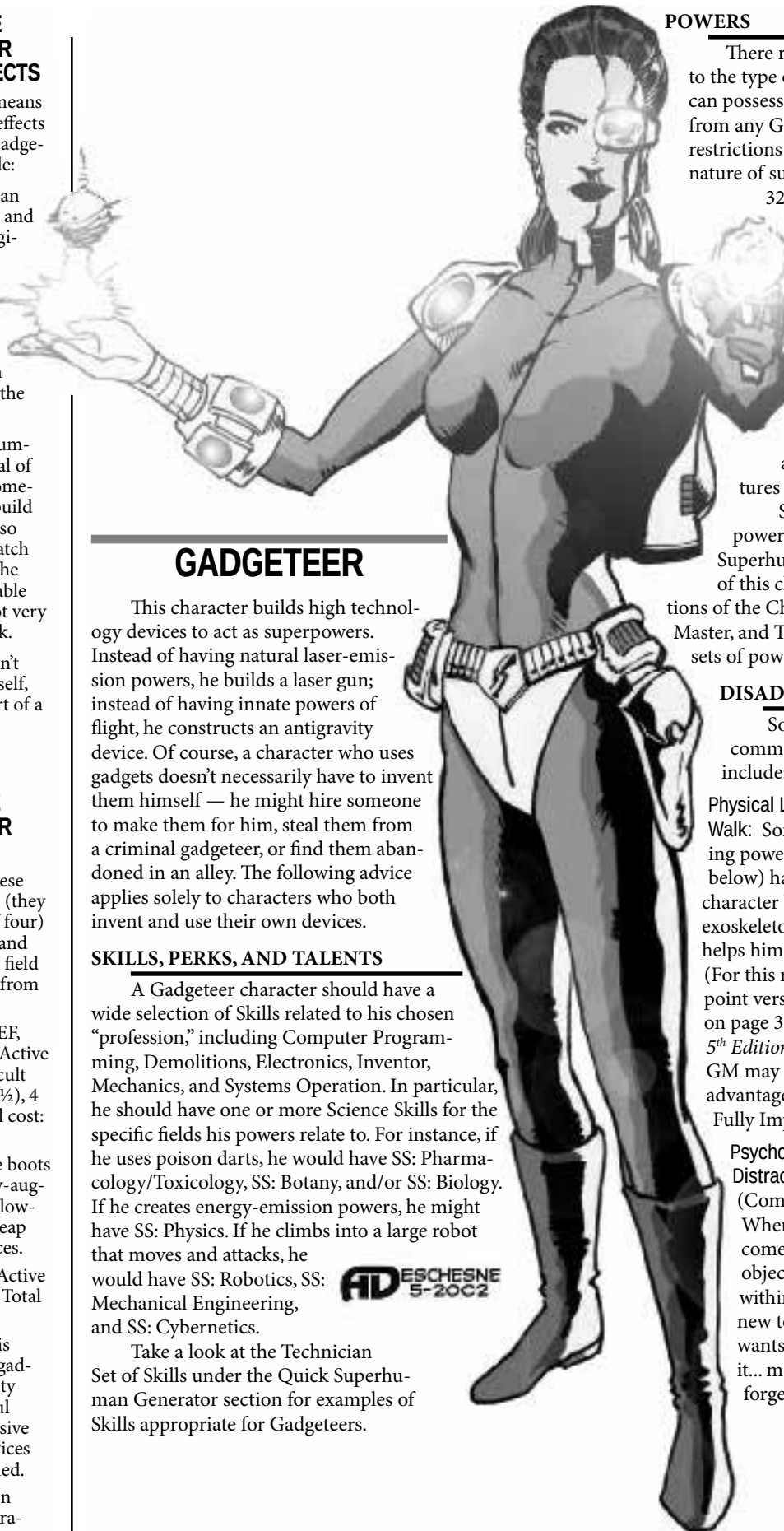
Sample Gadgeteer-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Checklist Hero, Mystic Master, and Trick Ammo Specialist sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

Some Disadvantages common to Gadgeteers include:

Physical Limitation: Unable To Walk: Some gadgeteers (including powered armor heroes; see below) have this problem. The character builds a hover-chair, exoskeleton, or suit of armor that helps him overcome this disability. (For this reason, unlike the 20-point version of this Disadvantage on page 336 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook, the GM may want to allow this Disadvantage only as Infrequently, Fully Impairing [15 points].)

Psychological Limitation: Easily Distracted By Scientific Matters (Common, Strong; 15 points): Whenever the character comes across any scientific object, detail, or technique within his field of interest but new to him, he automatically wants to explore or investigate it... meaning he sometimes forgets his primary goal.



MARTIAL ARTIST

This character is normally at a human or slightly-above-human level of physical performance, but augments his abilities with extensive training in formal or informal martial arts. He isn't necessarily best-known for his fighting skills; he may be thought of foremost as an investigator or an acrobat, for instance.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

In addition to Martial Arts and related Combat Skill Levels, a Martial Artist usually has Skills related to his martial training. He may have Knowledge Skills pertaining to strange arts, foreign lands, or martial-arts subcultures. He may speak Languages related to the cultures that developed his fighting styles.

Martial Artists often have physical Skills that are natural offshoots and consequences of their training. Acrobatics, Breakfall, Climbing, Concealment, Contortionist, Fast Draw, Shadowing, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, and Weapon Familiarity are all frequent choices. If the character also has an investigative bent, Bugging, Lockpicking, and Security Systems are also good possibilities.

See the Dedicated Fighter, Investigator, Patriot, Playboy, and Tactician Sets in the Quick Superhuman Generator section for appropriate Skill examples for Martial Artists.

POWERS

Martial Artists often have weapons or gadgets — not so many as the Gadgeteer, of course, and Martial Artists are not always the designers or builders of the gadgets they use. Martial Artist gadgets tend to be oriented toward improving combat (some will be melee weapons or thrown weapons, armor, and so on) or mobility (swinglines, cling-grips).

Some Martial Artists emphasize the mystic or magical aspect of their powers. They buy many *chi*-based powers, develop secret mystic abilities as part of their training, or even study full-blown Oriental sorcery.

Sample Martial Artist-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Grasshopper, Knight, Sensei, and Super-Boxer sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

Martial Artists are often very focused characters — the dedication they need to train up to a superhero level of performance is clear evidence of this. So a couple of appropriate Disadvantages for them include:

Psy-

chological Limitation: Obsessive (Common, Strong; 15 points): The character, once he decides on a goal, refuses to give up on it.

Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong; 10 points): The character is determined to punish those whom he believes deserve punishment.

Martial Artists also undergo rigorous physical conditioning that makes them very strong in some ways but can weaken them in others, such as:

Susceptibility: Missing With (Specific Attack) (takes 3d6 instantly; Common; 20 points): The character's preferred attack requires very exacting biomechanics. When the character misses with the attack, he sustains physical harm. A character should only have this Disadvantage if the GM is sure the character will use the attack frequently (several times per combat).

Susceptibility: Poisons And Gases (takes 1d6 per Phase; Common; 10 points): The character's system is unusually delicate; whenever an invasive atmosphere or substance enters his lungs or a toxic substance enters his bloodstream, he begins to suffer damage. Alternately, this may result because the character's system functions so efficiently, due to his high level of physical conditioning, that poisons and gases spread throughout it quickly.

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violet Perception (Sight Group), +6 versus Range for Sight Group, Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points), Hearing Group Flash Defense (8 points) (total of 37 points); all OIF (-½). Total cost: 25 points.

Universal Defense Field Belt: This belt creates a broad-spectrum force field that offers protection against most forms of attack.

Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Sight Group Flash Defense/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (75 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 50 points.

POSSIBLE MARTIAL ARTIST SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Martial Artist powers include:

- The character has spent years at an ancient monastery hidden deep in the Himalayas studying a powerful fighting style long thought forever lost.
- The character is a mutant with a natural gift for or grasp of hand-to-hand combat.
- The character is a "living cartoon" escaped from an anime movie.
- The spirit of a long-dead noble warrior has merged with the character and granted him powerful fighting abilities.

EXAMPLE MARTIAL ARTIST POWERS

The Delicate Kick Of Han Chen: HKA 2d6, NND (defense is Resistance; +1), Does BODY (+1) (90 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Increased Endurance

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Cost (x2 END; -½), Activation Roll 12- (-¾). Total cost: 36 points.

Drunken Defense: +6 DCV (30 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Requires An Acrobatics Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Fists Of The Dragon: HA +6d6 (30 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Requires A Chi Manipulation Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Thunder-Leap: HA +8d6 (40 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Only Works With Move Through (-½). Total cost: 20 points.

POSSIBLE MENTALIST SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Mentalist powers include:

- The character is a mutant, born with awesome psychic powers.
- Thanks to a radiation accident, mutation, or unusual ancestry, the character's brain functions on a much higher level than that of other humans, allowing him to access higher-order scientific principles that manifest in our reality as psychic powers.
- The character has received mystical training focusing on the arts of glamour, illusion, domination, and telepathy.
- The character has built gadgets that grant him Mental Powers.

EXAMPLE MENTALIST POWERS

Distant Viewing: Clairvoyance (Sight Group), 32x Range (3200") (45 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Requires An EGO Roll (assuming EGO Roll of 14-; -½).

MENTALIST

This character has psionic powers — abilities deriving from the energy of the mind. Psionic powers have some of the same characteristics as magic (they are somewhat mysterious and spooky), but usually are not as extensive in their versatility and do not derive from a rationale that is explicitly magical or supernatural.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Mentalist characters often receive training in parapsychology, the formal examination of psychic phenomena. Parapsychologists usually start as students of psychology. Thus SS: Psychology and SS: Parapsychology are common choices. The *Danger Sense* Talent is also very appropriate.

POWERS

The powers that are normally thought of as related to the world of the psychic include Clairvoyance (Distant Viewing, Precognition, Postcognition), Ego Attack, Enhanced Senses (Detect Psychic Energy, Detect Spirits), Flight (Levitation), Healing, Killing Attack, Ranged (Pyrokinesis), Mental Defense, Mental Illusions, Mind Control, Mind Link, Mind Scan, Telekinesis, and Telepathy. However, depending on how far one wishes to stretch the definition of "psionic," particularly in regard to psychokinetic effects, many other abilities are possible. Characters in the comics have used "mental energy" not only to control minds and move objects, but to alter targets at the cellular level (Transform), deflect attacks or create defensive barriers (Force Field, Force Wall, Missile Deflection), reach inside an opponent's mind or body to wreak all sorts of havoc (various Drains, Flash, RKA NND), and so on.

Sample Mentalist-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the

Clairvoyant, Telekinetic, and Telepath sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

Mentalists often have a heightened sense of the feelings of people around them, so their players might choose one or more Disadvantage that reflect this enhanced sensitivity.

Enraged/Berserk: Sympathetic Berserk (Berserk when

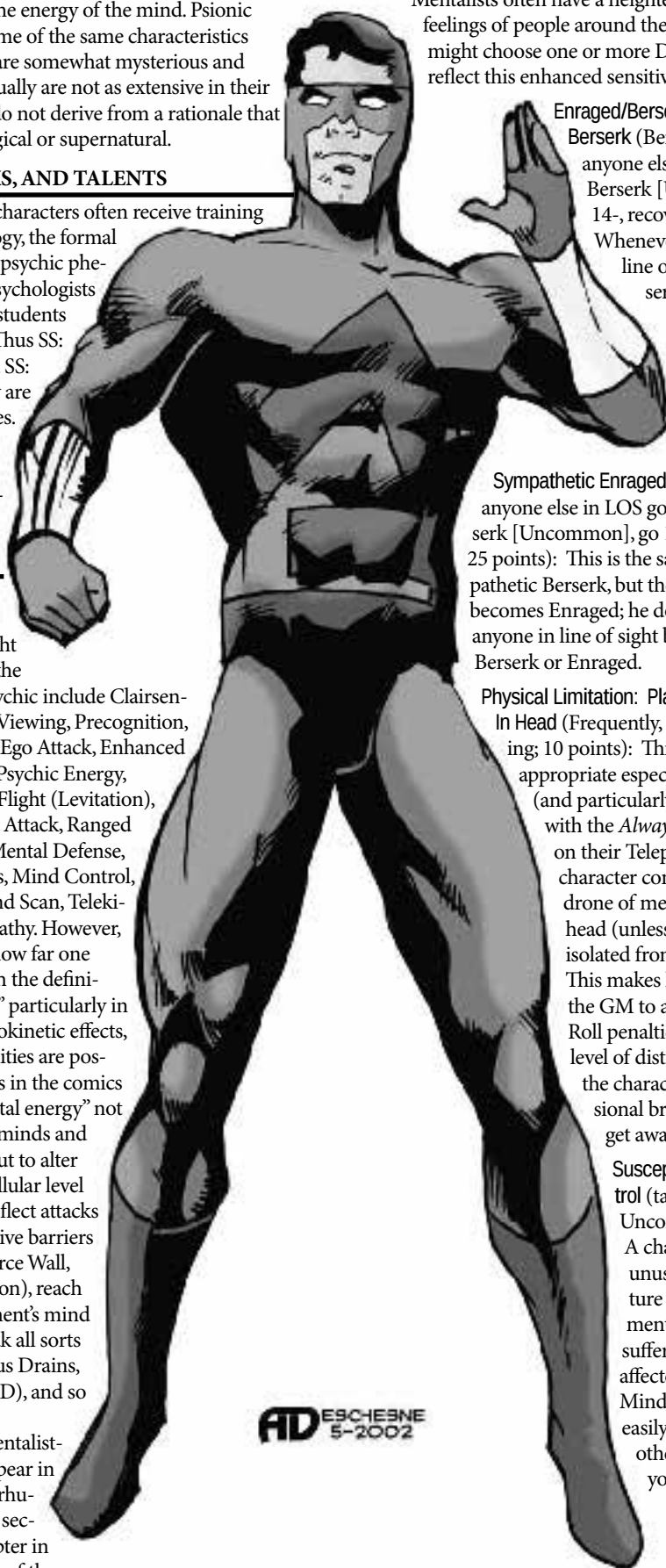
anyone else in LOS goes Berserk [Uncommon], go 14-, recover 14-; 35 points): Whenever someone within line of sight goes Berserk, the character does, too — he's simply overcome by the other person's intense emotions.

Enraged/Berserk:

Sympathetic Enraged (Enraged when anyone else in LOS goes Enraged or Berserk [Uncommon], go 14-, recover 14-; 25 points): This is the same as the Sympathetic Berserk, but the character only becomes Enraged; he does so whenever anyone in line of sight becomes either Berserk or Enraged.

Physical Limitation: Plagued By Voices In Head (Frequently, Slightly Impairing; 10 points): This Disadvantage, appropriate especially to telepaths (and particularly to telepaths with the *Always On* Limitation on their Telepathy), means the character constantly hears a drone of mental voices in his head (unless he's completely isolated from other humans). This makes him jittery, allows the GM to assign him PER Roll penalties because of his level of distraction, and forces the character to take occasional breaks where he can get away from people.

Susceptibility: Mind Control (takes 1d6 per Phase, Uncommon; 15 points): A character with an unusual mental structure or very touchy mental powers might suffer damage when affected by another's Mind Control (you can easily substitute some other Mental Power if you like).



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METAMORPH

This character is a shapechanger. His body can alter its shape, dimensions, coloration, density, and/or malleability. Characters with Growth and Shrinking technically fall in this category, but often fit into some other archetype as well — just larger or smaller (*i.e.*, tiny Martial Artist, gigantic Brick, tiny Mystic, and so on).

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Metamorphs often use their powers in spy-like ways — sneaking into dangerous areas, assuming the identities of other people, and so on. So all Skills related to spy activities are appropriate, including Acting, Concealment, Conversation, Cramming, Disguise, Mimicry, Oratory, Persuasion, Seduction, Shadowing, and Stealth.

The Metamorph's ability to alter his physical nature also supplies a sufficient justification for buying several physical Skills and Talents, including Acrobatics, Breakfall, Contortionist, Defense Maneuver, Ambidexterity, and Double Jointed.

POWERS

Multiform, Shape Shift, Stretching, Growth, and Shrinking are the most common and most obvious Metamorph powers. But any number of others are appropriate if you consider the many ways a metamorph might reshape his body:

Armor: Hardening the skin.

Clinging: Squeezing fingertips and other portions of the skin into rough surfaces.

Entangle: Wrapping an enemy up in loops of one's own body (usually requires the *Feedback* and *Cannot Form Barriers* Limitations).

Extra Limbs.

Flight/Gliding: Creating wings, flying in the shape of a bird, spreading one's malleable body into a parawing.

Killing Attack, HTH: Shaping body parts into melee weapons or sharp points, growing claws.

Leaping: Stretching the legs to allow extravagant leaps — metamorphs often form their legs into spring-like coils to leap.

Missile Deflection: Turning one's body rubbery to catch and repel missiles.

Running/Swimming: Stretching the legs to allow for a longer, faster stride/kick.

Swinging: Using stretched arms to permit fast travel.

Tunneling: Shaping one's body into a bore-like apparatus to travel through the earth.

Sample Metamorph-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Bendy Toy and Doppelganger sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

Metamorphs are often unhappy with their physical condition — they and others consider them freakish and inhuman. So appropriate Disadvantages include:

Physical Limitation: Requires Specialized Medical Attention (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing; 10 points): This Disadvantage means an ordinary doctor in an ordinary medical facility has a very hard time helping this character. Any time a character without a specific Knowledge Skill or Science Skill concerning the medical care of the specific person or his specific race tries to make a Paramedics or other medicine-related roll, he receives a penalty of at least -4 (for minor situations) or -8 (for crisis situations).

Psychological Limitation: Desperate For Acceptance (Uncommon, Strong; 10 points): Metamorphs often feel cut off from the rest of humanity, so they make extra efforts to be accepted into a group (such as a superteam).

This Disadvantage means the character should make

choices that fit right in with the group dynamic and may be more easily manipulated by teammates, friends, and even villains in an ongoing effort to fit in.

Psychological Limitation: Self-Loathing (Very Common, Moderate; 15 points): A character with this Psychological Limitation tends to be unusually

Continued from last page

Total cost: 22 points.

Enhance Rage: Mind Control 10d6 (50 Active Points); Only To Control/Inflict Anger (-1). Total cost: 25 points.

Psychic Obliteration: RKA 2d6, BOECV (Mental Defense applies; +1), Does BODY (+1) (90 Active Points); Only Works On Beings With Minds (-½), Limited Range (10"; -¼), Requires An EGO Roll (assuming EGO Roll of 14; -½), No Knockback (-¼), Beam (-¼). Total cost: 33 points.

Psychokinetic Shield: Force Field (12 PD/12 ED). Total cost: 24 points.

POSSIBLE METAMORPH SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Metamorph powers include:

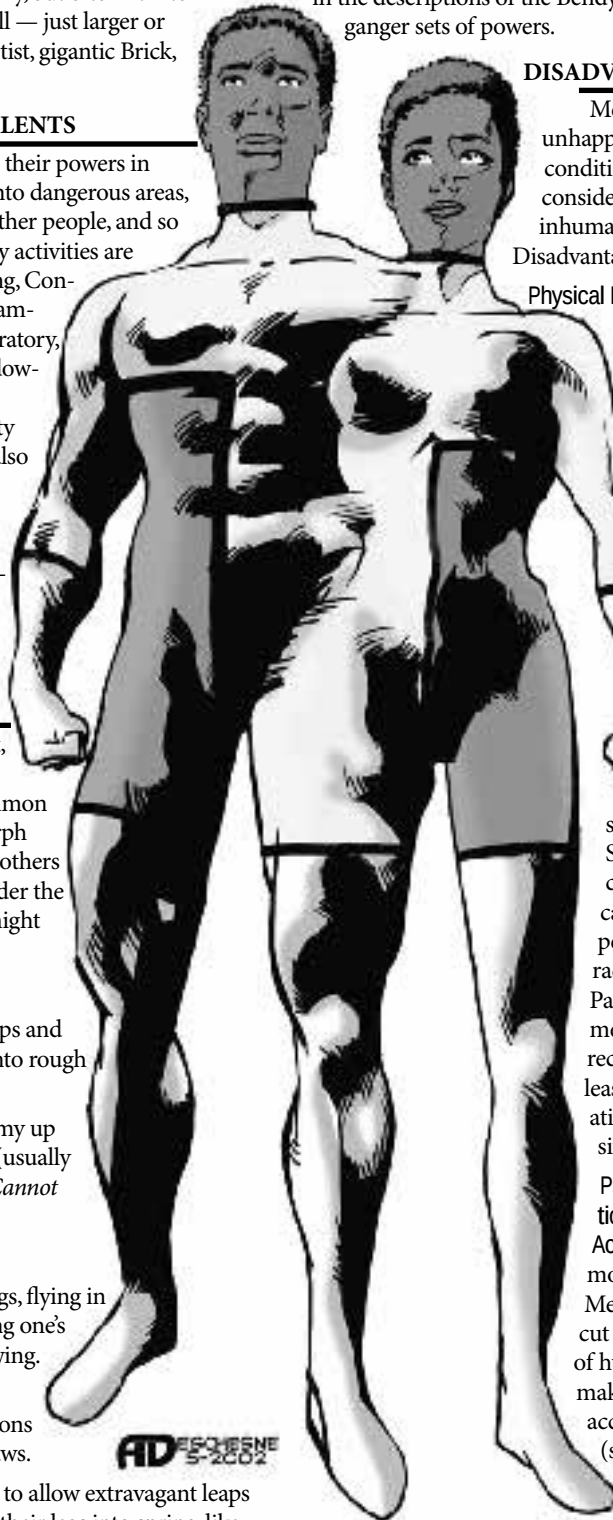
- The character is a mutant, born with shapeshifting powers; he may not even *have* a "true shape."
- An animal-god grants the character the power to assume the forms of various creatures.
- While researching or working near new plastics, the character is accidentally exposed to them and ends up with a malleable body instead of dying.
- The character is an alien from an entire species of metamorphs.

EXAMPLE METAMORPH POWERS

Mace-Hands: The metamorph transforms his hands into spiked maces, using them to smash his opponents.

HKA 1½d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼). Total cost: 31 points.

Continued on next page



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Parachute Form: The metamorph shapes his malleable body into a parachute-like form, allowing him (and up to one person holding onto his arms and legs) to drift gently to the ground.

Gliding 6", Usable Simultaneously (character and one other person; +½) (9 Active Points); **Limited Movement** (character cannot gain altitude, and must move at least 12" downward for every 1" forward; -½). Total cost: 6 points.

Rubbery Body: Physical attacks just bounce off the character's malleable body, or have difficulty affecting so flexible a form.

Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% (30 Active Points); **Requires A Malleable Body Powers Roll** (-½). Total cost: 20 points.

Squeezing Through Cracks: The metamorph can ooze his malleable body through even the tiniest openings.

Desolidification (affected by any attack) (40 Active Points); **Does Not Protect Against Damage** (-1), **Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects** (-½), **Concentration** (0 DCV; -½), **Extra Time** (Extra Phase; -¾). Total cost: 11 points.

POSSIBLE MYSTIC SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Mystic powers include:

■ The character has studied magic for years (perhaps decades) and is an accomplished manipulator of arcane energies.

■ A curse has "granted" the character mystical powers (but also some hefty Disadvantages).

■ A dying wizard, sens-

courageous in battle (a reflection of his unconscious death-wish or desire to be punished) and fails to pursue opportunities that permit him a measure of personal happiness (meaning the GM should remind this character's player of the Disadvantage any time the character does something smart in his professional or personal-relationship life).

MYSTIC

Mystics are characters trained in the use of magic, who have a natural affinity for magic, who have magic-derived powers, or who possess and use enchanted items. When not participating in more general team adventures, they often confine their movements and activities to a subculture that is exclusively magical, mystical, and supernatural in origin... meaning teammates who visit their houses and other haunts may end up with a case of the wilies ("The lamp *spoke* to me — I swear!").

Having Mystic characters in a campaign implies that magic really exists in that campaign world, and that raises some issues for the GM to consider (see page 53).

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Appropriate Mystic Skills include Knowledge Skills in a variety of occult subjects (arcane and occult lore generally, monsters, mysterious sites, secret histories, secret societies, necromancy, thaumaturgy, the gods, demons, alternate dimensions, and so on) and Languages (especially dead or mysterious ones). (Cryptography only to translate is also often appropriate.) Many Mystics also have a *Power Skill* called Magic upon which many of their powers are based.

Mystics are very Perk-oriented, sometimes having Access to occult sites, Contacts with a wide variety of occult experts, Favors from individuals they've helped, animal-companion Followers (familiar), *Head Of State* Fringe Benefits (usually from

alternate dimensions), the priestly *Right To Marry* Fringe Benefit, Reputations as mystic protectors of Earth, and secret Bases ("sanctums").

Universal Translator is Talent frequently found among dimension-traveling Mystics.

POWERS

There is really no limit or even focus to the type of powers a mystic might have. However, certain structures of powers are common. Mystic powers often

Require A Skill Roll (based on Magic), and sometimes require Gestures, Incantations, Concentra-

tion, Extra Time, and/or Increased Endurance Cost. In short, Power Limitations are very common among Mystics. On the other hand, sometimes super-mages just *look* Limited; they may, for example, gesture and incant for show, but when push comes to shove they can cast spells even if bound and gagged, so they take no *Gestures* or *Incantations* Limitations on their powers.

Sample Mystic-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Checklist Hero, Mystic Master, and Summoner sets of powers.

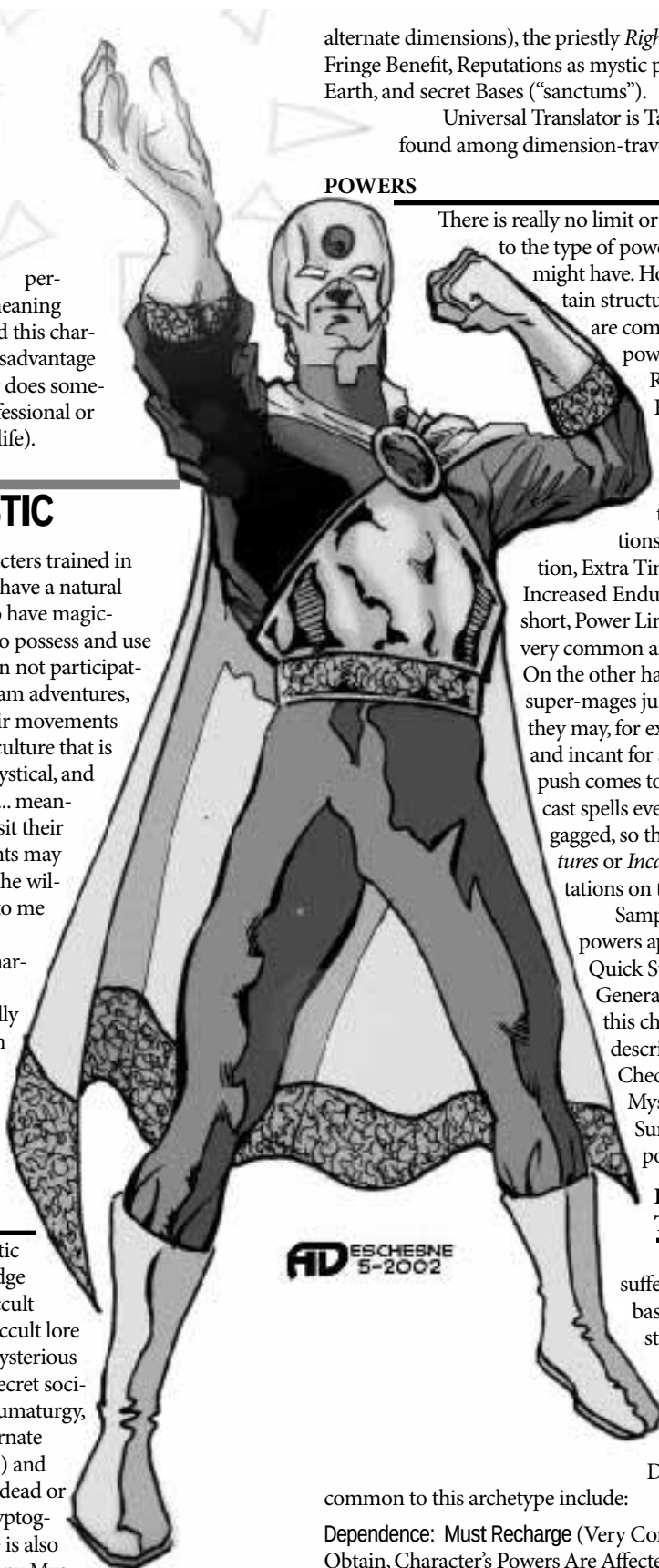
DISADVANTAGES

Mystics often suffer Hunteds based out of the strange and eerie environments that are their homes.

Other Disadvantages

common to this archetype include:

Dependence: Must Recharge (Very Common/Easy To Obtain, Character's Powers Are Affected [Activation Roll 11-], 1 Day; 0 points): A character with this Disadvantage must regularly return to or summon forth a battery-like item or lose his powers. (This assumes a power recharger that normally comes when summoned. If the character must go to a specific place, which cannot occur when he is captured or far away from home, the Very Common becomes Common,



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and the Total becomes 5 points.)

Dependence: Must Drink Blood (Very Common/Easy To Obtain, 1d6 damage, 1 Day; 0 points): There are a lot of vampiric player characters out there, after all. This Disadvantage isn't really any different from any other character's need to ingest sustenance on a daily basis, but since obtaining blood may cause the character problems, it's worth noting as a Disadvantage for some PCs.

Psychological Limitation: Easily Distracted By Magical/Occult/Supernatural Matters (Common, Strong; 15 points): This is the Mystic's equivalent of the Gadgeteer's Disadvantage. Whenever the character comes across any appropriate object, detail, or technique within his field of interest but new to him, he becomes distracted by it. This includes strange enchanted items, tomes of forbidden lore, unusual magical creatures, and so on.

Susceptibility: Contact With Iron (takes 1d6 per Phase, Very Common; 25 points): This is a Susceptibility appropriate to characters with the blood of elves or faerie-folk in their veins. If they touch ferrous metal with their bare flesh, they suffer burns and pain.

Susceptibility: Holy Objects And Places (takes 2d6 per Phase in contact, Common; 25 points): Vampires, demons, and other innately evil mystical creatures often cannot stand to touch holy ground, holy symbols, holy water, and other such objects. Typically, a vigorous display of a holy item suffices to drive them off, or at least persuade them to come no closer.

Unluck: Cursed (2d6; 10 points): Some mystic characters have enemies who have inflicted a curse on them, represented by Unluck (and/or other Disadvantages). Trying to learn enough, or

become powerful enough, to dispel the curse is often a big motivator for the character.

PATRIOT

The Patriot is a character who deliberately embodies traits that his nation finds especially admirable, and chooses to represent that nation in a symbolic way. Alternately, he may embody some other concept, belief system, religion, philosophy, or principle, one not necessarily related to nationalistic fervor. Patriots often acquire their powers through service to that which they represent (they suffer a radiation accident while serving in the military, volunteer for a "superhuman soldier" project, or the like).

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS, POWERS

Patriots are archetypes only in a symbolic sense (though that's still important, especially in a genre where symbolism is often so prominent).

There's no standard set of abilities most Patriot characters possess; their powers tend to emulate or reflect whatever the character embodies (making it possible for other characters to predict their abilities in many cases). Speaking in a character design sense, Patriot characters tend to belong to any of the other archetype groups, especially Brick and Martial Artist, so when you create a Patriot, you should choose Skills and Powers from the choices most prevalent among the other archetype associated with your character concept.

DISADVANTAGES

There are two types of Patriots — Heroic and Villainous. A Heroic Patriot displays the most virtuous traits of his nation; a Villainous one displays the nastiest.

Heroic Patriots are likely to have Disadvantage such as:

Psychological Limitation: Code Of The Hero or Honorable:
See page 67.

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ing the character's innate goodness and heroism, gifted the character with his mystical powers.

■ The character is a descendant of a famous magician (Merlin, Cagliostro, whoever) and has an innate ability to use magic even though he's never studied it.

EXAMPLE MYSTIC POWERS

The Amulet Of The Aandiri: Force Field (8 PD/8 ED/8 Power Defense), Usable By Other (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (42 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 21 points.

The Blasting-Wand Of Berala The Bold: EB 15d6 (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 25 points.

The Scintillant Shackles: Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF, Stops Sight Group (60 Active Points); Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Cannot Form Walls (-¼). Total cost: 34 points.

A Simple Spell Of Comprehension: Universal Translator (INT Roll), Usable Simultaneously (usable by up to eight characters at once; +1) (40 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV when casting; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 20 points.

EXAMPLE PATRIOT POWERS

Dada Fugue: The Avant Guard, living embodiment of dadaist, abstract, and surreal art, can inflict his unusual viewpoint upon others, temporarily confusing the hell out of them.

Drain INT 4d6, Ranged (+½) (60 Active Points); Requires An Oratory Roll (-½). Total cost: 40 points.

Justice-Sight: Justicar, a hero possessed by a Spirit of Justice who grants him crimefight-

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ing powers, has the ability to discern criminal culpability.

Detect Criminal Culpability Or Intent (PER Roll) (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range. Total cost: 20 points.

Let Freedom Ring: Captain Liberty, the national hero of the United States, can affect his foe with the sound of the Liberty Bell ringing when he throws a punch.

Hearing Group Flash 10d6 (30 Active Points); No Range (-½), Linked (to Punch; -½). Total cost: 15 points.

Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite: Tricolor, the national hero of France, can split into three separate selves, each with powers reflecting one of the qualities of the French motto, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

Duplication (creates two 350-point Duplicates), Altered Duplicates (100%; +1) (150 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 100 points.

EXAMPLE POWERED ARMOR POWERS

Boot-Jets: Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 40 points.

Gauntlet Blasters: Energy Blast 12d6 (60 Active Points); OIF (-½), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 34 points.

Protective Capabilities: Armor (18 PD/18 ED), Hardened (+¼) (67 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 45 points.

Searchlight: Sight Group Images, +3 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (8" Cone; +½) (28 Active Points); OIF (-½), No Range (-½), Only To Create Light (-1). Total cost: 9 points.

Psychological Limitation: Overprotective Of (Class of People) (Uncommon, Strong; 10 points): A Patriot with this Psychological Limitation feels a special kinship with or responsibility for one specific category of people — women, children, computer nerds, teachers and child-care personnel, and so on, particularly if they are a subset of the nation he represents. The presence of this Disadvantage means the character will be extra-diligent about protecting this type of person and unusually outraged when this type of person is harmed, endangered, or even insulted.

Villainous Patriots are likely to have Disadvantages such as:

Psychological Limitation: Racist (Very Common, Strong; 20 points): The character chooses only to represent one race of a multi-racial national population, and is happy to oppress or even kill members of other races. A character known to be a Racist may also have a Reputation reflecting that fact.

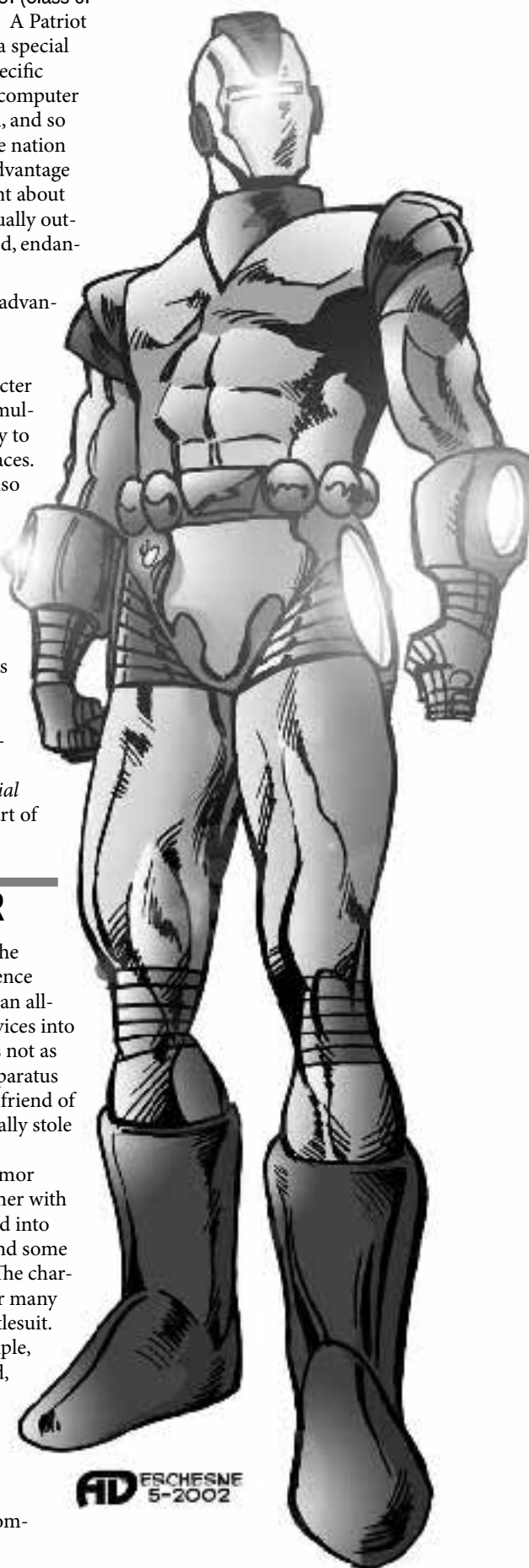
Psychological Limitation: Superpatriot (Common, Total; 20 points): The character believes in his nation, right or wrong, to such an extent he can acknowledge no faults. When his nation's interests or government conflicts in any way with any other, he considers his nation to be 100% correct and will enforce his nation's wishes without question.

Either type of Patriot may have *Social Limitation: Subject To Orders* if he's a part of his nation's military.

POWERED ARMOR

This character is a variant form of the Gadgeteer (above), with the main difference being that the Powered Armor hero has an all-in-one gadget — he integrates all his devices into a single suit of powered armor. Also, he's not as likely to be the actual inventor of the apparatus (he might just be an employee, tester, or friend of the inventor, or even someone who actually stole the suit from the inventor).

Typically, players build Powered Armor characters using the *Power Armor* together with a suite of Attack Powers (usually grouped into a Multipower or Variable Power Pool) and some Movement Powers (most often Flight). The character may also build Enhanced Senses or many other miscellaneous powers into his battlesuit. But other options are possible. For example, a character may prefer to use Force Field, Damage Resistance, or even Damage Reduction as his main Defense Power. Players with detailed knowledge of the *HERO System* might even experiment with building the powered armor as a Vehicle, though this is generally not recommended.



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SPEEDSTER

This character's powers are based around movement, usually (but not always) at high velocities. The typical speedster either runs or flies very fast, and probably has extremely high reflexes in addition, all of which makes him a high-mobility, hard to hit target with some unusual abilities. Other speedsters focus on unusual Movement Powers (e.g., Teleportation) and their implications.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Speedsters tend to have extraordinary fighting skills based on the notion that they move so fast they can more easily dodge out of the way of attacks or correct their own blows to strike their enemies more often or more accurately. Therefore, large numbers of Combat Skill Levels are appropriate for

them. Those CSLs are usually for HTH Combat (5 points each) or movement-based attacks such as Move Through, Move By, and Grab By (3 points each for the group). Some Speedsters buy CSLs for DCV to represent the way they "blur" themselves, or their ability to move out of the way of attacks.

With the GM's permission, many speedsters also buy Penalty Skill Levels to counteract the penalty for performing non-combat tasks more quickly than normal (see page 45 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*). This allows them to, for example, clean an entire house in the blink of an eye, program a supercomputer in just one minute, and perform other such "speed tricks."

Speedsters are often scientists who have genetically modified themselves, created apparati that speed them up, or developed unusual sciences that allow their hyperkinetic abilities. Thus, Science Skills may be appropriate, along with technical Skills like Computer Programming or Inventor.



POWERS

In addition to Movement Powers, Speedsters often have powers such as these:

Change Environment: Just by waving arms around very fast, a Speedster could fill an area with static electricity. (This is of no consequence most of the time, but could justify an Energy Blast and serve as the means to recharge a character who has an electricity-based END Reserve.) He could also make an area very windy, clean it up in a single Phase, or the like.

Desolidification: The character moves or vibrates himself in such a way as to put himself out of tune with reality.

Energy Blast: The character could create static electricity (see Change Environment, above), throw ordinary objects very fast, shove air in concussive waves, and so on.

Extra-Dimensional Movement: The character vibrates out of synch with reality and enters a different reality.

Force Field: The character could vibrate in such a way to compact air in a defensive shield around him.

Hand-to-Hand Attack: Enough HA dice can simulate striking multiple blows in a very short amount of time. The Speedster may want to apply the *Autofire* Advantage instead of just using large numbers of dice to create the rapid-fire punch.

Images: The Speedster could move so fast he leaves afterimages behind as he runs or flies, creating images of himself that enemies must sort through when trying to attack him.

Invisibility: The character might vibrate in such a way that he goes out of phase with conventional reality, allowing him to turn invisible.

Killing Attack, HTH: The character could rub his hand across an object so fast that he creates tremendous friction energy, setting the target on fire.

Killing Attack, Ranged: As per Energy Blast, above, but with sharp objects.

Missile Deflection: The character simply grabs comparatively slow-moving bullets and the like out of the air and hurls them in another direction.

Teleportation: The character puts on a burst of speed and appears to travel instantaneously to his destination. The character might be limited to Teleporting along open pathways, or might transform into a form of energy and reappear at his destination.

Sample Speedster-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Dimensional Innovator and Hyper-Combat sets of powers.

DISADVANTAGES

Appropriate Speedster Disadvantages include:

Dependence: Requires Enormous Caloric Intake (Very Common/Easy To Obtain; Weakness, 1 Day; 0 points): The character must sustain his hyper-accelerated metabolism by feeding a tremendous appetite. He's always stopping off in mid-patrol for a snack.

Physical Limitation: Requires Specialized Medical Attention (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing; 10 points): As per the Metamorph, above.

POSSIBLE SPEEDSTER SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Speedster powers include:

- The character is a mutant, born with the ability to fly, teleport, or what have you.
- The character manipulates time and/or other dimensions to make himself seem to move faster, when in fact it's not that he's fast, but that he can slow other people down.
- The character taps the energy of the atoms in his body and can use it to move at tremendous velocities.
- The character has been blessed with speed powers by a god such as Hermes or Rabbit.

EXAMPLE SPEEDSTER POWERS

Hyper-Running I: Running +26" (32" total) (total cost: 52 points) **plus** Clinging (normal STR) (10 Active Points); Linked (-½), Cannot Resist Knockback (-¼) (total cost: 6 points). Total cost: 58 points.

Hyper-Running II: Flight 32" (64 Active Points); Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼). Total cost: 51 points.

Hyper-Running III: Teleportation 20", MegaScale (1" = 10 km; +½) (60 Active Points); Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼), Must Pass Through Intervening Space (-¼). Total cost: 40 points.

Vibro-Phasing: Desolidification (affected by energy attacks, or attacks by other hyper-velocity characters). Total cost: 40 points.

POSSIBLE WEAPONMASTER SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some (but by no means all) of the special effects that can explain Weaponmaster powers include:

- The character acquires his martial skills through intense training and devoted effort.
- The character possesses a magic weapon that tells him what to do in a fight.
- A god of war, such as Odin or Ares, imbues the character with amazing warrior powers.
- The last surviving member of his species, the character carries within him the combined martial knowledge of his people, programmed into him by his people's greatest scientists before they died.

EXAMPLE WEAPONMASTER POWERS

Boomerang: Energy Blast 7d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (52 Active Points); OAF (character must use 1 Combat Skill Level to make boomerang return to his hand in the event of a miss; -1), No Knockback (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼). Total cost: 21 points.

Cleaving Through Weak Points: Armor Piercing (+½) for up to HKA 3d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (33 Active Points); OIF (any sword of opportunity; -½). Total cost: 22 points.

The Enchanted Blade Of Rendrak: HKA 1½d6 (plus STR), Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (50 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 25 points.

Explosive Arrow: RKA 1d6+1, Explosion (-1 DC/2"; +¾) (35 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 17 points.

Psychological Limitation: Irked By Slowness (Common, Moderate; 10 points): When a character can perform tasks in the blink of an eye, having to wait on others tends to make him frustrated and irritable. This does little to ingratiate him to the people he's annoyed with.

Vulnerability: 2 x STUN From Unexpected Collisions (Common; 20 points): The character doesn't withstand collision damage well when he isn't prepared for it, such as when someone runs into him by surprise, instantly erects a Force Wall right in front of him, is the victim of a Martial Throw, or the like.

WEAPONMASTER

This character has a powerful weapon (or a set of powers that are weapon-like) and relies on it almost exclusively in combat.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Like Martial Artists, Weaponmasters have a fairly heavy Skill/Talent focus. The Weaponmaster tends to have a large number of Combat Skill Levels, plus other weapon-related and combat-related skills — Autofire Skills, Defense Maneuver, Fast Draw, Martial Arts, Rapid Attack, Tactics, Teamwork, Weapon Familiarities, Weaponsmith, technical or scientific skills pertaining to the construction or maintenance of the weapon, and so on.

A Weaponmaster will certainly find it helpful to have a *Weapon Permit* Fringe Benefit, particularly if he's often singled out by the authorities for carrying a blatantly illegal weapon ("I don't care if you are a member of the Justice Crusaders, lady, you can't go carryin' that pigsticker around on the street!").

Appropriate Talents for Weaponmasters include Combat Luck, Combat Sense, Danger Sense, and Lightning Reflexes.

POWERS

A Weaponmaster, naturally, uses one or more weapons built with Attack Powers (typically Energy Blast, Hand-to-Hand Attack, or Killing Attacks). Some focus on a single weapon, perhaps developing multiple maneuvers and abilities that represent different ways to use it. Another category of Weaponmaster is the character whose weapon fires a bewildering variety of ammunition types, some of which are weapons and some of which perform other functions (like establishing swing-lines and climb-lines, acting as signal flares, and so on). These Weaponmasters usually define their weapons with

Multipowers (or occasionally other Power Frameworks). An example of this sort of power arrangement is the Trick Ammo Specialist Set in the Quick Superhuman Generator section (page 85).

A Weaponmaster's powers do not have to be in a Focus — they could be natural to the character (for example, perhaps he can "generate a spear of life-energy" innately). Focus-based Weaponmasters are, however, far more common.

Sample Weaponmaster-style powers appear in the Quick Superhuman Generator section of this chapter in the descriptions of the Super-Warrior, Trick Ammo Specialist, and Very Big Gun Wielder sets of powers.

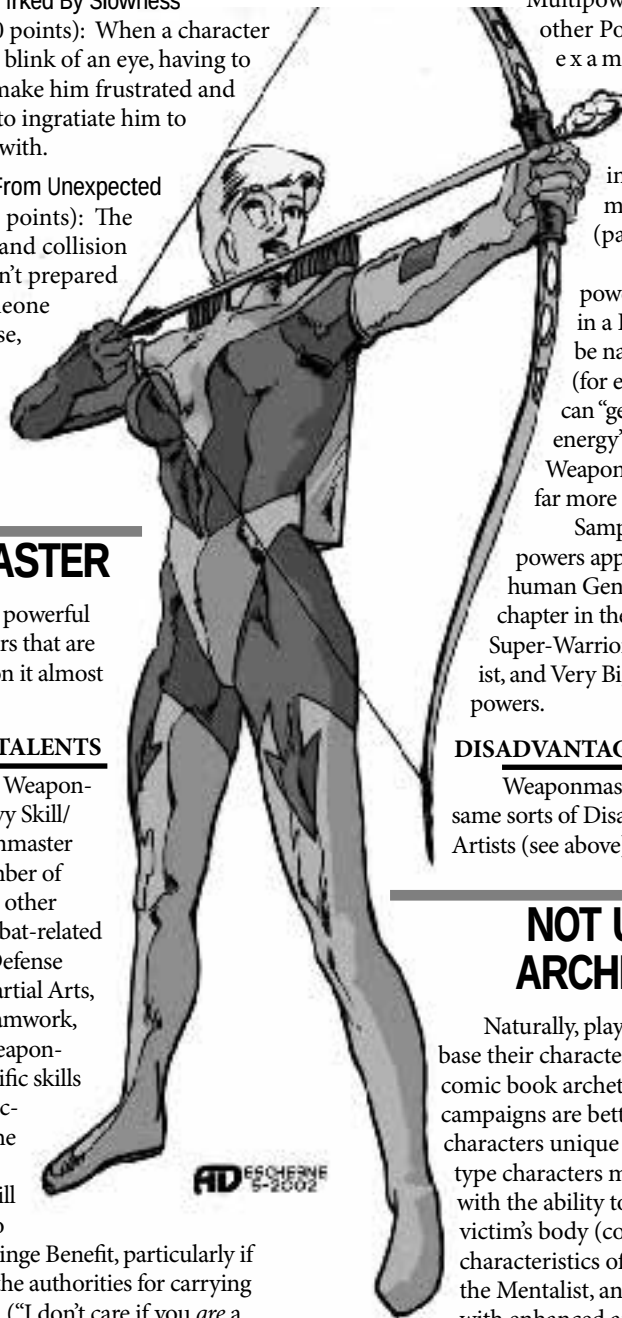
DISADVANTAGES

Weaponmasters typically have the same sorts of Disadvantages as Martial Artists (see above).

NOT USING ARCHETYPES

Naturally, players are not required to base their characters around the classic comic book archetypes. Many *Champions* campaigns are better if they include some characters unique to them. Non-archetype characters might include: a hero with the ability to chemically affect a victim's body (combining some of the characteristics of the Energy Projector, the Mentalist, and the Mystic); a hero with enhanced animal traits (combining some of the characteristics of the Brick, the Martial Artist, and the Weaponmaster); a hero who simulates the powers of supers he has recently been in contact with (combining traits from any number of different archetypes); and a crusading vigilante with a wide variety of abilities (combining some of the characteristics of the Gadgeteer, the Martial Artist, and/or the Weaponmaster).

Similarly, players should not feel restricted by the explanations of archetypes — they should base new characters on those archetypes if they feel inspired by them, and ignore them otherwise. If a player has a different take on a particular archetype or power than what's described above, he should build to his own preferences. Archetypes aren't supposed to be straitjackets; they're intended as inspiration and guidance only.



QUICK SUPERHUMAN GENERATOR



The following charts and descriptions work together as a system with which you can create a superhero or supervillain quickly — a convenience for a player jumping into a game for which he has no character, and for a GM who has to put together one or more superpowered NPCs on short notice.

To use the Quick Superhuman Generator, you first roll two dice on the chart below to find the general Type of the super, then roll any additional dice called for on the chart to determine the Subtype of character. For the initial two dice roll, read the first die as 1 (a result of 1 or 2), 2 (a result of 3 or 4), or 3 (a result of 5 or 6); read the second die as the usual 1-6 range. That generates a roll of two single digits — 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, and so on — instead of the normal 2-12 bell curve. (This ensures an equal chance of any given roll occurring.) For instance, a roll of 1-3 on the dice roll would yield a result of “Brick”; to find out the exact subtype of Brick, you’d roll 1d6, where, for instance, a result of 2 would indicate an All-Around Fighter.

Having found the Subtype, you proceed to the text for that subtype, which tells you to roll dice to randomly determine the character’s Characteristics Set, Primary Powers Set, Secondary Powers Set, and Skills/Perks/Talents Set. (Alternately, you can also simply choose the sets you want your character to have; a character gets 1 Characteristics, 1 Primary Powers, 1 Secondary Powers, and 1 Skills/Perks/Talents sets.) Write down the names of the sets you have rolled or selected.

Then continue further in the chapter to the descriptions of those sets. All you have to do is write the information from those descriptions on your character sheet.

At the end of the Quick Superhuman Generator, you’ll be able to randomly roll or choose sets of Disadvantages for your character as well. When that’s done, you’ll have in hand a simple but fully functional character who needs only a name, costume description, and personality to make him ready to play. He may not be as detailed, or have as complex power constructions, as a character built from scratch, but he can still hold his own in the campaign.

SUPERHUMAN GENERATOR: TYPES AND SUBTYPES TABLE

Roll 2d6	Type and Subtypes
1.1 to 1.3	Brick
1-2	All-Around Fighter
3-5	Flying Brick
6	Palooka
1.4 to 1.5	Energy Projector
1-3	Air Superiority
4-6	Artillery
1.6 to 2.1	Martial Artist
1-3	Acrobat
4	Young Lion
5	Master
6	Martial Mystic
2.2 to 2.3	Mentalist
2.4	Metamorph
2.5 to 2.6	Mystic
1	Bestowed/Spirit-Bonded
2-3	Elementalist
4-6	Sorcerer-Sage
3.1 to 3.2	Powered Armor
1-2	Reroll as Brick
3-4	Reroll as Energy Projector
5	Reroll as Weaponmaster
6	Checklist Power Armor Hero
3.3 to 3.4	Speedster
3.5 to 3.6	Weaponmaster

The Gadgeteer is subsumed into the Powered Armor and Weaponmaster results; the Patriot appears as a Skills Set found among several different archetypes.

SPECIFIC SUBTYPE DETAILS

For each of the following subtypes, roll 1d6 for each of the four sets of components the character receives (Characteristics, Primary Powers, Secondary Powers, and Skills/Perks/Talents). Take notes on the results of those rolls; once you’ve chosen all four, you can go to the *Details Of The Sets* section and find out what exact traits each set provides.

Brick

ALL-AROUND FIGHTER

This character fights well and is likely to be a good front-line combatant.

- **Characteristics:** 1-3 Nimbleness Set, 4-6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-2 Brute Strength Set, 3 Density Set, 4-5 Growth Set, 6 Strength Projector Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Fight or Flight Set, 3 Flight and Sight Set, 4 All-Terrain Set, 5-6 Space Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Dedicated Fighter Set, 2 Patriot Set, 3 Playboy Set, 4 Spy Set, 5-6 Tactician Set.

FLYING BRICK

This character has good mobility and a high Strength to bring to bear on enemies.

- **Characteristics:** 1-2 Nimbleness Set, 3-6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-4 Brute Strength Set, 5-6 Density Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Fight or Flight Set, 3-4 Flight and Sight Set, 5-6 Space Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Dedicated Fighter Set, 2-3 Patriot Set, 4 Scientist Set, 5-6 Tactician Set.

PALOOKA

This character is a bit of a bruiser — he's strong, but not necessarily as versatile as other sorts of Bricks.

- **Characteristics:** 1-6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-4 Brute Strength Set, 5-6 Density Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-3 Bouncing Ball Set, 4 Earth-Mover Set, 5-6 Freight Train Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1-4 Dedicated Fighter Set, 5-6 Patriot Set.

Energy Projector

AIR SUPERIORITY

This character moves quickly, strikes from range, and can then move up on inconvenienced targets or get back out of range again.

- **Characteristics:** 1-4 Nimbleness Set, 5-6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-2 Mega-Blast Set, 3 Modulated Blast Set, 4 Sniper Blast Set, 5 Trick Ammo Specialist Set, 6 Very Big Gun Wielder Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1 Fight or Flight Set, 2-3 Flight and Sight Set, 4 Sensory Platform Set, 5-6 Space Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Dedicated Fighter Set, 2 Patriot Set, 3 Scientist Set, 4 Spy Set, 5 Tactician Set, 6 Technician Set.

ARTILLERY

This character uses energy powers or the equivalent to pound an enemy from a distance. He's the long-range equivalent of several of the Brick subtypes.

- **Characteristics:** 1-4 Nimbleness Set, 5-6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-4 Mega-Blast, 5-6 Sniper Blast.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Fight or Flight Set, 3 Flight and Sight Set, 4 Freight Train Set, 5 Sensory Platform Set, 6 Space Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1-2 Gunman Set, 3 Playboy Set, 4 Scientist Set, 5 Tactician Set, 6 Technician Set.

Martial Artist

ACROBAT

This character is a whirling, leaping, bouncing hero. His martial arts may be a recognizable style, but is just as likely to be a personal art he has developed in conjunction with his acrobatic skills.

- **Characteristics:** 1-4 Nimbleness Set, 5-6 Health and Intellect Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-4 Grasshopper Set, 5-6 Super-Boxer Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Bouncing Ball Set, 3-4 Flight and Sight Set, 5-6 Sensory Platform Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics Set, 2 Dedicated Fighter Set, 3-4 Investigator Set, 5 Patriot Set, 6 Spy Set.

YOUNG LION

This character is a youthful, perhaps brash, most likely inexperienced hero; he probably has a good heart, but is likely to be aggravating to more seasoned, world-wise characters.

- **Characteristics:** 1-4 Nimbleness Set, 5-6 Health and Intellect Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-3 Grasshopper Set, 4-5 Knight Set, 6 Super-Boxer Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-3 Bouncing Ball Set, 4-6 Freight Train Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics Set, 2 Dedicated Fighter Set, 3-4 Patriot Set, 5-6 Tactician Set.

MASTER

This character is a martial arts master. He may not be as good a fighter as other superheroes — mastery of an art does not automatically result in superiority over all others in a superhero environment — but he is a wise, experienced fighter and probably a teacher.

- **Characteristics:** 1-2 Health and Intellect Set, 3-4 Nimbleness Set, 5-6 Brains and Will Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-4 Sensei Set, 5-6 Super-Boxer Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-3 Flight and Sight Set, 4-6 Ground-Pounder Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics Set, 2 Dedicated Fighter Set, 3-4 Spy Set, 5-6 Tactician Set.

MARTIAL MYSTIC

This character has developed martial arts skills while exploring the world of mysticism and the supernatural; he belongs in both the martial world and the occult world.

- **Characteristics:** 1-2 Health and Intellect Set, 3 Nimbleness Set, 4-6 Brains and Will Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-4 Super-Boxer Set, 5-6 Checklist Hero Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1 All-Terrain Set, 2-3 Flight and Sight Set, 4 Ground-Pounder Set, 5-6 Sensory Platform Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics Set, 2 Investigator Set, 3 Patriot Set, 4 Playboy Set, 5-6 Tactician Set.

Mentalist

This character has psychic powers. He may spend most of his non-adventuring time investigating the world of the paranormal, but his psionic abilities are strong enough to make him competitive in the superhero arena.

- **Characteristics:** 1-4 Brains and Will Set, 5-6 Health and Intellect Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-2 Clairvoyant Set, 3-4 Telekinetic Set, 5-6 Telepath Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Ground-Pounder Set, 3-6 Mental Tools Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1-4 Investigator Set, 5-6 Playboy Set.

Metamorph

This character's body is malleable (or he can change form), allowing him a tremendous range of combat and noncombat abilities.

- **Characteristics:** 1-2 Brains and Will Set, 3-5 Health and Intellect Set, 6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-3 Bendi Toy Set, 4-6 Doppelganger Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1 All-Terrain Set, 2-3 Bouncing Ball Set, 4 Fight or Flight Set, 5 Ground-Pounder Set, 6 Wall-Crawler Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Dedicated Fighter Set, 2 Investigator Set, 3 Scientist Set, 4 Spy Set, 5 Tactician Set, 6 Technician Set.

Mystic**BESTOWED/SPIRIT-BONDED**

This character has received his mystic powers as a gift from another being (a god, an archmage, a demon...). His powers usually seem more like innate abilities than spellcasting.

- **Characteristics:** 1-3 Health and Intellect Set, 4-5 Brains and Will Set, 6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1 Brute Strength Set, 2 Checklist Hero Set, 3 Mystic Master Set, 4 Super-Boxer Set, 5

Telekinetic Set, 6 Telepathic Set.

- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 All-Terrain Set, 3-4 Fight or Flight Set, 5-6 Mental Tools Set.

- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics, 2-4 Dedicated Fighter Set, 5 Patriot Set, 6 Tactician Set.

ELEMENTALIST

This character taps the power of primal magical elementalism; he is likely to have powers based around earth, air, fire, water, even metal or wood (elements of the Oriental mystic-element set). This character is more likely to be an instinctive rather than a trained magician.

- **Characteristics:** 1-4 Health and Intellect Set, 5 Brains and Will Set, 6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-2 Checklist Hero Set, 3 Mega-Blast Set, 4 Modulated Blast Set, 5-6 Telekinetic Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1 Earth-Mover Set, 2-4 Fight or Flight Set, 5-6 Flight and Sight Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1-4 Dedicated Fighter Set, 5 Patriot Set, 6 Tactician Set.

SORCERER-SAGE

This character is a trained magician; most of his powers come from spells that are invocations of greater powers. This character is likely to be wise, even serene.

- **Characteristics:** 1-3 Health and Intellect Set, 4-6 Brains and Will Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1 Checklist Hero Set, 2 Modulated Blast Set, 3-4 Mystic Master Set, 5 Summoner Set, 6 Trick Ammo Specialist Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Flight and Sight Set, 3-4 Mental Tools Set, 5-6 Sensory Platform Set.
- **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1-4 Investigator Set, 5-6 Playboy Set.

Powered Armor

Three of the four Powered Armor results required you to re-roll as Brick, Energy Projector, or Weaponmaster.

The fourth option is:

CHECKLIST POWERED ARMOR HERO

This character has built or obtained powered armor (or, for a Gadgeteer, an arsenal of gadgets) that permits him to perform a surprisingly broad set of tasks; he is often considered to be a living multi-tool.

- **Characteristics:** 1-2 Health and Intellect Set, 3-4 Brains and Will Set, 5 Nimbleness Set, 6 Ruggedness Set.
- **Primary Powers:** 1-3 Checklist Hero Set, 4 Mystic Master Set (substitute another special effect for Magic wherever noted), 5-6 Trick Ammo Specialist Set.
- **Secondary Powers:** 1 All-Terrain Set, 2 Fight or Flight Set, 3 Freight Train Set, 4-5 Sensory Platform Set, 6 Space Set.

■ **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Patriot Set, 2 Playboy Set, 3-4 Scientist Set, 5 Tactician Set, 6 Technician Set.

Speedster

This character is accelerated to the point that his sheer speed makes him competitive against supervillains, or has other unusual movement powers.

■ **Characteristics:** 1-3 Health and Intellect Set, 4-6 Nimbleness Set.

■ **Primary Powers:** 1-3 Dimensional Innovator Set, 4-6 Hyper-Combat Set.

■ **Secondary Powers:** 1-2 Freight Train Set, 3-4 Ground-Pounder Set, 5 Space Set, 6 Wall-Crawler Set.

■ **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics, 2 Playboy Set, 3-4 Tactician Set, 5-6 Technician Set.

Weaponmaster

This character uses a single weapon or related power (which may have a great number of variant uses) against his enemies.

■ **Characteristics:** 1 Brains and Will Set, 2-3 Health and Intellect Set, 4-5 Nimbleness Set, 6 Ruggedness Set.

■ **Primary Powers:** 1-2 Super-Warrior Set, 3-4 Trick Ammo Specialist Set, 5-6 Very Big Gun Wielder Set.

■ **Secondary Powers:** 1 Freight Train Set, 2-3 Ground-Pounder Set, 4-6 Sensory Platform Set.

■ **Skills/Perks/Talents:** 1 Acrobatics, 2 Dedicated Fighter Set, 3 Gunman Set, 4 Investigator Set, 5 Spy Set, 6 Tactician Set.

Disadvantages

With the character's beneficial attributes all chosen, you can now begin choosing his Disadvantages as well. The choice of Disadvantages is normally tied very directly to his character conception and background. However, some sets of Disadvantages related to recurrent themes are possible.

Roll on the accompanying table to determine the character's Disadvantages sets, rolling for a number of sets determined by the character's power level.

DISADVANTAGES BY POWER CATEGORY

Power Level	Number Of Sets
Low-Powered	2
Standard	3
High-Powered	3
Very High-Powered	4
Cosmically Powerful	4

If a set doesn't seem right for the character's Powers and Skills, or for the background and origin you have conceived for him, choose another, or re-roll to get a different result. If you prefer, you can simply choose from among the selections rather than roll.

DISADVANTAGE SETS

Roll 3d6	Disadvantages Set
3	Anti-Violence Set
4	Hunter Set
5	Curse Set
6	Infamy Set
7-13	Standard Set
14	Normal Guy Set
15	Radiation Accident Set
16	Tragic Past Set
17	Cultural Alien Set
18	Over-Refined Set

Adjustments

Once you have the basic set of Characteristics, Powers, and Skills/Perks/Talents in place, you can begin fiddling with them.

First, adjust all values according to the power level of the campaign. The values provided in these sets are all designed assuming a Standard campaign; you should modify those values if you are playing at any other power level. Use the accompanying Power Level Adjustments Chart, multiplying the Active Point value of the powers by the number shown in the chart.

Sometimes, things will not be as simple as merely multiplying a point value — for instance, a 4-point Martial Arts maneuver does not multiply up into a 60-point maneuver. Use common sense and dramatic sense when adjusting point values (for instance, by adding Martial Arts maneuvers to a set, by rounding point values to appropriate values for a power, and so on).

Third, when two or more sets contribute to the same Characteristic or power, combine their values if possible. For instance, one set might grant a STR +40 and one a STR +10; put them together for a STR +50, for a total STR of 60. If one set grants a Leaping +5" and another a Leaping +10", combine them into a Leaping +15". In this step, you can also combine separate Multipowers into a single Multipower if you wish, or move powers from one set into the Multipower of another set.

Fourth, when those combinations exceed the GM's maxima or point/effectiveness ceilings for the campaign, you'll need to trim the final power back

POWER LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS CHART

If The Campaign Is	Characteristics	Multiply This Feature By This Amount		
		Primary Powers	Secondary Powers	Skill/Perks/Talents
Low-Powered	x.8	x.75	x.66	x.5
Standard	x1	x1	x1	x1
High-Powered	x1.2	x1.25	x1.33	x1.5
Very High-Powered	x1.6	x2	x1.66	x1.5
Cosmically Powerful	x1.6	x3	x1.66	x1.5

to be within the campaign limits.

Fifth, go through and decide whether to modify any powers or sets of powers with Limitations. The most common, and most appropriate, use of this step is to apply the *Focus* Limitation to some powers — armored skin becomes an armored suit, an Energy Blast becomes a blaster pistol, and so on. For at least one archetype — Powered Armor/Gadgeteer — having Foci is mandatory; it's also almost universal among Weaponmasters.

Sixth, use any points saved through use of Limitations to purchase any additional traits you think the character should have.

DETAILS OF THE SETS

Each of the sets mentioned above is detailed below. The first line gives the name and total cost of the set; subsequent lines break down the components of the set.

Characteristics Sets

Each of these sets costs 125 Character Points.

BRAINS AND WILL SET

This set is optimized for characters who are both smart and forceful of personality.

Cost	Characteristic
5	+5 STR
15	+5 DEX
16	+8 CON
6	+3 BODY
13	+13 INT
26	+13 EGO
13	+13 PRE
5	+5 PD
3	+3 ED
15	+1.5 SPD
8	+4 REC

HEALTH AND INTELLECT SET

This set is optimized for characters who are healthy of body and mind.

Cost	Characteristic
8	+8 STR
30	+10 DEX
20	+10 CON
10	+5 BODY
8	+8 INT
10	+5 EGO
7	+7 PD
4	+4 ED
20	+2 SPD
8	+4 REC

NIMBLENESS SET

This set is optimized for characters best-known for grace and agility, but the term “nimbleness” does reflect a certain keenness of mind as well.

Cost	Characteristic
8	+8 STR
39	+13 DEX
16	+8 CON
6	+3 BODY
5	+5 INT
6	+3 EGO
5	+5 PD
5	+5 ED
27	+2.7 SPD
8	+4 REC

RUGGEDNESS SET

This set is optimized for someone who is tough of body and, to a certain extent, of spirit.

Cost	Characteristic
8	+8 STR
30	+10 DEX
20	+10 CON
10	+5 BODY
10	+5 EGO
5	+5 PRE
8	+8 PD
6	+6 ED
20	+2 SPD
2	+1 REC
6	+6 STUN

Primary Powers Sets

Each of these sets costs 100 Character Points.

BENDY TOY SET

This set is suitable for a superhuman who can mold and stretch his malleable body to accomplish tasks.

Cost	Power
30	<i>Malleable Body</i> : Stretching 4"; Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
40	<i>Stretching Powers</i> : Multipower, 40-point reserve
1u	1) <i>Molding To Surfaces</i> : Clinging (normal STR)
3u	2) <i>Resilient Form</i> : Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%
1u	3) <i>Pseudopods</i> : Extra Limbs (as many as desired)
1u	4) <i>Parawing Form</i> : Gliding 15"
2u	5) <i>Big, Hard Hands</i> : HA +6d6; Hand-to-Hand Attack (-½)
1u	6) <i>Clothing Mimicry</i> : Cosmetic Transform 2d6 (Instant Change)
1u	7) <i>Spring-Legs</i> : Leaping +15"
4u	8) <i>Bouncing Missiles</i> : Missile Deflection (arrows/projectiles), +5 OCV, Range (+1)
4u	9) <i>Long, Stretchy Legs</i> : Running +20" (26" total)

RANDOM ADVANTAGES

If you'd like to randomly determine one or more Advantages for an ability your character acquires as part of a power set, use the following tables. If you get an inappropriate result, roll again.

+¼ Advantages

Roll one die to determine which table to roll on, and one die to determine results on that table.

First roll:

1-2 = Table 1

3-4 = Table 2

5-6 = Table 3

Table 1

- 1: Affects Desolidified (single special effect)
- 2: Autofire (2-3 shots)
- 3: 32 Charges
- 4: Delayed Effect
- 5: Difficult To Dispel
- 6: Does Knockback

Table 2

- 1: Hole In The Middle (fixed hole)
- 2: Indirect (choose appropriate effect)
- 3: Increased Maximum Range (x5)
- 4: Invisible Power Effects (choose appropriate effect)
- 5: MegaScale (1" = 1 km)
- 6: Personal Immunity

Table 3

- 1: Reduced Endurance (½ END)
- 2: Sticky
- 3: Time Delay
- 4: Trigger (set trigger)
- 5: Usable By Other
- 6: Variable Special Effects (limited group)

+½ Advantages

Roll one die to determine which table to roll on, and one die to determine results on that table.

Continued from last page

First roll:

- 1 = Table 1
2 = Table 2
3 = Table 3
4-5 = Table 4
6 = Table 5

Table 1

- 1: Affects Desolidified
2: Area Of Effect (One Hex)
3: Armor Piercing
4: Autofire (5 shots)
5: 64 Charges
6: Cumulative

Table 2

- 1: Damage Shield
2: Double Knockback (x1½)
3: Explosion
4: Hole In The Middle (variable)
5: Increased Maximum Range (x25)
6: Indirect (choose appropriate effect)

Table 3

- 1: Invisible Power Effects (choose appropriate effect)
2: Line Of Sight
3: MegaScale (1" = 10 km)
4: NND (equally common defense)
5: No Range Modifier
6: Penetrating

Table 4

- 1: Persistent
2: Ranged
3-5: Reduced Endurance (0 END)
6: Sticky

Table 5

- 1: Transdimensional
2: Trigger (variable trigger)
3: Uncontrolled
4: Usable On Others (choose appropriate effect)
5: Variable Advantage (+¼ Advantages)
6: Variable Special Effects (any special effect)

- 4u 10) *Shapechanging*: Shape Shift (Sight, Touch, and Radio Groups, any shape)
8m 11) *Enhanced Malleability*: Stretching +8"

BRUTE STRENGTH SET

This set is for Brick characters who have a very simple set of powers — they do nothing more than dish out and take a lot of damage.

Cost Power

- 75 *Super-Strength*: +60 STR; Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)
21 *Tough Skin*: Damage Resistance (18 PD/10 ED); Hardened (x2; +½)
4 *Heavy*: Knockback Resistance -2"

CHECKLIST HERO SET

This set is for characters who try to be all things to all situations, such as many Gadgeteers. You can easily create even more different types of characters by substituting a few powers here and there.

Cost Power

- 20 *Fighting Skills*: Martial Arts (choice of 20 points' worth of Maneuvers)
40 *Bunch Of Useful Abilities*: Multipower (60-point reserve); choose -½ worth of Limitations (OIF, Requires A Skill Roll, Activation Roll 14-, or the like) and apply them to the reserve and to each slot
3u 1) *Bodily Safety*: Life Support: Total
2u 2) *Booster*: Aid 3d6 (choice of affected Characteristic or Power)
3u 3) *Deadly Attack*: RKA 2½d6
4u 4) *Defense Shield*: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%
1u 5) *Enhanced Personal Defenses*: Force Field (10 PD/10 ED)
1u 6) *Heat Sensing*: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)
1u 7) *Heightened Vision*: +8 versus Range for Sight Group
1u 8) *Improved Reach*: Stretching 4"
3u 9) *Intangibility*: Desolidification
3u 10) *Invisibility Screen*: Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
4u 11) *Mental Blast*: Ego Attack 6d6
4u 12) *Power-Blast*: Energy Blast 12d6
1u 13) *Radar*: Radar (Radio Group)
2u 14) *Size Increase*: Growth (+30 STR, +6 BODY, +6 STUN, -6 KB, 6,400 kg, -4 DCV, +4 PER Rolls to perceive character, 8 m tall, 4 m wide)
1u 15) *Size Reduction*: Shrinking (.5 m tall, 1.6 kg mass, -4 to PER Rolls to perceive character, -4 DCV, takes +6 KB)
3u 16) *Strength Enhancer*: +60 STR (60 Active Points); No Figured Characteristics (-½)
2u 17) *Telekinetic Manipulation*: Telekinesis (20 STR)
1u 18) *UV Sensing*: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)

CLAIRVOYANT SET

This set is for characters who can detect danger and images from the past and future. This type of Clairvoyant has Martial Arts not as a result of study and training, but simply because he knows which attacks are coming and has a sense of where he should counter-attack.

Cost Power

- 20 *Fighting Skills*: Martial Arts (choice of 20 points' worth of Maneuvers)
24 *Premonitions*: Danger Sense (self only, out of combat) (PER Roll +4)
56 *Foresight*: Precognitive and Retrocognitive Clairsentience, Sight and Hearing Groups; Concentration (½ DCV; -¼)

DENSITY SET

This set is for Brick characters who increase their density.

Cost Power

- 60 *Density Alteration*: Density Increase (400,000 kg mass, +60 STR, +12 PD/ED, -12 KB)
36 *Superhard Skin*: Armor (12 PD/12 ED)
4 *Too Heavy To Shove*: Knockback Resistance -2"

DIMENSIONAL INNOVATOR SET

This set belongs to Speedsters whose powers affect the very fabric of reality, or work via dimensional manipulation of some sort.

Cost Power

- 60 *Dimensional Manipulation Movement*: Multipower, 60-point reserve
12m 1) *Hyperrunning*: Running +24"; Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)
4u 2) *Hyperdimensional Movement*: Flight 18", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼)
2u 3) *Running On Air*: Gliding 16"
3u 4) *Hyperkinetic Strike*: HA +9d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)
4u 5) *Attack Avoidance*: Missile Deflection (all Ranged attacks), Range (+1)
6u 6) *Phase Shifting*: Desolidification (affected by magic or dimension-based powers), Usable Simultaneously (+½)
6u 7) *Running Between Dimensions*: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in a related group of dimensions [alternate Earths]), x4 Increased Weight, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
2u 8) *Afterimages*: Sight Group Images, -8 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (8" radius; +¾); No Range (-½), Set Effect (multiple images of self; -1)
1u 9) *Quick-Change Artist*: Cosmetic Transform 2d6 (Instant Change)

Continued on next page

DOPPELGANGER SET.

This set is for Metamorphs who can change their shape.

Cost Power

- 45 *Alternate Form: Shape Shift* (Sight, Hearing, and Touch Groups, any shape), Cost Endurance Only To Change Shape (+1/4)
 55 *Animal Forms: Multiform* (change shape into any eight animal forms, chosen during character creation, of up to 200 points each)

GRASSHOPPER SET

This set belongs to martial artists who bounce around the landscape in a frenetic fashion.

Cost Power

- 30 *Well-Honed Reflexes*: +10 DEX
 20 *Fighting Style*: Martial Arts (choice of 20 points' worth of Maneuvers)
 16 *Fighting Prowess*: +4 Extra DCs for Martial Arts
 15 *Wuxia Leaping*: Leaping +15"
 19 *Attack Avoidance*: Missile Deflection (bullets/shrapnel), +2 OCV

GROWTH SET

This set belongs to Bricks who like to get big and stomp hard.

Cost Power

- 60 *Size Increase*: Growth (+60 STR, +12 BODY, +12 STUN, -12 KB, 400,000 kg, -8 DCV, +8 PER Rolls to perceive character, 32 m tall, 16 m wide)
 24 *Long Legs*: Running +12"
 16 *Tough Skin*: Damage Resistance (20 PD/12 ED)

HYPER-COMBAT SET

This set indicates someone who uses super-speed powers chiefly to hammer on targets.

Cost Power

- 48 *Super-Running*: Running +24" (30" total)
 40 *Speedster Powers*: Multipower, 40-point reserve
 2u 1) *Impact Resistance*: Armor (26 PD/0 ED); Only To Protect Against Damage Sustained When Performing Move Throughs/Move Bys (-1)
 3u 2) *Rapid-Fire Punch I*: HA +8d6; Hand-to-Hand Attack (-½)
 2u 3) *Rapid-Fire Punch II*: HA +5d6; Autofire (5 shots; +½); Hand-to-Hand Attack -½)
 4u 4) *Friction Attack*: HKA 2½d6
 1u 5) *Heightened Reactions*: +1 SPD; Costs Endurance (-½)

KNIGHT SET

This set belongs to Martial Artists who tend to use weapons or weapon-like powers in addition to Martial Arts.

Cost Power

- 13 *Well-Developed Muscles*: +13 STR
 20 *Fighting Style*: Martial Arts (choice of 20 points' worth of Maneuvers)
 3 *Martial Arts Weapons*: Use Martial Arts with Choice of 3 Weapons Groups
 27 *Iron Skin*: Armor (9 PD/9 ED)
 37 *Killing Blow*: HKA 1½d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)

Optional substitution: replace Martial Arts Weapons and Killing Blow with Swinging 20" and an HKA 1d6+1.

MARTIAL ARTS SETS

Wherever a set indicates a character has a choice of Martial Arts, he can choose up to 20 points' worth of Martial Maneuvers. If he pleases, he can choose from or roll between these four sets (some of which include Martial Maneuvers from *The Ultimate Martial Artist*); each set costs 20 points.

1-2 — *Hard Style*: Fast Strike (4 points), Killing Strike (4 points), Martial Block (4 points), Offensive Strike (5 points), Takedown (3 points).

3-4 — *Soft Style*: Defensive Block (5 points), Defensive Strike (5 points), Legsweep (3 points), Martial Dodge (4 points), Martial Throw (3 points).

5 — *Weapons Style*: Basic Strike (3 points), Martial Block (4 points), Martial Disarm (4 points), Martial Weapon Strike (4 points), Offensive Weapon Strike (5 points).

6 — *Shoving Style*: Martial Escape (4 points), Martial Grab (3 points), Root (4 points), Shove (4 points), Sacrifice Strike (5 points).

MEGA-BLAST SET

This set is for Energy Projectors who hit their targets very hard but don't exhibit a lot of versatility.

Cost Power

- 13 *Energy Resistance*: +13 ED
 87 *Mega-Blast*: Energy Blast 14d6; Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)

MODULATED BLAST SET

This set is for Energy Projectors who know how to modulate their energy emissions to perform different tasks.

Cost Power

- 75 *Energy Powers*: Multipower, 75-point reserve
 7u 1) *Basic Blast*: Energy Blast 10d6; Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
 7u 2) *Explosive Blast*: Energy Blast 10d6; Explosion (+½)
 7u 3) *Piercing Blast*: Energy Blast 10d6; Armor Piercing (+½)
 4u 4) *Deadly Blast*: RKA 3d6

Continued from last page

+1 Advantages

Roll one die to determine which table to roll on, and one die to determine results on that table.

First roll:

- 1-2 = Table 1
 3-4 = Table 2
 5-6 = Table 3

Table 1

- 1-4: Any two +½ Advantages
 5: Area Of Effect
 6: Armor Piercing (x2)

Table 2

- 1: Autofire (6-10 shots)
 2: BOECV
 3: Continuous
 4: Explosion (-1 DC/3")
 5: Indirect (choose appropriate effect)
 6: Invisible Power Effects (choose appropriate effect)

Table 3

- 1: MegaScale (1" = 1,000 km)
 2: NND
 3: Penetrating (x2)
 4: Transdimensional (choose appropriate effect)
 5: Usable On Others (choose appropriate effect)
 6: Variable Advantage (+½ Advantages)

RANDOM LIMITATIONS

If you'd like to randomly determine one or more Limitations for an ability your character acquires as part of a power set, use the following tables. If you get an inappropriate result, roll again.

-¼ Limitations

Roll one die to determine which table to roll on, and one die to determine results on that table.

First roll:

1-2 = Table 1

3-4 = Table 2

5-6 = Table 3

Table 1

1: Activation Roll (choose appropriate effect)

2-3: Charges (choose appropriate effect)

4: Concentration (½ DCV)

5: Extra Time (Delayed Phase)

6: Gestures

Table 2

1: Focus (IIF)

2: Incantations

3-5: Limited Power (choose appropriate effect)

6: Limited Range

Table 3

1: OIHID

2: Reduced By Range

3: Reduced Penetration

4: Requires A Skill Roll (choose appropriate effect)

5: Side Effects (choose appropriate effect)

6: Visible

-½ Limitations

Roll one die to determine which table to roll on, and one die to determine results on that table.

First roll:

1-2 = Table 1

3-4 = Table 2

5-6 = Table 3

MYSTIC MASTER SET

This set is for Mystics who can create a broad range of magical effects. By altering the special effects (and perhaps a few of the Powers), you can use this set for other types of characters as well.

Cost Power

- 53 *Mystic Powers:* Multipower, 80-point reserve; choose -½ worth of Limitations (Activation Roll 14-, Concentration, Gestures, Incantations, Requires A Skill Roll, or the like) and apply them to the reserve and to each slot
- 4u 1) *Æthereal Form:* Desolidification (affected by magic), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
- 3u 2) *Bright Flames Of The Valdar:* RKA 2½d6
- 1u 3) *Cloak Of The Unseen:* Invisibility to Sight Group
- 2u 4) *Dampen Magic:* Suppress Magic 5d6, any Magic power one at a time (+¼)
- 5u 5) *Disrupt Magic:* Dispel Magic 21d6, any Magic power one at a time (+¼)
- 2u 6) *Farsensing:* Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 2x Range (300")
- 4u 7) *Invoked Shadows:* Darkness to Sight Group 6" radius
- 4u 8) *Magical Enhancement:* Aid 2d6, all Magic powers simultaneously (+2)
- 3u 9) *Pathways Of The Adepts:* Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in any dimension), x4 Increased Weight
- 3u 10) *Shield Of The Aandiri:* Force Wall (10 PD/10 ED)
- 5u 11) *Siphon Magic:* Drain Magic 4d6, any Magic power one at a time (+¼), Ranged (+½)
- 3u 12) *Torments Of The Mind:* Ego Attack 5d6
- 3u 13) *Valdarian Fire:* Energy Blast 10d6
- 3u 14) *Valdarian Lights:* Sight Group Flash 10d6
- 2u 15) *Touch Of The Spriggan:* Growth (+30 STR, +6 BODY, +6 STUN, -6 KB, 6,400 kg, -4 DCV, +4 PER Rolls to perceive character, 8 m tall, 4 m wide), Costs Endurance Only To Activate (+¼)

SENSEI SET

This set is for experienced martial-arts teachers.

Cost Power

- 20 *Fighting Style:* Martial Arts (choice of 20 points' worth of Maneuvers)
- 20 *Fighting Style:* another Martial Art (choice of 20 points' worth of Maneuvers)
- 20 *Fighting Prowess:* +5 Extra DCs for Martial Arts
- 5 *Martial Arts Weapons:* Use Martial Arts with Choice of 5 Weapons Groups
- 35 *Sensei's Strike:* Find Weakness 16- with one attack type

SNIPER BLAST SET

This set is for Energy Projectors who are adept at hitting targets from a very long away, often with the advantage of surprise.

Cost Power

- 100 *Energy Blast* 10d6, Armor Piercing (+½), No Range Modifier (+½)

STRENGTH PROJECTOR SET

This set is for Bricks who can do more with their Strength powers than merely hit things.

Cost Power

- 21 *Armored Skin:* Armor (7 PD/7 ED)
- 60 *Strength Tricks:* Multipower, 60-point reserve
- 4u 1) *Controlled Adrenaline Rush:* +40 STR; Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Figured Characteristics (-½)
- 4u 2) *Concussive Hand-Clap:* Energy Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)
- 5u 3) *Rending And Tearing:* HKA 2½d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)
- 4u 4) *Allmighty Smackdown:* HA +8d6; Auto-fire (5 shots; +½); Hand-to-Hand Attack (-½)
- 2u 5) *Super-Strong Legs:* Leaping +25"

SUMMONER SET

This set is for Mystics whose normal tactic is to summon magical creatures to deal with an enemy. In this structure, the Mystic can summon four 100-point creatures and has Mind Control with which to control them, if necessary.

Cost Power

- 75 *Conjuration:* Summon 4 100-point creatures (defined by character), Expanded Class (defined by character; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
- 25 *Conjuror's Control:* Mind Control 8d6, Telepathic (+¼); Only Works Against Summoned Creatures (-1)

SUPER-BOXER SET

This set is for characters with extraordinary physical abilities derived from nearly mystical martial arts techniques.

Cost Power

- 30 *Fighting Style:* Martial Arts (choice of 30 points' worth of Maneuvers and Extra DCs)
- 10 *Ch'i-Powered Leaping:* Leaping +10"
- 40 *Ch'i Powers:* Multipower, 40-point reserve
- 4u 1) *Ch'i Control:* Simplified Healing 4d6
- 3u 2) *Iron Shirt:* Armor (12 PD/12 ED); Activation Roll 15- (-¼)
- 4u 3) *Lei Kung's Fire:* Energy Blast 8d6
- 3u 4) *Ox-Felling Blow:* HKA 2d6 (plus STR)
- 4u 5) *Sublime Energy Control:* Missile Deflection and Reflection (all Ranged attacks)
- 1u 6) *Unshakable Balance:* Flight 5"; Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼), Only To Stand And Move On Small, Fragile Surfaces (-½)

- 1u 7) *Wire-Fu Wall-Scaling*: Clinging (normal STR); Requires An Acrobatics Roll (-½)

SUPER-WARRIOR SET

This set is for characters who have a superhumanly broad range of combat abilities.

Cost Power

- 15 Combat Sense (PER Roll)
 5 Defense Maneuver II
 15 *Deadly Aim*: Find Weakness 12- with one attack type
 18 *Combat Protection*: Armor (6 PD/6 ED)
 22 *Power Strike*: HA +9d6; Hand-to-Hand Attack (-½) plus one additional -½ Limitation of choice (Activation Roll 14-, OIF, IAF, or the like)
 15 *Ducking And Dodging*: Missile Deflection (bullets/shrapnel) or +3 DCV
 10 *Swift*: Running +5"

TELEKINETIC SET

This set is for Mentalists and some other archetypes adept at moving objects with their minds.

Cost Power

- 60 *Telekinetic Mastery*: Multipower, 60-point reserve
 6u 1) *Telekinetic Manipulation I*: Telekinesis (40 STR)
 6u 2) *Telekinetic Manipulation II*: Telekinesis (32 STR), Fine Manipulation
 6u 3) *Telekinetic Manipulation III*: Telekinesis (26 STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
 6u 4) *Telekinetic Blast*: Energy Blast 12d6
 3u 5) *Telekinetic Bubble*: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing), Usable Simultaneously (up to 8 people at once; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½)
 3u 6) *Telekinetic Flight*: Flight 15"
 1u 7) *Telekinetic Sensing*: Detect Limited Class Of Physical Objects (PER Roll) (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Range
 5u 8) *Telekinetic Shield*: Force Field (18 PD/18 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
 4u 9) *Whirling Dust And Debris*: Darkness to Sight Group 4" radius, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (sufficient dust and debris of opportunity; -½)

TELEPATHIC SET

This set is for mentalists who specialize in mind-to-mind contact.

Cost Power

- 5 *Psychic Defenses*: Mental Defense (5 points, plus points from EGO)
 20 *Psychic Communication*: Mind Link, specific group of up to 4 minds at once (teammates)
 50 *Telepathic Powers*: Multipower, 50-point reserve
 5u 1) *Psychic Communication*: Telepathy 10d6
 5u 2) *Mental Assault*: Ego Attack 5d6
 3u 3) *Psychic Domination*: Mind Control 10d6;

- Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)
 5u 4) *Inflicted Hallucinations*: Mental Illusions 10d6
 2u 5) *Psychic Searchwaves*: Mind Scan 10d6; Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1)
 2u 6) *Premonitions*: Danger Sense (self only, out of combat, any danger) (PER Roll)
 3u 7) *Mindsense*: Detect Minds (PER Roll) (Mental Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Sense, Targeting Sense

TRICK AMMO SPECIALIST SET

This set is for characters who have a vast number of different attacks available to them (typically through a weapon, such as a gun or bow).

Cost Power

- 60 *Trick Ammo*: Multipower, 60-point reserve
 2u 1) *Air Concussion Ammo*: Dispel Darkness 10d6, Area Of Effect (3" Radius; +1); Only Versus Smokes, Mists, And Related Dark-nesses (-½), 4 Charges (-1)
 4u 2) *Blast Ammo*: Energy Blast 12d6; 8 Charges (-½)
 6u 3) *Deadly Ammo*: RKA 4d6; Charges 16 (-0)
 4u 4) *Explosive Ammo*: Energy Blast 8d6, Explosion (+½); 8 Charges (-½)
 3u 5) *Flare Ammo*: Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (3" Radius; +1); 4 Charges (-1)
 4u 6) *Glue Ammo*: Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF; 8 Charges (-½)
 2u 7) *Line Ammo*: Stretching 12"; 2 Recoverable Charges (-1), Only For Grabbing, Pulling, And Climbing (-1)
 4u 8) *Neural Interference Ammo*: Drain STR 4d6, Ranged (+½); 8 Charges (-½)
 5u 9) *Smoke Ammo*: Darkness to Sight Group 6" radius; 4 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (-¼)
 6u 10) *Swingline Ammo*: Swinging +60"; 8 Recoverable Charges (-0)

VERY BIG GUN WIELDER SET

This set is for a character who has a powerful weapon with a fair number of different functions. You can substitute Ranged Killing Attacks for Energy Blasts in this design at an exchange rate of 1 DC Killing per 1d6 Normal. Following the usual practice in this section, the *Focus* Limitation has not been applied yet, so you could use this set as-is for a character with powerful natural attacks (provided you could justify the Charges as part of his special effect, or substituted a different Power Modifier with the same value).

Cost Power

- 6 +2 with Multipower
 75 *Very Big Weapon*: Multipower, 75-point reserve
 7u 1) *Main Blast*: Energy Blast 12d6, 32 Charges (+¼)
 7u 2) *Auto-Blast*: Energy Blast 7d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½)
 5u 3) *Explosive Blast*: Energy Blast 10d6, Explosion (+½); 8 Charges (-½)

Continued from last page

Table 1

- 1: Activation Roll (choose appropriate effect)
- 2: Charges (choose appropriate effect)
- 3: Concentration (0 DCV)
- 4: Costs Endurance
- 5: Extra Time (choose appropriate effect)
- 6: Any two -¼ Limitations

Table 2

- 1-2: Focus (OIF or IAF)
- 3: Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END)
- 4: Instant
- 5: No Range
- 6: Any two -¼ Limitations

Table 3

- 1-3: Limited Power (choose appropriate effect)
- 4: Requires A Skill Roll (choose appropriate effect)
- 5: Side Effects (choose appropriate effect)
- 6: Variable Limitation (-¼ Limitations)

-1 Limitations

Roll one die to determine which table to roll on, and one die to determine results on that table.

First roll:

- 1-3 = Table 1
- 4-6 = Table 2

Table 1

- 1: Activation Roll (choose appropriate effect)
- 2: Charges (choose appropriate effect)
- 3: Concentration (0 DCV throughout)
- 4: Extra Time (choose appropriate effect)
- 5: Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END)
- 6: Side Effects (choose appropriate effect)

Table 2

- 1-2: Focus (OAF)
- 3-4: Limited Power

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(choose appropriate effect)

5: Requires A Skill Roll (choose appropriate effect)

6: Any two -½ Limitations

Secondary Powers Sets

These sets all cost 75 Character Points. Each provides some mobility and some defenses, and many provide other powers as well.

ALL-TERRAIN SET

This set allows a character to move through most environments.

Cost Power

- 15 *Toughness*: Armor (5 PD/5 ED)
- 2 *Environmental Immunity*: Life Support (Safe Environment: Low Pressure/Vacuum)
- 2 *Environmental Immunity*: Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation)
- 2 *Environmental Immunity*: Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)
- 2 *Environmental Immunity*: Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Heat)
- 10 *Environmental Immunity*: Life Support (Safe Environment: Self-Contained Breathing)
- 30 *All-Terrain Travel*: Multipower, 30-point reserve
- 1u 1) *Wall-Walking*: Clinging (normal STR)
- 3u 2) *Flying*: Flight 15"
- 3u 3) *Glide-Capable*: Gliding 30"
- 2u 4) *Runs Like The Wind*: Running +10" (16" total)
- 2u 5) *Swims Like A Fish*: Swimming +18" (20" total)
- 1u 6) *Digging*: Tunneling 2" through DEF 2 material

BOUNCING BALL SET

This set is for characters who have superhuman leaping or bouncing abilities.

Cost Power

- 36 *Toughness*: Armor (12 PD/12 ED)
- 9 *Heightened Senses*: +3 PER to all Sense Groups
- 30 *Prodigious Leaping*: Leaping +30"

EARTH-MOVER SET

This set is for characters who move through the earth; their powers allow them to move very quickly atop it as well.

Cost Power

- 21 *Toughness*: Armor (7 PD/7 ED)
- 5 *Underground Breathing*: Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underground)
- 40 *Earth Movement*: Multipower, 40-point reserve
- 3u 1) *Avalanche Riding*: Running +20" (26" total), Side Effects (ground/pavement underneath character's feet suffers 2d6 Killing Damage; -½)
- 4u 2) *Delving*: Tunneling 8" through DEF 8 materials
- 1u 3) *Earthwalls*: Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF; Only To Form Barriers (-1), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)
- 1u 4) *Earthmoving*: Telekinesis (20 STR); Only Versus Earth/Rock (-1)

FIGHT OR FLIGHT SET

This set provides a very simple group of flight and defensive powers.

Cost Power

- 18 *Toughness*: Armor (6 PD/6 ED)
- 50 *Flying*: Flight 20", x8 Noncombat
- 7 *Aerial Dodger*: +2 DCV; Only When Flying (-½)

FLIGHT AND SIGHT SET

This set provides flying, some defensive, and decent perception powers.

Cost Power

- 9 *Toughness*: Damage Resistance (9 PD/9 ED)
- 40 *Flying*: Flight 20"
- 10 *Keen Eyes*: +5 PER with Sight Group
- 6 *Keen Eyes*: +4 versus Range for Sight Group
- 10 *X-Ray Vision*: N-Ray Perception (stopped by lead, gold, or Force Fields) (Sight Group)

FREIGHT TRAIN SET

This set is for characters who run very fast (but normally lack Speedster-level powers) and like to run into targets very hard.

Cost Power

- 39 *Impact Resistance*: Armor (13 PD/13 ED)
- 6 *Impact Resistance*: +6 PD
- 30 *Runs Like The Wind*: Running +15" (21" total)

GROUND-POUNDER SET

This set is for characters who have to run to get to the scene of the action, are capable of incredible leaps when they need them, and have a sufficient affinity for being on the ground that they don't get knocked off their feet as often as some others.

Cost Power

- 12 *Toughness*: Damage Resistance (12 PD/12 ED)
- 8 *Rooted*: Knockback Resistance -4"
- 10 *Incredible Leaping*: Leaping +10"
- 45 *Runs Like The Wind*: Running +20" (26" total), x4 Noncombat

MENTAL TOOLS SET

This set is for psychics whose telekinetic powers allow them to fly around and resist damage.

Cost Power

- 15 *Mindsense*: Detect Minds (PER Roll) (Mental Sense Group), Analyze, Discriminatory
- 20 *Telekinetic Powers*: Elemental Control, 40-point powers
- 20 1) *Telekinetic Flight*: Flight 20"
- 20 2) *Telekinetic Shield*: Force Field (20 PD/20 ED)

SENSORY PLATFORM SET

This set is for characters with a broad array of sensory powers. Such characters often have some flight and defensive powers as well, though the rationale for those powers is usually tied up in the character's origin rather than being related to the sensory suite.

Cost Power

- 10 *Toughness*: Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)
- 20 *Flying*: Flight 10"
- 15 *Heightened Awareness*: +5 PER with all Sense Groups
- 5 *Heat-Sight*: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)
- 10 *Unstoppable Perception*: N-Ray Perception (player chooses Sense Group and defines nature of power)
- 15 *Radar-Sense*: Radar (Radio Sense Group)

SPACE SET

This set is for characters who fly into outer space.

Cost Power

- 12 *Toughness*: Armor (4 PD/4 ED)
- 8 *Radio-Sense*: Radio Perception
- 19 *Spaceworthy*: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: Low Pressure/Vacuum, High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat)
- 30 *Space Traveler*: Multipower, 30-point reserve
- 3u 1) *Flying*: Flight 15"
- 3u 2) *FTL Flight*: FTL Travel (1,000 LY/Year)

WALL-CRAWLER SET

This set is for characters who can run across walls as easily as they can across level ground, whether because of super-speed powers, telekinetic powers, insectile powers, or something even stranger.

Cost Power

- 10 *Wall-Walking*: Clinging (normal STR)
- 9 *Toughness*: Damage Resistance (9 PD/9 ED)
- 40 *Wallcrawling Powers*: Multipower, 40-point reserve
- 4m 1) *Incredible Leaping*: Leaping +20"
- 6m 2) *Run Like The Wind*: Running +15"
- 6m 3) *Swingline*: Swinging +30"

Skills/Perks/Talents Sets

All these sets cost 50 points each. Most have up to 11 points assigned to "Personality/Background Skills" of the player's choice, to allow for the purchase of Skills appropriate for the specific character as the player conceives of him. Because the exact roll depends on the character's Characteristics, rolls are not listed (but note that some are bought with boni — for example, 7 points spent on Acrobatics gives a character a DEX Roll +2).

ACROBAT SET

This set is for characters who have tremendous gymnastic and balance skills.

Cost Skill

- 7 Acrobatics
- 7 Breakfall
- 15 Combat Skill Levels: +3 with HTH or Ranged Combat (player's choice)
- 3 Contortionist
- 10 Martial Arts (choice of 10 points' worth of Maneuvers)
- 8 Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)

DEDICATED FIGHTER SET

This set is for characters whose lives revolve around fighting.

Cost Skill

- 3 Acrobatics
- 3 Breakfall
- 30 Combat Skill Levels: +6 with HTH or Ranged Combat (player's choice)
- 11 Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)
- 3 Absolute Range Sense

GUNMAN SET

This set is for characters who specialize in ranged attacks.

Cost Skill

- 20 Combat Skill Levels: +4 with Ranged Combat
- 5 Fast Draw
- 10 Range Skill Levels: +5 level with Tight Ranged Group
- 2 Weapon Familiarity: Small Arms
- 3 Weaponsmith (Firearms, Muscle-Powered HTH)
- 10 Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)

INVESTIGATOR SET

This set is for characters whose profession or superhero motif involves investigation. It is suited to detectives, mystic researchers, and the like.

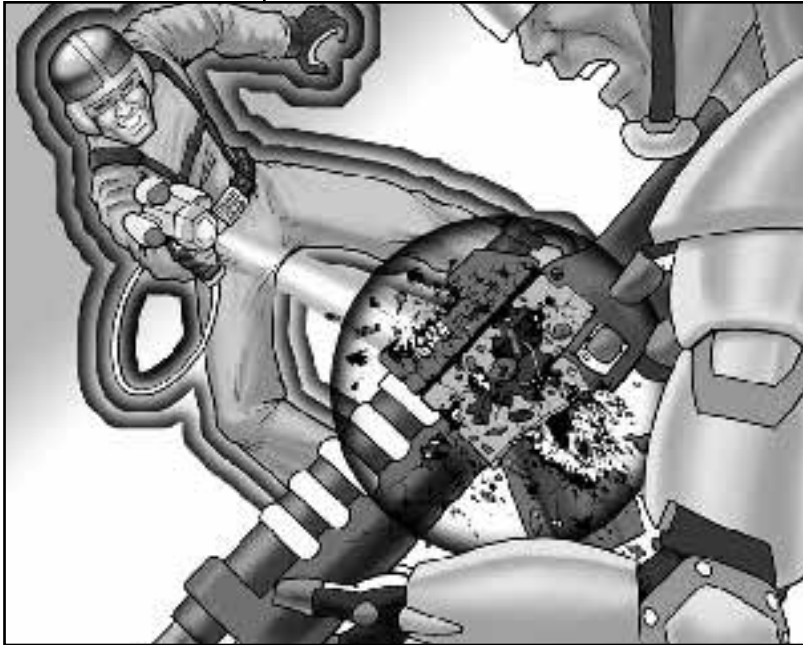
Cost Skill

- 3 Bribery
- 3 Bugging
- 3 Bureaucratics
- 5 Conversation
- 3 Criminology
- 7 Deduction
- 3 Interrogation
- 2 Area Knowledge: Campaign Area 11-
- 2 City Knowledge: Campaign City 11-
- 3 Persuasion
- 3 Shadowing
- 3 Streetwise
- 10 Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)

PATRIOT SET

This set is for characters who belong to the Patriot archetype. It is a broad mix of Skills allowing the character to be proficient at a number of different tasks; it is versatile but lacks the focus of other Skill sets.

Cost	Skill
5	+5 PRE
3	Acrobatics
3	Breakfall
10	Combat Skill Levels: +2 with HTH or Ranged Combat (player's choice)
3	Conversation
4	Area Knowledge: Home Nation
3	Oratory
3	Paramedics
3	Persuasion
3	Tactics
10	Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)

**PLAYBOY SET**

This set is for characters who have a lot of wealth to back up their crimefighting interests.

Cost	Skill
3	Conversation
3	High Society
10	Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)
15	Money: Filthy Rich
19	Vehicle or Base, 95-point

SCIENTIST SET

This set is for characters who develop their own powers in the laboratory.

Cost	Skill
10	+10 INT
7	Science Skills: player's choice of seven Sci-

ence Skills at 11- each

10	Skill Levels: +2 with All Science Skills
3	Scientist
10	Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)
10	Base (Laboratory), 50-point

SPY SET

This set is for characters whose skills lean toward espionage or perhaps even assassination.

Cost	Skill
3	Acting
3	Bribery
3	Bugging
3	Combat Driving or Piloting (player's choice)
3	Concealment
3	Conversation
3	Cryptography
3	Disguise
3	Lockpicking
3	Security Systems
3	Seduction
3	Stealth
3	Systems Operation
11	Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)

TACTICIAN SET

This set is for characters who are adept at battlefield tactics; such characters are likely to be the battle coordinators for their teams.

Cost	Skill
12	+4 PER with all Sense Groups
5	Combat Skill Level: +1 with HTH or Ranged Combat (player's choice)
5	Defense Maneuver II
5	Tactics
8	Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)
15	Danger Sense (self only, in combat) (PER Roll)

TECHNICIAN SET

This set is for characters who work extensively with machinery, including gadgeteers and inventors.

Cost	Skill
3	Computer Programming
3	Demolitions
3	Electronics
3	Inventor
3	Mechanics
4	Science Skills: player's choice of two Science Skills at 11- each
3	Security Systems
15	Skill Levels: +3 level with Technical Skills
3	Systems Operation
10	Personality/Background Skills (player's choice)

Disadvantages Sets

Each of the following sets provides 50 points' worth of Disadvantages for the character. A character may have several sets, up to the campaign Disadvantage point limit.

STANDARD SET

Value Disadvantage

- 15 Hunted: Personal Enemy 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity

ANTI-VIOLENCE SET

Value Disadvantage

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Pacifist; Refuses To Injure Or Harm Others (Very Common, Strong)
- 30 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Physical Attacks *or* Energy Attacks (player's choice) (Very Common)

CULTURAL ALIEN SET

Value Disadvantage

- 5 Distinctive Features: Rube (Easily Concealed, Noticed and Recognizable)
- 10 Enraged: when insulted through cultural misunderstandings (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 14-
- 10 Hunted: the authorities 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Unfamiliar With Earth Culture (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Naive (Very Common, Moderate)

CURSE SET

Value Disadvantage

- 15 Accidental Change (choose appropriate circumstances) 11-
- 15 Enraged/Berserk (player's choice of conditions)
- 15 Distinctive Features: monstrous/cursed form (Easily Concealed, Causes Extreme Fear or Disgust)
- 5 Unluck 1d6

HUNTER SET

Value Disadvantage

- 10 Distinctive Features: Obsessive, Creepy Manner (Easily Concealed, Always Noticed and Causes Major Reaction)
- 15 Hunted: Personal Enemy 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hunting Personal Enemy (Common, Strong)

INFAMY SET

Value Disadvantage

- 5 Hunted: the press 8- (Less Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Hunted: Personal Enemy Character Has Wronged 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (may not be taken with Standard Set unless a different Disadvantage is substituted for this one)
- 15 Reputation: Did Something Very Bad, 11- (Extreme)

NORMAL GUY SET

Value Disadvantage

- 15 DNPC (choose appropriate circumstances)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Overcompensates For Lack Of True Powers (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Vulnerability: 1½ x STUN from Falling and Knockback Damage (Very Common)

OVER-REFINED SET

This set is for characters whose extreme training regimens and diets leave them vulnerable to environmental circumstances other people have no problem with.

Value Disadvantage

- 10 Physical Limitation: Must Maintain Very Careful Diet (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitations: Hyper-Reflexes, Attacks Without Meaning To (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (with a character who has similar powers/origins)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Gas/Poison Attacks (Common)

RADIATION ACCIDENT SET

Value Disadvantage

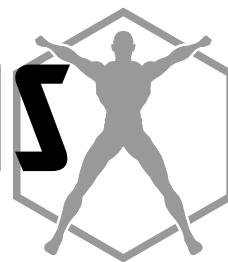
- 20 Hunted: Villain Involved in Origin 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Fear Of [Energy/Circumstance Related To Origin] (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from [Energy/Circumstance Related To Origin] (Common)

TRAGIC PAST SET

Value Disadvantage

- 15 Hunted: Someone Related to Past 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hatred of [Group of Choice] (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful *or* Self-Destructive (player's choice) (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 DNPC (choose appropriate circumstances) *or* Destitute *or* Unluck 2d6 (player's choice)

SUPERTEAMS



Though many comic books showcase the adventures of solo heroes, or of hero-side-kick teams, *Champions* is more commonly all about team adventures, such as those depicted in comic books like *The Avengers*, *Teen Titans*, *The X-Men*, *Justice League*, and the like. So, players designing characters need to consider team-related issues — how their characters will form a team, each character's role in the team, and so on — during the character creation process. The GM should also give some thought to these issues, since whether the PCs form a team can significantly effect the course of the campaign and the nature of the adventures he runs.

HOW TEAMS GET TOGETHER

In a *Champions* environment, superheroes band together to form superteams in one of a few different ways.

Catalyst After Long Association. With characters who have been played in separate campaigns, or with characters who are presumed to have had a considerable amount of pre-campaign experience (even though this wasn't gamed out), an event or pressing social need may unite them.

Of the techniques discussed here, this approach is perhaps the trickiest to pull off. The GM normally must put together an adventure that brings these separate heroes together and puts them into a situation they can only resolve as a group. Once the adventure's done, the characters may not "get the idea" that it's advantageous for them to work together, meaning the GM may have to concoct one or more additional scenarios with the same structure, or provide additional incentive (like a Vehicle or Base). Alternatively, the GM might have to meta-game the notion — approaching one or more players to find out if their characters would have come up with the idea of creating a permanent team and begun organizing such a thing. Then those players can get the ball rolling during a play session.

Common Origin. Especially in campaigns which have a limited number of sources for superpowers, superheroes might all acquire their powers at the same place and time (or through some other common origin that inevitably draws them together). They might all be willing test subjects for a military service, which gives them common goals and circumstances. They might all be caught up in the same radiation accident, which tends to make them cling together out of common experiences.

This technique is fairly easy to pull off. The GM will want to keep the heroes together and endangered during the first several episodes, so they're forced to depend on one another for survival. By the time the menace that caused them to gain powers or that appeared just as they were gaining their powers is ended, they effectively are a team — the only thing left is for one or more members to realize it and to formalize the arrangement.

Master Organizer. In campaigns where characters are all supposed to be relative new to the world of superheroing but have not met and have little in common, the GM should consider resorting to an organizer — someone who brings the supers together to propose that they work together as a team. Possible organizers include wealthy philanthropists, retired superheroes, mysterious supernatural beings, or a teenaged fan who writes a brilliant letter.

This is perhaps the easiest approach to creating a superteam. One way to ensure its success is to have the organizer provide a few things the characters otherwise lack — for instance, a Vehicle or Base, training, communications devices, and/or a group identity. Characters who are aware of their inability to cope with Hunteds, the emotional consequences of their origins, and so on often leap at the opportunity to band together.

The GM should evaluate these three approaches, and also consider other approaches appropriate to his particular campaign setting, and choose the one that best fits his game as it's forming.

TEAM MEMBER TYPES

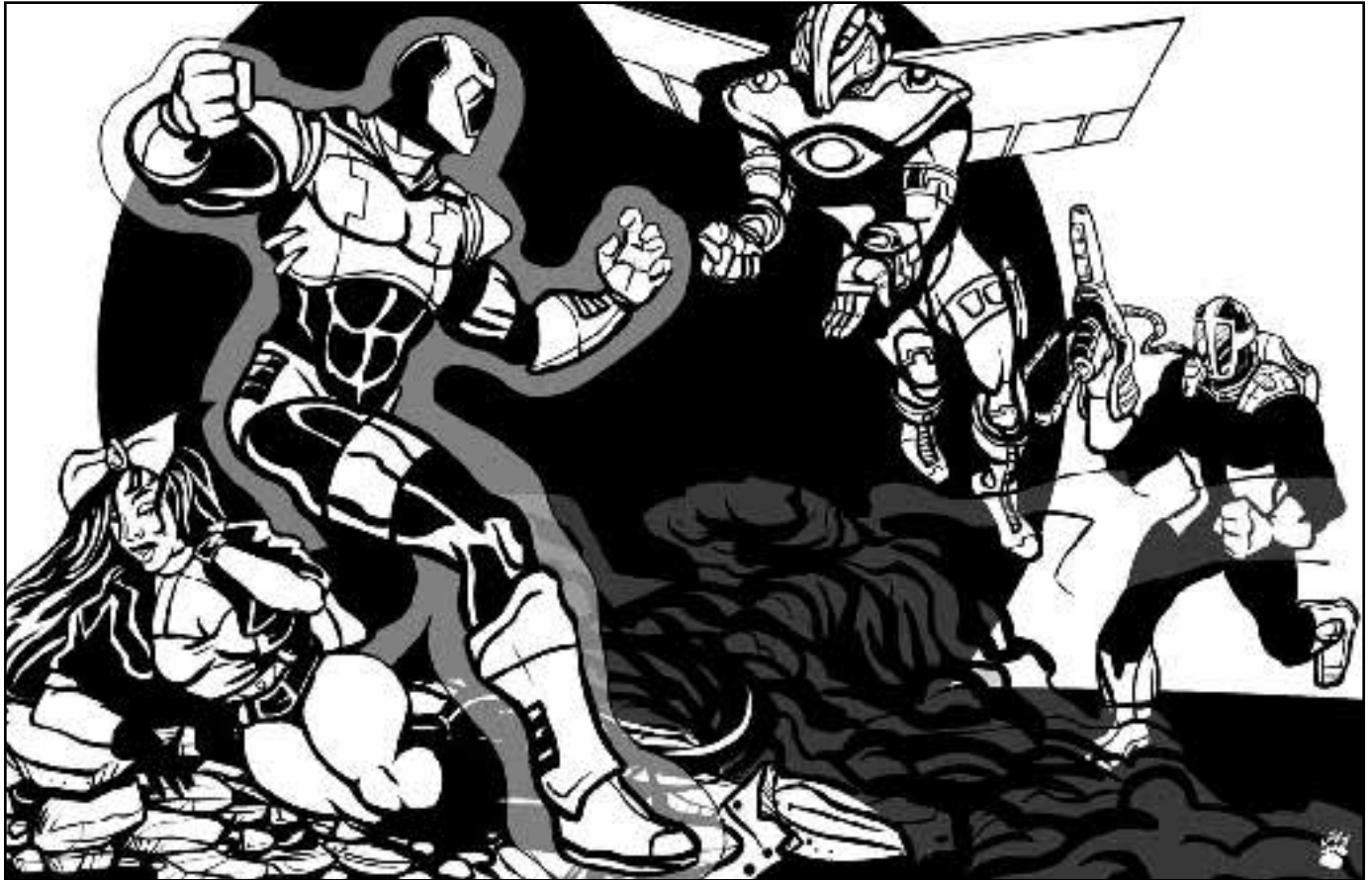
When putting a team together, the GM and players should consider both the personalities and the possible team roles of all the characters.

Team Personality Types

Superteams in the comics tend to be made up of members with a broad range of personalities. While there is no mechanism to ensure that the same thing happens in a campaign (nor should there be!), it may be valuable to the GM to look at the range of PC personalities and determine whether there are too many of any one type.

If the players are creating characters at the same time, they, too, should find out what the range of personality types is to see if there is a pressing need for one or more types.

Among the personality types commonly seen in superteams are:



Captain Daffy: This character has only a casual relationship with organization and perhaps reality itself. He probably does as the team leader says, but in a madcap way — flirting with enemies, playing pranks, showing off, cracking jokes. Such a character can bring some much-needed levity to a situation, or can inject inappropriate levity to an occasion that ought to remain serious. Daffy characters can be the emotional centerpieces of a team, since everyone tends to like them.

The Loner: This character is usually quiet and emotionally distant. Tactically, he may perform just as described for the Rebel (in which case he shares all the difficulties of that personality type), or he may perform perfectly well within the team structure and yet remain an enigma. In the latter situation, the GM should consider running the occasional story in which facts about the character become known and in which he must make a rare display of emotion or need to the other characters.

Mr. Dependable: This character does his job, doesn't talk back, doesn't run away, doesn't cause trouble. He may be morose or cheerful, but is likely to be quiet. When the Natural Leader is unavailable, Mr. Dependable is most likely to be his second-in-command.

Mr. Gung-Ho: This character is anxious for direct confrontation. He's often a front-line fighter when action starts, but he's also a bit too ready to make sure that action gets started — he prefers a bit of splatter to negotiations. Unfortunately, in a campaign without a Natural Leader, Mr. Gung-

Ho tends to take control, and the team finds only military solutions to its problems.

The Natural Leader: This character tends to be quiet and charismatic. He may have skills such as Tactics, Persuasion, Oratory, and SS: Psychology. He leads less out of a desire to be in charge than out of a recognition that without his planning skills and directorial impulses, the team will perform in an inefficient, perhaps self-destructive fashion.

The Rebel: This character just wants to do his own thing. When trouble starts, he adopts his favorite tactics, often “not hearing” or deliberately disobeying leader instructions. Note that this is a particularly tricky personality role to adopt in a campaign. In the comics, the writers always find a reason for such a character to remain with the team, but in campaigns, an excess of rebellion results in enough hard feelings (among the characters, and perhaps even among the players) that this character becomes unwelcome. The player of such a character and the GM should talk about ways to keep the Rebel character as a welcome team member — for instance, limiting instances of solo action so they're fewer than occasions when he acts according to team needs, providing Skills and Powers no one else has (such as Healing), and so on.

The Survivor: This character has experienced tragedy and is still around, but is not yet fully recovered. He's likely to be a bundle of Psychological Limitations (even temporary ones for which he receives no points). It's very common for such

a character to have a tremendous need for others (hence his staying with the team) but be unable to express it. As with Captain Daffy, this character might be the emotional glue that holds the team together, as everyone tries to help, or a bone of contention as the other members disagree on the best way to help.

The Thinker: This character is always thinking one step ahead — trying to outplot the enemy, manipulate the NPC, anticipate the surprise lurking around the corner. He lives to outwit. As with Mr. Dependable, this character can be a good stand-in when the Natural Leader is not around, but he's not so good as the full-time leader of the team. His desire to outwit the enemy sometimes causes him to create schemes more complicated than necessary, to lose valuable time coming up with the "perfect plan," and so on.

Team Member Roles

In addition to considering the best mix of personality types, the GM and players should consider the best mix of team member roles. If, for instance, every member of the team is a high-STR brick with no ranged attacks other than thrown Chevrolets, the team is going to be somewhat one-sided in its tactics, and thus limited in the solutions it can attempt for problems.

It's best to think in quasi-military terms when deciding what roles a team needs, since the roles are most important in combat.

Artillery/Air Support: The team profits if one or more members can make attacks from range. These characters need good mobility (typically through Flight) and Ranged attacks.

Infantry: The team needs one or more members who can stand up front to inflict and sustain damage. These characters need to be good fighters with good defenses. Bricks, Powered Armor characters, and Martial Artists often fulfill this role.

Intelligence: A team benefits if at least one character can coordinate complex communication efforts, dig information out of computers, and sneak around in secure emplacements. Martial Artists, Weaponmasters, and/or Gadgeteers with an investigative orientation usually take on this role.

Officer: A team can have more than one officer. At the minimum, it needs one — someone to speak for the team when there's no time to consult, and to bark orders in combat. But two or more team members can divide officer roles. One might be the peacetime leader but delegate direct control of the team to someone with more martial skills when combat breaks out.

Special Ops: It's helpful for one or more team members to have skills and powers that are difficult to anticipate or detect — psychic powers like Telepathy and Mind Scan, abilities of impersonation like Shape Shift, strange powers like Desolidification, and so on.

Support: Generally, supply is not a concern to a superhero team; each member tends to be responsible for his own ammunition, recharging, and so on.

But teams do have support needs in two major categories: transportation and medical. If not all team members can travel at the kind of pace the team needs to sustain, then one or more members has to carry others, or the team needs a common Vehicle like the Team Transport on page 112. Similarly, it's useful for a team member to be able to handle Teleportation and Extra-Dimensional Movement chores. Also, it's invaluable for a team member to have medical skills and/or Healing.

With a good mix of the above team roles, a superteam can be a very effective organization indeed.

TEAM CHARACTERISTICS

The GM and players should also consider secondary team characteristics. Though this is not necessarily a concern at the very beginning of a team's adventures, these questions will come up.

Team Name

A team needs a name if the public and press are to be able to deal with it. But naming a team can be even trickier than naming a character — it has to be somehow representative of everybody and also be agreeable to all the founding members.

Here are some things to remember when working up a team name:

You Don't Have To Have One At The Beginning. Though any team comic book features the team name on the cover of every issue starting with #1, a *Champions* campaign team doesn't have to have its name in place from the first episode. In fact, it's sometimes best to wait a half-dozen episodes or so before settling on a name. The reason is this: a team that's just come together and had no adventures (or only one adventure) probably hasn't settled on a team motif yet, has not yet developed a signature tactic, and so on. Once the campaign is a little ways along, such factors are easier to spot.

Consider The Goal. All teams have one or more goals to accomplish, even if those goals are very broad or ill-defined. And those goals may offer suggestions for a team name. Does the team want to protect the public? It could be the Protectors. Does the team want to watch out for bad guys? It could be Vigil, the Guardians, the Watch, or the Sentries.

Have A Suggestion Box. When the characters decide it's time for their team to have a name, give the players an episode or two during which they can send the GM any number of suggestions. Then, prior to an adventure, list out all the suggestions and distribute the list among the players, allowing each to vote for three to five names. If the name with the most votes is agreeable to everyone (even those who didn't vote for it), you have gained a team name with a minimum of trouble.

Watch Out For Unintentional Humor. Carefully consider any superhero team in light of possible unwanted meaning. The Penetrators and the Look-

outs would not last long in the wiseacre-filled environment of the superhero world.

RANDOM SUPERTEAM NAME GENERATOR

Having trouble thinking up a name for your superteam? Try this handy chart! Roll two dice once for the two words in the name. Read the first die as 1-3 ("1") and 4-6 ("2"), and the second die as 1-6 in the usual fashion. That generates 12 possible words in each category, with an equal chance of each one occurring.

2d6 Roll First Word In Name

- | | |
|-----|------------------------|
| 1.1 | Atomic |
| 1.2 | (Color of your choice) |
| 1.3 | Destiny |
| 1.4 | Freedom |
| 1.5 | Hero |
| 1.6 | Honor |
| 2.1 | Justice |
| 2.2 | Liberty |
| 2.3 | Power |
| 2.4 | Secret |
| 2.5 | Super- |
| 2.6 | Victory |

2d6 Roll Second Word In Name

- | | |
|-----|-----------------|
| 1.1 | Brigade |
| 1.2 | Corps |
| 1.3 | Crew |
| 1.4 | Crusaders |
| 1.5 | Force |
| 1.6 | Guard/Guardians |
| 2.1 | Knights |
| 2.2 | League |
| 2.3 | Legion |
| 2.4 | Patrol |
| 2.5 | Squad(ron) |
| 2.6 | Vanguard |

Bases

It's good for a team to have a base of operations, but sometimes difficult to convince them to build one (after all, it costs Character Points they may prefer to spend on personal powers or resources).

Note that it's only difficult to convince them of such a thing if they feel all their needs are being met by their current circumstances. If they like using a local park as a mustering-point and not having a central lab where they can coordinate their wrist-radios, they have much less motivation to build a real base.

There are a few things the GM can do to persuade them to build a base, however.

Give Them A Rotten Little Base: In a very early adventure, an NPC hero may volunteer his personal hideout, or a grateful rescuee may offer the heroes his hunting cabin, giving the PCs a place to meet. As the size and lack of facilities of the place begin to get on the heroes' nerves, they'll either begin exploring alternatives or start to rebuild their current site into something more fitting.

Give Them A Comparison: Have them go through an adventure in which they meet and cooperate with a team that has a really good base, and have the adventure demonstrate the base's usefulness. Little things like seeing how useful a thorough suite of laboratories and a rapid-deployment hangar housing the team jet are can act as a motivator. A millionaire playboy's mansion, with features such as hot tubs, a wine steward, and a masseur, can also be a real convincer.

This raises the question of who pays for the base. Typically, each PC chips in the points needed to buy a Base (and/or Vehicle; see page 60 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*), but there are several other options:

The PCs Get Their Base For Free: To encourage the PCs to form a team, work together as a team, and act like a team, the GM might simply give them their base for free. This means the GM builds it for them, which has the additional benefit of allowing him to insert various plot hooks and story development points.

The PCs Get Their Base Partly For Free: Often, it's best if the GM, in the guise of a philanthropist or NPC hero, pays for the basic headquarters functions (land, location, exterior defenses, and perhaps a team vehicle), then allow the PCs to pay for other features. The PCs are often glad to pay for personal facilities such as laboratories and computers, and that might set them on the path of occasionally purchasing base upgrades.

The PCs Pay For Their Base... Slowly: Rather than having to pony up the cost of a Base all at once, the PCs may want to do it slowly, by saving up Experience Points. For example, the GM should consider asking the players, "Would anyone object if I held back one Experience Point every other game from every character to put into a common point pool for the base?" If the players agree to this, the GM can establish this "account" for purchasing a Base, and perhaps for regular Base upgrades.

Several sample bases appear on pages 106-11.

Equipment

In a similar vein, many teams issue specific items of team equipment to all members. These range from minimalist radios using the same frequency to emergency life support devices, flight apparati, even common Perks.

The GM can either grant such items for free to all team members as long as they remain with the team (an appropriate technique, especially if the point value of the items is low), require each player to set aside a number of his character's points for team equipment, or include the team equipment in the same "Experience Point account" set up for team bases.

Sample team equipment appears in Chapter Three, *Superhero Technology*.

GOVERNMENT LIAISONS

One staple of many team-oriented comic books is the “government liaison” — an NPC assigned by the authorities to work with the PC superteam in various capacities. In some cases this person is a law enforcement officer who actually goes out and takes part in the team’s missions. More often, the government liaison is a bureaucrat or official of some sort who prefers to keep well out of harm’s way.

The government liaison typically has one of two roles in the campaign: “good cop” and “bad cop.” The good cop liaison is, basically, a friend and ally of the PCs. He genuinely admires them, supports what they’re doing, and so on. He does his best to make their jobs easier, smooth things over with the government when they get in trouble, and obtain whatever resources they need that he can provide. Of course, he’s still a government employee doing a government job, so his bosses may sometimes force him to act in ways he’d rather not, but at heart he’s on the side of the angels.

The bad cop liaison, on the other hand, either doesn’t trust (or like) the PCs, or is more concerned about doing his job “by the book” than about really helping them. He spies on the PCs and reports their every move to his bosses; says unfavorable things about them to other government officials; keeps them on as tight a leash as he can; and snarls up their requests for help with bureaucratic red tape.

Friendly or not, a government liaison can be a big help to the PCs. He can get them equipment, access to experts, and funding they might not otherwise be able

Relationship With Authority

Though the question won’t necessarily come up in the team’s first few adventures, its members have to decide how they intend to interact with the area’s legitimate government authorities. Most such relationships fall into one of the following categories. Note that the players ought to be the ones to decide what relationship they want; if they do not like the relationship they have with the authorities and that relationship continues for more than a few episodes, they begin to lose interest in and affection for the campaign.

The GM can, of course, change the nature of the relationship temporarily (by having an enemy frame the team for murder, for example), but should be wary of changing it permanently unless that’s what the players want.

Government-Employed: The superteam is actually part of some government agency. All team members should be given the *Federal/National Police Powers Fringe Benefit*. They pay for that, and some other team gear, by taking the *Disadvantage Hunted* (Watched by their employer) — a result of their employers keeping a close eye on them.

Government-Sanctioned: The team is not part of any government agency but has a formal right to engage in crimefighting activities, so long as those activities remain within the scope of some federal or local restrictions. (For instance, one restriction might be that the team communicate with the government about all investigations and combats.) Depending on the exact nature of the relationship, the GM might allow all members to have *Fringe Benefits* such as *Local Police Powers* and *Weapon Permit*. It’s very likely the team has a minor *Hunted* (Watched) owing to government scrutiny.

Friendly With The Law: The team cooperates with the law whenever possible; the law turns a blind eye to some of its activities (for example, not really investigating complaints that are nothing more than harassment attempts made against the heroes, not issuing citations for unauthorized use of a flying vehicle within city limits, and so on). This is a good “default” relationship for GMs and

players who don’t want to worry too much about the “realistic” implications of their activities *vis-a-vis* the government.

Pursued By The Law: The team is Hunted by the local and perhaps federal authorities, who regard its members as outlaws for some reason (even if it’s just because of “illegal use of superpowers” or “aggravated assault by superpower”). The PCs may have difficulty establishing a Base, conducting their patrols, and even living their daily lives as a result of this “interference” with their heroic adventures.

Team Charters

A Charter is a document laying out details of the team’s goals, intended methodology, rules of governance and conduct, and the rights and restrictions it extends to its members. Charters typically cover things like:

- statement of team goals, philosophy, and/or purpose
- induction of new members (procedure, limits on team size)
- removal of team members (grounds and procedure for ejecting a member from the team)
- a description of team member privileges and benefits (salary, insurance, residuals from licensing deals, team credit cards, and so on)
- a description of team member responsibilities, possibly including scheduling details (the team has a meeting on the first day of every month and each member must attend, each member must take monitor duty on a rotating schedule, required charity work or public appearances, all team members chip in to pay the butler’s salary, and so on)
- rules of expected good conduct by all team members
- a formal description of the team’s (and thus each member’s) relationship with the government (if applicable)

A new team typically has no charter (after all, it hasn’t been together long enough to draft one), and many teams never create one, preferring a more *laissez-faire* approach to superheroing. Since minor points of team conduct and regulations rarely have any effect on the game, “no charter” is the default option for *Champions*



campaigns (though the special effect of “no charter” might be “we have a charter, but neither the players nor the GM has bothered to write down any details”).

Another approach, one used by many long-established teams/gaming groups, is to establish that the team has a charter, but not to worry about writing down all its details. The major points may be listed in one of the GM’s files somewhere, and whenever a question about the contents of the charter comes up during the game, the players decide on it and the GM makes a note to add to the file.

Lastly, a group of players interested in doing so can actually draft an entire charter and make a copy for everyone in the game. This takes a lot of work, of course, but it definitely adds to the verisimilitude of the game. A fully fleshed-out charter may even generate some story ideas.

In some campaigns, a team may be *required* to have a charter. For example, government agencies might not be willing to extend sanction to a superteam that isn’t serious enough to draft a charter and stick to it. Similarly, a wealthy patron might require all prospective members of the team he’s assembling to sign a charter he’s prepared (perhaps after some discussion regarding its terms).

Tactics

Teams are more effective when their members act in concert, and one way to do so is to develop combat tactics — maneuvers that allow two or more members to combine their strengths in a way that overpowers or baffles the enemy.

For instance, let’s say that one team member has Missile Deflection and Reflection, allowing him to Reflect all types of attacks, but he himself has no Ranged attack. Another team member has a laser attack. They might situate themselves on opposite sides of a villain, with the laser-blaster pretending to fire at the villain but actually firing at his teammate, and the teammate unexpectedly Reflecting the attack into the villain’s back. The virtue of this approach is that it may be unexpected, giving the Reflecting character a much improved chance of hitting with the attack. (On the other hand, a missed Reflection roll means the character may get hit by his teammate’s attack!)

The GM can help a team develop tactics by recognizing when an improvised move would actually be useful when practiced and repeated, and then recommending to the players that it be given a name and used on a regular basis. For instance, at the end of the episode with the laser-reflection attack, the GM might say to the players, “That was an interesting move; what do you call that?” This will prompt them to give the maneuver a distinctive code-name. In a later episode, if the players have not already begun to utilize that maneuver, the GM might spot a situation where the circumstances mirror those of the original use of the maneuver, and point the fact out to the

players, giving them the opportunity to use the move again. Over time, the characters, as they spend Experience Points to improve their powers or develop new ones, might even develop powers designed to be used in a complementary fashion.

Even if a team doesn’t want to go to the effort of creating its own unique group of tactics, two or more team members can buy the *Teamwork* Skill to reflect, in general terms, their ability to work well together in combat. This allows them to Coordinate attacks, which can be extremely effective, especially against master villains, city-stomping giant monsters, and other such foes.

SOME TEAM TACTICS

In addition to the maneuvers described on pages 153, here are some possible tactics for a superteam to use. Clever players will undoubtedly come up with many more.

Can’t Go There: A character with Force Wall can sometimes construct and position his Walls to deny the enemy access to certain areas, or channel foes’ freedom of movement so his allies can make a devastating attack.

Drag-And-Drop: A fast-moving character (typically, a character with lots of inches in Flight) picks up a slower character, carries him toward the target, then lets him go so he performs a Move By or Move Through at the faster character’s velocity. You can either use the “dropped” character’s base CV for the attack (on the grounds that he’s going to try to twist and squirm and move so that he avoids the impact, thus negating much of the attacker’s efforts to “aim” him), or adapt the rules for the “fastball special” (page 153).

Grab And Hold: A high-STR character Grabs a villain and holds him helpless while the “brick’s” teammates attack. (On the other hand, this lowers the brick’s DCV to the villain’s allies’ counterattacks....) One variation on this tactic uses Entangle, but that does grant the victim some extra DEF unless the Entangle has the *Takes No Damage From Attacks* Advantage or the attacks are ones that do no BODY (Ego Attack, some NNDs). Another involves using Martial Throw (or some other method) to render the target prone, halving his DCV.

Up, Up, And Away: A high-STR character can toss an enemy without Flight, Gliding, or Teleportation way up in the air, achieving three effects: it effectively removes the enemy from the combat for a while; it probably reduces the enemy’s DCV, making it easy for the character’s allies to attack him; and it may cause the enemy to take a considerable amount of damage when he falls back down to the ground.

Continued from last page

to obtain. On the other hand, he also keeps tabs on them (sometimes extremely detailed ones), and in some cases may even try to make them follow his orders. Sometimes having a government liaison can be a very mixed bag for the PCs — half really useful, half really aggravating.

Depending on the team’s preferences and resources, the government liaison may work at (and even live at) their base, or he may have his own office in a government building downtown (city hall, the Federal Building, or what have you). Either choice offers the GM plenty of story potential, though the former provides more opportunities for the PCs to interact with the government liaison directly — and thus for the GM to develop him as a detailed, intriguing NPC, instead of leaving him as just another faceless functionary.



CHAPTER THREE:

BLASTERS & JETPACKS: SUPERHERO TECHNOLOGY

In this chapter you'll find discussion of, advice about, and *HERO System* statistics for Bases, Vehicles, and gadgets — elements of the superhero genre that make normals more competi-

tive with supers, hero-teams of average power more competitive with overpowered master villains, and so on. All of them are easily adaptable to just about any *Champions* campaign.

BASES AND HEADQUARTERS



Bases and headquarters — homes and/or operations centers to superheroes, supervillains, super-agents, master criminals, master spies, and world-affecting wannabes — are a staple of superhero campaigns and comics. This section discusses constructing them with the *HERO System* rules.

PURPOSE

Before designing a super-base, you should decide what the base is for. That one decision affects every other decision you're going to make. Some sample purposes for bases include:

Emergency Hideout/Safe House. This site is a fallback position for a superhero who is suddenly on the run. It is probably very small, no larger than a smallish apartment, and very well concealed. Its facilities are limited — again, about the same as an apartment, perhaps with some advanced communications or scientific systems and multiple access/escape points. Because of their size and the fact that they're not visited very often, Emergency Hideouts/Safe Houses tend to remain undiscovered by a super's enemies.

Identity Insulator. This site is a place where one or more superheroes go to change from their Secret Identities to their super-identities and back again. Such a base tends to be very well-concealed but situated in a very public area and include a convenient way for the supers to enter and exit without the access being noticed. For instance, an Identity Insulator base might have its accesses be set up in a darkened portion of a traffic tunnel. As he enters that section of tunnel, a character hits a button that drops down a concealed ramp, allowing him to drive up into the base in a moment, then retracts the ramp before another driver sees it; when exiting, the character gets up to speed in a separate tunnel above the traffic tunnel, timing his exit to merge with traffic, and drops down to the darkened section via another ramp. Another approach might be to have the normal-identity access through a side door in a train station or bus station, with the super-identity access in a concealed hatch on the same building's roof. Either way, the Identity Insulator base tends to be light on amenities, and none of the equipment or materials within it connect the super identities to the normal identities.

Muster Point. This sort of base is a place for the members of a superteam to gather for meetings and missions. Such a place may be hidden, or publicly-known and built for defense. It is likely to include

the facilities of an office building (communications, offices, a few labs, garage/hangar for vehicles, computer and relevant databases, even quarters for team members when they need to stay overnight or for an extended period). It may have a part-time or full-time staff of civilians to help manage and repair it. It is not likely to be large, owing to its limited role, but will be at least as large as a smallish corporate setup.

Operations Center. This base is a more formidable example of the Muster Point, and is one of the most common sorts of bases utilized by *Champions* superteams. In addition to the facilities of an office building, it may have elaborate defenses to help keep it from being raided by supervillains, extensive laboratories, repair facilities for vehicles, super-human-oriented training facilities, and a generous helping of amenities and luxuries (after all, fighting crime is tough work!). It's likely to be continuously manned by a civilian team of operatives (though they need not be soldiers or enforcers of any sort), and one or more team members, particularly those without Secret Identities, may use it as their permanent address. The Champions' base, Homestead, described on page 193, is this sort of base.

Military Base. Take the Operations Center and add a standing unit of super-agents and you get a Military Base. The base may be that of a hero-team, in which case the super-agents are used for crowd control during super-fights, investigations, and occasional combat support. It may be that of a villain team or master villain, in which case the super-agents are shock troops. A Military Base has vehicle and housing facilities appropriate to the supers and civilians stationed out of it and may be of considerable size, even if it is hidden.

Royal Domain. This sort of base is most common among supervillains with aspirations (or realities) of rule. A super may be the ruler of a small European nation or the high priest/priestess of a lost civilization living in a vast cavern system or a hidden valley. The super might be the heir to an otherdimensional land or be a demigod/demigoddess whose personal palace is the equivalent of a small country. In the case of a Royal Domain, only a fraction of the people present are actually considered Followers associated with the super; most are people with civilian occupations that do not bear on the character, and will not help him in times of trouble. Still, the resources available in a Royal Domain base are considerable, and can include military forces and vehicles, plus lots of places to hide, make plans, stash gear allowing

EXAMPLE GARAGES AND HANGARS

Superjet Hangar: This is a hangar for a team with one high-tech aircraft (8 hex area). It includes a repair section. With a change in name, it becomes a Supercar Garage. Total size: 24 hexes.

Supersquad Launch Bay: This facility houses 10 fighter craft (each 5 hexes in size), with a separate launch door for each. The repair facilities are located elsewhere. Total size: 100 hexes.

Mountain Hideaway Hangar: This hangar is hidden in a hollowed-out mountaintop that's part of a supervillain's concealed headquarters. It only has one entrance and exit for each of the three vehicles (sizes 5, 8, and 20 hexes), and includes repair facilities suitable to work on one 20 hexes' worth of vehicles at a time. Total size: 292 hexes.

EXAMPLE LABS AND LAB EQUIPMENT

Bare-Bones Lab: Skill Roll 9- (or 11- for Background Skills). Total cost: 3 points (or 2 points for a Background Skill).

Standard Lab: Skill Roll 11-. Total cost: 7 points.

Advanced Lab: Skill Roll 14-. Total cost: 13 points (or 5 points for a Background Skill).

Sophisticated Lab: Skill Roll 17-. Total cost: 19 points (or 8 points for a Background Skill).

Extremely Sophisticated Lab: Skill Roll 20-. Total cost: 25 points (or 11 points for a Background Skill).

Incredibly Sophisticated Lab: Skill Roll 23-. Total cost: 31 points (or 14 points for a Background Skill).

characters to achieve their goals, and so on. Worst of all, most characters who own a Royal Domain do so legitimately, meaning they're likely to have the legal right while there to do anything they wish, and protection from prosecution in other nations — in short, the *Diplomatic Immunity* Fringe Benefit.

BASE SIZE

With your base's purpose established, you can decide what size you want it to be. If you don't have a sense of how large you wish it to be, then you can add up hexes based on the facilities you expect it to have, as described below. Feel free to adjust the final numbers based on a desire for more space (or a need to fit the base into a smaller overall area), to account for high ceilings, and so forth.

DINING AND OTHER HALLS

For any sort of grand entertainment hall, take the maximum number of people who are supposed to occupy it comfortably at any given time and multiply that by two for a comparatively cozy chamber (such as a house's dining room), four for a relatively spacious chamber (such as a mansion's dining room or private viewing theater), and six for a very spacious chamber (such as a commercial movie theater or mansion's ballroom).

For instance, if your base has a miniature theater for reviewing mission films, and it's supposed to house 20 people at a time, you'd multiply that 20 by 4 to get a total area of 80 hexes.

ESCAPE TUNNELS

Some bases feature escape tunnels by which members can flee in times of crisis (or enter when staging a rescue of teammates when the base has been captured).

The standard Escape Tunnel is 1" wide and 1" tall for every 1" it is long; therefore, it takes up 1 hex for every 1" of length. For example, if a tunnel starts at the basement of a base and emerges in the woods 100" away, it's a 100-hex tunnel.

However, characters can build smaller escape tunnels, if desired. One could be ½" wide and 1" tall, meaning it takes up ½ hex for every 1" it is long. One could even be ½" wide and ½" tall for every 1" in length, thus taking up ¼ of a hex per 1" length, but that's really only suitable to flying characters, people digging their way out of a prison, smaller-than-normal PCs, or setups where there is a special Flight or Running gadget in place to carry an escapee to freedom.

In any case, an Escape Tunnel could be bought with bonuses to the same *Concealment* Skill that goes into making a base hard to find, but with the *Partial Coverage* Limitation applied to its cost. The *Concealment* Skill used this way makes all tunnel entrances/exits difficult to find.

GARAGES/HANGARS

Garages should have a minimum of two times the hexes necessary to house all vehicles intended to be within them (based on the vehicles' area in

hexes, per the Vehicle Size Table on page 463 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*); this assumes each has its own separate exit. For garages/hangars where the vehicles share routes out to common exits, the minimum room should be four times the hexes necessary to house all vehicles intended to be within them.

If the garage/hangar has a repair section, the repair area requires room equivalent to eight times the hexes taken up by the total number of vehicles to be repaired simultaneously.

HALLWAYS, COMMON BATHROOMS

The design of your base interior will have a tremendous bearing on how many hexes you need to set aside for hallways and common bathrooms. Some designers like to have lots of hallways; others get by simply providing accesses between adjacent rooms.

When calculating hallways, it's best to wait until you've determined the areas of all other base internal areas, then take that number and divide by 10. The result is a good rule-of-thumb estimate for how many hexes you should set aside for halls and bathrooms.

LABORATORIES

Private Laboratories

A lab can be crammed down into 1 hex; this is little more than a cubicle with a tabletop, some equipment, a chair, and a computer. Standard private laboratories would normally start at 6 hexes (4 hexes at 1 ¼-hex height, plus 1 hex for storage space) and could be larger as space permits.

Shared Laboratories

Shared laboratories follow the same guidelines as Private Laboratories, but need a minimum of 1 hex per person who is expected to be in it at the same time; they are much more comfortable when they have an overall addition of six or more spaces for elbow room.

Note that libraries are often bought as several laboratories whose spaces have been added together in a single chamber.

MUSEUMS

Many teams have museums or other display areas — places where they keep souvenirs of their most important adventures, statues of members who have fallen in the line of combat, and so on. The size of a team's museum is a very subjective choice; follow the guidelines listed for "Dining And Other Halls," above, and then adjust to taste.

OFFICES

A base should have one office for any super member who wants one, one for every coordinator of civilian staff, one for every important civilian staffer (such as staff doctors), and one for every officer managing civilian super-agents. In addition, most teams like to have conference rooms and a "situation room" which constitutes the team's war/ready room.

Offices can be very small; 1 hex corresponds roughly to a cubicle-style office, so that's the mini-

imum size required per person in an office. A smallish office in which someone can take visitors and remain comfortable is about 6 hexes (4 hexes at 1¼-hex ceiling heights, plus an extra hex of closet/storage space). Team leaders and master villains may choose to have larger offices.

A bathroom attached to an office takes up about 1 hex for minimal facilities, 2 for full facilities at a basic level of comfort, and more for very comfortable facilities.

QUARTERS

Bunkrooms: 1-2 hexes per person with permanent quarters. In a military setup, two or even three people might share the same bunk, sleeping in rotation, but in such a situation you should not allot less than 1 hex per person.

Standard Quarters: 6 hexes (4 hexes at 1¼-hex height, plus 1 hex for closet/storage space) or more. This is roughly equivalent to a smallish hotel room without a bathroom. For a private bathroom, add 1 hex for minimal sink/toilet/shower stall facilities, 2 for average facilities, more for lavish facilities.

VIP Quarters: 28 hexes (16 hexes at 1¼-hex height, plus 3 hexes for closet/storage space, plus 5 hexes for comfortable bathroom facilities) or more.

TRAINING FACILITIES AND PRISON BLOCKS

Training facilities and prison blocks are normally built as portions of the base with the *Partial*

Coverage Limitation placed on any powers that pertain only to them (in the case of Attack Powers and the like, re-title *Partial Coverage* as *Only Within Defined Area*, meaning the attacks only work in that specific room [they may not also take a *No Range* Limitation]). So once you know how large an area the facility takes up, a necessary calculation when determining the value of the *Partial Coverage* Limitation, you'll know how many hexes of the base's internal area to set aside.

Often, a Training Facility has an office and viewing area associated with it. That office/viewing area is not part of the Training Facility and its area comes out of the area allotted for Offices (above).

CARE AND FEEDING OF GROUNDS

A base does not have to have Grounds, but do consider their virtues. They can accommodate swimming pools, picnic areas, parking lots, landing strips, shooting ranges, riding areas, waterfalls, and many other features that do not add to a base's defensibility or super-purpose but make it a much nicer place to visit or live.

LOCATION

Bases can be situated in cities, suburbs, or more distant locals, and can be at ground level, atop the water, deep in the wilderness, floating in the air, submerged beneath the sea, buried in the earth, in outer space, or even conveniently tucked away in another dimension. Each of these choices costs points (except the "default value" of a city-based location at ground level).

Each of these choices offers advantages and disadvantages to a superteam.

City

Advantages: In a campaign whose adventures mostly take place in a specific city, City placement puts the characters close to the scene of the action. It also makes it easy to take advantage of city utilities, services, and so forth.

Disadvantage: City placement is also sometimes problematic; not only is space at a premium in cities, but a base whose location is known to the public can more easily be attacked by villains, might be picketed by protesters, and so on. If the base's location is secret, the effort required to keep it concealed is greater, owing to the higher concentration of population and traffic in its immediate vicinity. Whether it's public or secret,

Continued from last page

Waldos: A lab's user (be it the Base's computer or a character) can use these artificial limbs to handle and move dangerous objects and substances.

Extra Limbs (two or more mounted at necessary locations throughout the base). Total cost: 5 points.

Hot Room: A specially-sealed room for storing dangerous materials.

+6 DEF (18 Active Points); *Partial Coverage* (-2) (total cost: 6 points) **and** Life Support (Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat) (6 Active Points); *Partial Coverage* (-2) (total cost: 2 points). Total cost: 8 points.

DANGER ROOMS

A "danger room" is a training facility especially designed for superhumans. It features equipment and obstacles suitable for persons of superhuman capabilities: weightlifting sets measured in the tens of tons, rather than the hundreds of pounds; a "jogging" track able to withstand the high velocities generated speedsters and the weight of metallic characters; and a workout room able to simulate superhuman combat.

That last point is particularly important. Relatively ordinary things like multi-ton weightlifting sets you can just assume are part of the training facility without defining them in rules terms, but a combat simulator is something the characters building a base should pay for. As the text notes, typically this means buying the Powers the danger room uses and applying the *Partial Coverage/Only Within Defined Area* Limitation. The Advantages *Variable Advantage*

Continued on next page



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and *Variable Special Effects* can be applied to the Powers as well, thereby allowing them to simulate a wide variety of blasters and gadgets. The Underwater and Space example bases in this chapter both take this approach with their danger rooms.

A more versatile way of doing the same thing is to define the danger room as a Variable Power Pool. That really expands the scope of training options available to the heroes. On the other hand, the Pool needs to be pretty big to account for all the devices in use, so this method gets expensive. For example:

Danger Room: Variable Power Pool, 150 base + 75 control cost, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (262 points total); OIF (all powers bought with the VPP must have a *Focus* Limitation of -½ or greater; -½), Only Within Defined Area (value varies based on relative size, for this example assume -2). Total cost: 225 points.

Appropriate Powers for a Danger Room VPP include any Attack Power, Change Environment, Force Wall, and Summon (the latter to create robots and the like for the characters to fight). The GM should also consider allowing the Danger Room to buy negative Skill Levels through its VPP, though that's not normally allowed.

Danger rooms often make for interesting plot points. For example, villains invading the base may get trapped in them by the heroes and pummelled on by the machinery — or a sneaky villain may reprogram the danger room to *really* pose a danger to the heroes!

the heroes have to be more careful when fights in the base spill over into surrounding areas; this placement increases the possibility innocents will be hurt.

Suburb

Advantages: Suburban bases have most of the same advantages as City. In addition, they are far enough away from the city's center that it's easy to have larger facilities and grounds.

Disadvantage: Suburbs are just far enough away from the city to make getting there in times of crisis take a few (possibly crucial) moments longer. In addition, if the base is secret, strange goings-on are more likely to be noticed by crime-watching neighbors.

Distant

Advantages: Bases set up in distant areas — such as farmland — allow for larger facilities, and they are far enough away from prying eyes that normal levels of traffic to and from them are not likely to arouse suspicion.

Disadvantage: These sites are far enough away to make it take a while to get to the scene of action even at nearby cities; such bases often benefit from the presence of a world-class teleportation device.

Floating In Water

Advantages: Bases that float can't be reached casually; someone approaching them must do so by boat or by swimming, and those approaches are comparatively easy to detect. In addition, supers attached to such bases can participate in regular water-related recreation.

Disadvantage: Floating bases can be induced to sink, which is a tremendous nuisance.

Deep Wilderness

Advantages: This site is far away from civilization of any sort, dozens or hundreds of miles from the nearest road, surrounded by rough country. Its remoteness makes it difficult for people to visit casually, and gives the team enough open surroundings to play a good game of super-powered golf.

Disadvantage: On the down side, the base's surroundings are so vast they're impossible to monitor effectively. People can travel or camp for days on the land without knowing they're trespassing, and, if there, can witness superhero comings and goings without intending to. Also, if the base population gets in trouble, help could be a long time in coming.

Airborne

Advantages: This type of base stays up in the air. It might be a very large vehicle, such as a zeppelin, or might be as immobile as any ground base — for instance, a magical castle built atop a cloud, or a city held aloft by antigravity generators. Its aerial nature makes it difficult to access, and it's certainly a prestigious home address.

Disadvantage: As with "Floating In Water" bases, having a sudden failure of the system that holds it

aloft can be catastrophic. Having to leave in a hurry can be similarly dangerous, if the departee in question does not know how to fly.

Underwater

Advantages: An Underwater base has all the advantages of one that floats on water (above), with the additional element of a greater opportunity for concealment and privacy.

Disadvantage: If hulled, an underwater base will fill rapidly, much to the discomfort of its residents. If it is deep enough and not maintained at a surface-level atmospheric pressure, its inhabitants have to spend hours undergoing decompression before leaving — simply teleporting to the surface would be a very dangerous proposition for most supers. It may be hard for help to reach the base, if needed.

Underground

Advantages: Underground bases are comparatively easy to hide, making it possible to have large, sophisticated bases hidden in the midst of population centers. Underground bases are difficult to invade; intruders must confine themselves to access routes the designers choose, or must have tunneling or teleportation abilities. Without very sophisticated sensor abilities, it is also difficult for enemies to know about all exits (such as hidden escape tunnels). For these reasons, underground bases are a favorite among supervillains and master criminals; many superhero teams also find them convenient.

Disadvantage: Underground bases have few disadvantages. If they do not possess seismic sensors, it is possible for enemies to tunnel up to them without being noticed; and the lack of picture windows will occasionally depress the occupants.

In Space

Advantages: Considering that it costs governments billions of dollars to mount a space program, supers building a base in space can be certain that unannounced visitors fall into one of three categories: space aliens, astronauts, and supers equipped with spaceflight. This keeps visitors to a minimum and makes identifying them comparatively easy. Bases in space are also difficult for governments to regulate, giving superteams a measure of autonomy they cannot experience when headquartered within a nation's boundaries.

Disadvantage: For most supers, it's a long trip home, and for many it's not advisable to go outside for a walk; the environment is a very dangerous one.

Another Dimension

Advantages: Even more so than with outer space bases, alternate dimension bases are difficult for enemies or even casual visitors to find; they require magical/mystical/high-order physics knowledge to gain access. Given the correct choice of an alternate dimension, a base can have more room available to it than in most other environments, and can be situated in very colorful, visually interesting surroundings.

Disadvantage: Alternate dimensions are sometimes occupied or visited by very strange beings who might resent the construction of a headquarters there, putting the heroes in the position of defending their base from beings with unpredictable motives and powers.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Bases sometimes have staffs of employees. These NPCs, most of them normal humans, become regular parts of the lives of the base's superheroes. They can also become useful tools through which the GM brings the heroes into scenarios.

TYPES OF NPCs

Base NPCs fall into five basic categories:

Building Staff: These are personnel who take care of the base and its components, including vehicular components. They include mechanics, electricians, repairmen, engineers, groundsmen and gardeners, pool-boys, janitors, and the like.

Service Staff: These people take care of the other people on site. They include butlers, maids, housekeepers, cooks, personal trainers, security guards, receptionists, medical personnel, and so on.

Enforcement: Depending on the exact nature of the superteam and its base, there may also be an enforcement arm — a small paramilitary or police force, for instance. Skilled security guards or jailers may also fit into this category instead of Service Staff. These tend to be the most competent of base NPCs, though of course nowhere near as powerful or capable as the heroes themselves.

Family: Master villains and the like sometimes house their families in bases, though this is usually the exception rather than the rule.

Pets: Finally, superhumans and other base inhabitants can have pets on-site. These can be a master villain's pampered white cat, a wilderness hero's trusty wolf, a madman's victim-devouring mutant octopus, or (stretching the definition only a little) a bad guy's kept woman/kept man.

When creating NPCs for a base, give some thought to what position they fulfill in the team's/mastermind's organization. If you do, no NPC will seem inappropriate when found on-base.

CAMPAIGN ROLES

Beyond just their positions within the organization's hierarchy, every base NPC who appears repeatedly in the game ought to develop additional roles within the campaign. The GM doesn't have to decide on those roles initially; in fact, many will develop naturally as the character interacts more and more with the PCs.

Here are some examples of how this comes about. Suppose a superhero tends to damage his super-car a lot. Consequently, the vehicle spends a lot of time in the shop, and the superhero often goes down there to see how repairs are progress-

ing. This means one or more mechanics inevitably develop some sort of personal relationship with that super. It could be just a cordial friendship, or perhaps it becomes romantic. In either case, what happens when (for example) the NPC asks the superhero for an ethically ambiguous favor?

Many superheroes use the base computers constantly and need new programs to perform tasks. They may be able to write those programs themselves, but the base still needs an information manager to make sure those programs interact with one another and with the operating system in a friendly fashion. So the base ought to have one head programmer, and that person will interact with the computer-using supers a lot. Lots of plot and subplots could arise from the relationship.

Just passing through the front gate and past the main security post every day, sometimes several times a day, gives the superheroes a first-name acquaintanceship with the guard most often found on duty there. That provides the GM with the opportunity to develop the NPC further.

Once these sorts of personal relationships begin forming, they can take specific shape. See *NPC Roles*, page 177, for a description of possible shapes.

TECHNOLOGY

Bases are also loaded with high-tech gadgets that help superheroes accomplish their goals. Typical gadgets include long-range teleporters (to get supers from one end of the world to the other in no time), news-harvesting computers, training facilities that simulate the powers of supervillains (thus letting heroes prepare for specific foes), automated medical facilities, hand-held nuclear reactors, devices that recreate the circumstances under which supers obtained their powers, devices to seek out people with specific sets of powers, and more. The example bases below include many types of superhero-style technology.

Things Characters Don't Have To Pay For

There are also features Base designers don't have to account for with points. They include:

Access. Doors, airlocks, hatches, hangar doors, and so on don't cost points. However, security on them (making them harder than normal to get through without authorization, for example) does cost points, as does concealing them.

Basic Infrastructure. A base is wired for electricity and telephones (unless that's impossible for some reason). It has a typical heating, air conditioning, ventilation system. It's connected to the sewers or a septic tank. None of these things cost points, unless the characters want to "jazz them up" (for example, create an HVAC system so powerful and sophisticated that it functions as various types of Life Support for the entire base).

SECURITY GADGETS

Worried about the security in your base? Try these fine gadgets! Take a look at the sample bases in this chapter for other ideas.

Basic Security: Security Systems 11-. Total cost: 7 points.

High Security: Security Systems 14-. Total cost: 13 points.

Advanced Security: Security Systems 17-. Total cost: 19 points.

Extremely Advanced Security: Security Systems 20-. Total cost: 25 points.

Ultra-Advanced Security: Security Systems 23-. Total cost: 31 points.

Intruder Zapper: Installed in doors and other secured objects, Intruder Zappers deliver a non-lethal electric shock to anyone who tries to get through the door without proper authorization or means of access (*i.e.*, who fails a Lockpicking or Security Systems roll to covertly penetrate the door). Some variants are deadly (*i.e.*, they lack the NND Advantage, but have the *No Knockback* Limitation).

Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated rED; +1), Trigger (failed Lockpicking or Security Systems roll; +¼) (135 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼), No Range (-½), 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 39 points.

Anaesthetic Gas Projector: This device projects knockout gas into a large area (typically a single room).

Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is LS: Self-Contained Breathing; +1), Area Of Effect (12" Radius; +1¼) (97 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼), No Range (-½), Only Within Defined Area (value varies, assume -2), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 19 points.

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Capturefoam Projector:
This device projects a sticky, motion-impeding foam into a large area (typically a single room).
Entangle 6d6, 9 DEF, Area Of Effect (16" Radius; +1¼) (169 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼), No Range (-½), Only Within Defined Area (value varies, assume -2), 12 Charges (-¼).
Total cost: 34 points.

Decorations And Furnishings. The color and quality of a base's furnishings don't require point expenditures (unless they have some other purpose — a divan that flies a superhero to the scene of trouble at Mach 1 would cost points, of course).

Entertainments. Books, games, music CDs (and the players required to play them), and so forth don't cost points. Sometimes characters purchase a database of entertainments as a Knowledge Skill for a computer, but that's only for entertainments that have the additional convenience of being searchable by or playable on a computer system.

SAMPLE BASES

Below are three sample superhero bases. You can use them as-is in a campaign, modify them to meet your specific needs and those of the teams they will serve, or use them strictly as examples for construction of bases unique to your campaign.

Urban Base

This is an example of a modest superhero/supervillain base situated within the city.

This base is comparatively small; it has enough room for living quarters for team members, office and lab space for members and employees, a small garage/hangar for vehicles, and so on. It's not set up to house a full-sized team jet. It constitutes a Muster Point for a team.

This is a hidden and underground base, designed to be situated beneath a skyscraper, a city park, or the like. Its exits to the world above are secret ones, such as a hidden tunnel opening onto a subway track, an elevator exiting into an unused closet of the building above, a ramp leading into a restricted-access corner of a parking garage, and so on. Anyone searching for the base must overcome an 18- Concealment roll.

This is a comparatively sturdy base, with DEF 16 and BODY 8, though it lacks really esoteric defenses such as teleportation shields or dimensional-breach detectors. However, it does have a comprehensive system of visual and auditory sensors covering the inside of the base as well as nearby external locations of note (the base's Concealment applies to this); the sensors have their own internal power supply, so they keep operating even if the Generator is destroyed (this is simulated by applying the *Reduced Endurance* (0 END) Limitation to the cameras).

The relatively low total cost of the base means the facility is affordable even by novice teams. The total cost to the team would be 33 points divided among all the team members. The team must pay for its computer and staff (Followers) separately. The Urban Base's computer is a modest one, capable of keeping track of and filing news reports received over the base radio system, of maintaining a database about world supers, and so forth.

The base has a staff of civilian workers (typically eight, bought as Followers). The GM can choose any configuration for the staff, but a typi-

cal one includes a mechanic, an electronics tech, a librarian/archivist, three security specialists (one each for three work shifts), a butler/valet, and a very well-paid janitor/housekeeper. All of them are issued body armor, a pistol, and a hands-free radio headset, not because they are expected to go into combat, but because the team wants to afford them an improved chance to survive and escape in case a disaster visits the base.

The butler/valet lives on-site and has comparatively light duties, but is expected to be available any time he is called on; his job includes keeping the other staffers coordinated and managing their time, picking up or arranging for the pickup of food and supplies, and ushering costumed madmen who have just teleported unexpectedly into the base to the situation room where the team members can meet them.

URBAN BASE

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
8	BODY	6	
144"	Size	14	-8 DCV; no Grounds
16	DEF	42	Total Characteristic Cost: 62

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
20	<i>Location:</i> City, Underground	0
21	<i>Hidden:</i> Concealment 18-	0
8	<i>Generator:</i> Endurance Reserve (100 END, 10 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
3	<i>Heating/Air Conditioning:</i> Life Support (Safe Environments: Intense Heat, Intense Cold); Costs Endurance (-½)	1
7	<i>Sealable Environment:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); Costs Endurance (-½)	2
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
27	<i>Sensors:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 16x Range (2,400"), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Immobile (cameras and monitor station; -2) plus Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (to Clairsentience; -½) plus Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (-½)	0
13	<i>Laboratories:</i> 13 points' worth of laboratories (player's choice)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 104
Total Base Cost: 166

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0
Total Cost: 166/5 = 33

URBAN BASE COMPUTER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 3				

Abilities & Equipment

Cost Power

3	Cryptography 12-
5	AK: Earth 14-
5	AK: Home Nation 14-
5	CK: Campaign City 14-
2	KS: Archived Recent News 11-
4	KS: Current News 13-
3	KS: Superheroes 12-
4	KS: Supervillains 13-
2	KS: World Celebrities/Politicians 11-
2	KS: World History 11-
2	KS: World Politics 11-
2	Navigation (Land) 12-
2	SS: Mathematics 11-
3	Systems Operation 12-

Programs

1	Monitor Camera System, Report Anomalies
1	Plot Distance, Travel Times Between Specified Locations
1	Scan and Enter Data
1	Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
1	Send Emergency Call to Team Members If Specified Protocols Are Not Met

Talents

3	<i>Clock</i> : Absolute Time Sense
5	<i>Memory</i> : Eidetic Memory
3	<i>Calculator</i> : Lightning Calculator
3	<i>Instant-On Feature</i> : Lightsleep
4	<i>Scanner</i> : Speed Reading (x10)

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 67

Total Computer Cost: 70

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 70/5 = 14

URBAN BASE STAFF

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total cost: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total cost: 2 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
20	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 10

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers

END

10	<i>Body Armor</i> : Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 15- (-¼), Real Armor (-¼), Half Mass (-½) 0
9	<i>Pistol</i> : RKA 1d6+1, 4 clips of 16 Charges each (+¼); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), No KB (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼) [16]
8	<i>Radio Headset</i> : Radio Perception/Transmission; IIF (-¼) 0

Skills

3	Duty-Based Skill 12-
3	Duty-Based Skill 12-
3	Duty-Based Skill 12-
2	Personality Skill 11-
2	Personality Skill 11-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 40

Total Cost: 50

50+ Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 50/5 = 10

Underwater Base

This base is larger and more functional than the Urban Base. It serves as an Operations Center, and may be located in any body of water. It is assumed to be in a lake, river, or ocean immediately adjacent to the campaign city. For it to be a few miles out from the city (Suburbs) would cost +5 points; to be many miles out (Distant) would cost +10 points. If built close to a city, it has a tunnel access to the city's surface; if built farther out, the base either needs vehicles capable of transporting team members to distant points relatively quickly, or a powerful teleporter such as the one shown for the Space Base (below).

Unlike the Urban Base, this base has a Cell Block, an area where the team can hold captured villains temporarily. The Cell Block has higher DEF

than the rest of the base, and no one can Teleport into or out of it (unless their Teleportation has three or more levels of Armor Piercing). Psychic Energy Insulation in the walls makes it difficult to use Mental Powers in or through the Cell Block. If detainees attempt to escape, the team can use an Artificial Gravity Pinner to make it difficult or impossible for anyone in the Cell Block to move (on the average, a person trapped in the artificial gravity field needs STR 40 to even move).

The base's other major feature is a 200-hex "danger room," or training facility designed for superhumans. The danger room has high-DEF walls, and mounted in and behind the walls are a variety of weapons — they can surround a hero with Darkness, hit him with low-yield Energy Blasts, wrap him up in nets, create energy walls in front of him, and create holograms of his enemies, teammates, or obstacles appear around him. It's not enough to hurt most superhumans, but can give them a workout.

The base has no weapons, but can channel electricity into its exterior shell as a tactic to shock oversized sea-life or unwary supervillains who come into contact with it. But this is only a token defense; the base chiefly depends on its superheroes to defend it.

The base's computer has a greater processing capacity (*i.e.*, INT) than its counterpart in the Urban Base, and adds some databases related to its environment that make it easier for its operators to distinguish between natural events and potential enemy action in the base's vicinity. The base is larger, and so needs more personnel (who are the same as those in the Urban Base).

The cost of this base makes it inconveniently expensive for most beginning superteams, but is appropriate to a team that has built up some experience and finds that its original base is no longer adequate for its needs.

UNDERWATER BASE

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
8	BODY	6	
5,000"	Size	28	-13 DCV; no Grounds
16	DEF	42	Total Characteristic Cost: 76

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
15	<i>Location:</i> City, Underwater	0
21	<i>Hidden:</i> Concealment 18-	0
12	<i>Generator:</i> Endurance Reserve (100 END, 20 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
88	<i>Electrified Outer Shell:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No KB (-¼)	5
9	<i>Life Support Systems:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Safe Environment: High Pressure, Intense Cold); Costs Endurance (-½)	2
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
29	<i>Sensors:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 32x Range (4,800"),	

	Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Immobile (cameras and monitor station; -2) plus Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (to Clairsentience; -½) plus Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (-½)	0
8	<i>Sonar:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees); OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
1	<i>Sound Pickups:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group); OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
4	<i>Sound Pickups:</i> +5 PER with Hearing Group; OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
18	<i>Laboratories:</i> 18 points' worth of laboratories (player's choice)	
12	<i>Cell Block:</i> DEF +8, Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation (x2; +½); Partial Coverage (15 hexes; -2)	0
7	<i>Cell Block Psychic Energy Insulation:</i> Mental Defense (20 points); Partial Coverage (15 hexes; -2)	0
37	<i>Cell Block Artificial Gravity Pinner:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR), Affects Desolidified (+½), Area Of Effect (Any Area Of 9"; +1); Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1), Only Within Defined Area (15 hexes; -2)	15
15	<i>Danger Room:</i> DEF +14; Partial Coverage (200 hexes; -1¾)	0
5	<i>Danger Room Darkness Generators:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 2" radius; OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¾)	2
14	<i>Danger Room Blasters:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, Variable Special Effects (+½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¾)	4
9	<i>Danger Room Net Projectors:</i> Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF; OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¾)	4
13	<i>Danger Room Forcewall Generators:</i> Force Wall (8 PD/8 ED; 8" and 2" tall); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¾)	6
10	<i>Danger Room Hologram Generators:</i> Sight Group Images, -5 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (8" radius; +¾); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¾)	4

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 332
Total Base Cost: 408

Value Disadvantages
To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0
Total Cost: 408/5 = 82

UNDERWATER BASE COMPUTER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 13				

Cost Skills

- 3 Cryptography 14-
- 5 AK: Earth 16-
- 5 AK: Home Nation 16-
- 5 CK: Campaign City 16-
- 2 KS: Archived Recent News 11-
- 4 KS: Current News 15-
- 5 KS: Oceanographic Data 16-
- 4 KS: Sounds of Underwater Life Forms 15-
- 3 KS: Superheroes 14-
- 4 KS: Supervillains 15-
- 2 KS: World Celebrities/Politicians 11-
- 2 KS: World History 11-
- 2 KS: World Politics 11-
- 2 SS: Mathematics 11-
- 2 Navigation (Marine Navagation) 14-
- 3 Systems Operation 14-

Programs

- 1 Monitor Camera System, Report Anomalies
- 1 Monitor Sonar System, Report Anomalies
- 1 Plot Distance, Travel Times Between Specified Locations
- 5 Run Programmed Danger Room Simulation (Up to 5 Resident In Memory)
- 1 Scan and Enter Data
- 1 Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
- 1 Send Emergency Call to Team Members If Specified Protocols Are Not Met

Talents

- 3 *Clock*: Absolute Time Sense
- 5 *Memory*: Eidetic Memory
- 3 *Calculator*: Lightning Calculator
- 3 *Instant-On Feature*: Lightsleep
- 4 *Scanner*: Speed Reading (x10)

Total Abilities Cost: 82**Total Computer Cost: 95****Value Disadvantages**

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0**Total Cost: 95/5 = 19****Space Base**

Very experienced and powerful teams, or those who need to be able to operate with an autonomy not possible if they are headquartered within national boundaries, may choose to build a base in space — either in Earth orbit or on some mass such as the Moon. The base below presumes an orbital placement, but the only change needed to make it a lunar or asteroid base is elimination of the maneuvering thrusters. This is an Operations Center; increase the size of its staff and make a lot of them super-agents, and it becomes a Military Base.

To the functions of the Underwater Base, the Space Base adds Artificial Gravity (which can be turned off, and becomes disabled if power is interrupted), an imaging device for the War Room (that allows detailed holographic 3-D presentations of such things as landing zones, enemy bases, national events, and so forth), a core chamber that has its own artificial gravity, generator, life support, and communications (in case of disaster, the base complement can retreat there to stage operations or wait for rescue), and a teleportation device that can transport up to 16 team members and other

personnel to anywhere on Earth.

This base loses the underwater base's electrified hull and replaces it with an exterior blaster cannon that is sufficient to damage to many types of attacking spacecraft, and a set of internal neural zappers that are adequate to render many attackers unconscious.

With the move to space, the team can afford a self-aware computer system. This AI has all the facilities of the other bases' computers, but adds extensive databases of movie, music, and game entertainments (helpful to staff members who stay on duty there for protracted periods of time), the ability to handle base communications and arrange for the teleportation in of team members and staffers whose identities it confirms, a sophisticated conversation program, and the like.

The staffers of the Space Base are the same as for the Urban Base, but there should be 64 of them, with at least half being on-duty at any given time. Most live on the station for months-long shifts.

SPACE BASE

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
8	BODY	6	
5,000"	Size	28	-13 DCV; no Grounds
16	DEF	42	Total Characteristic Cost: 76

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
35	<i>Location:</i> Distant, In Space	0
12	<i>Generator:</i> Endurance Reserve (100 END, 20 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
7	<i>Artificial Gravity:</i> Telekinesis (10 STR); Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	1
13	<i>Life Support Systems:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Safe Environment: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum); Costs Endurance (-½)	2
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
3	<i>Situation Imager:</i> Sight Group Images, Increased Size (2" radius; +¼); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (10 hexes; -2)	1
29	<i>Sensors:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 32x Range (4,800"), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Immobile (cameras and monitor station; -2) plus Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (to Clairsentience; -½) plus Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (-½)	0
22	<i>Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+30 versus Range Modifier); OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
4	<i>Core Chamber — Backup Artificial Gravity:</i> Telekinesis (10 STR); Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1), Partial Coverage (50 hexes; -2)	1

5	<i>Core Chamber — Backup Life Support Systems:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Safe Environment: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum); Costs Endurance (-½), Partial Coverage (50 hexes; -2)	2
3	<i>Core Chamber — Backup Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Immobile (-1½), Partial Coverage (50 hexes; -2)	0
55	<i>Team Teleporter:</i> Multipower, 137-point reserve, all OIF Immobile (-1½)	
5u	1) <i>Near Vicinity Teleportation:</i> Teleportation 40", x32 Noncombat, x16 Increased Mass; OIF Immobile (-1½)	12
3u	2) <i>Earth To Base Teleportation:</i> Teleportation 5", x16 Increased Mass, MegaScale (1" = 100,000 km, move to any point up to 1 km away; +1¼); OIF Immobile (-1½)	14
5	<i>Maneuvering Thrusters:</i> Flight 10"; OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼)	1
5	<i>Polarized Exterior Windows:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); Only Protects Versus Exterior Flashes Against Interior Personnel (-1)	0
18	<i>Laboratories:</i> 18 points' worth of laboratories (player's choice)	
12	<i>Cell Block:</i> DEF +8, Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation (x2; +½); Partial Coverage (15 hexes; -2)	0
7	<i>Cell Block Psychic Energy Insulation:</i> Mental Defense (20 points); Partial Coverage (15 hexes; -2)	0
37	<i>Cell Block Artificial Gravity Pinner:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR), Affects Desolidified (+½), Area Of Effect (Any Area Of 9"; +1); Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1), Only Within Defined Area (15 hexes; -2)	15
15	<i>Danger Room:</i> DEF +14; Partial Coverage (200 hexes; -1¼)	0
5	<i>Danger Room Darkness Generators:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 2" radius; OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¼)	2
14	<i>Danger Room Blasters:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, Variable Special Effects (+½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¼)	4
9	<i>Danger Room Net Projectors:</i> Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF; OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¼)	4
13	<i>Danger Room Forcewall Generators:</i> Force Wall (8 PD/8 ED; 8" and 2" tall); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¼)	6
10	<i>Danger Room Hologram Generators:</i> Sight Group Images, -5 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (8" radius; +¾); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (200 hexes; -1¼)	4
48	<i>Exterior Defensive Blaster:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, 4 clips of 125 Charges each (+1); OIF Immobile (-1½)	[125]
15	<i>Exterior Defensive Blaster:</i> 7 more	

- Blasters, as above, spaced equidistantly around the base's hull [125]
- 24 *Internal Neural Tranquilizer*: Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is having a neural system markedly different from humans' or wearing a team-member radio; +1); OIF Immobile (located in command center/situation room; -1½), 16 Charges (-0) [16]
- 15 *Internal Neural Tranquilizer*: 7 more Tranquilizers, located at strategic points throughout the base (core chamber, teleporter room, hangar, four important hallways) [16]

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 453

Total Base Cost: 529

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 529/5 = 106

SPACE BASE COMPUTER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
3	SPD	7		Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 39

Cost Skills

- 9 Conversation 12-
- 3 Cryptography 14-
- 5 AK: Earth 16-
- 5 AK: Home Nation 16-
- 5 CK: Campaign City 16-
- 2 KS: Archived Recent News 11-
- 4 KS: Current News 15-
- 4 KS: Known Alien Races 15-
- 4 KS: Movies Database 15-
- 3 KS: Music Database 14-
- 5 KS: Space Data 16-

- 3 KS: Superheroes 14-
- 4 KS: Supervillains 15-
- 2 KS: World Celebrities/Politicians 11-
- 2 KS: World History 11-
- 2 KS: World Politics 11-
- 2 SS: Mathematics 11-
- 2 Navigation (Space) 14-
- 4 PS: Communications Coordinator 15-
- 2 PS: Game-Player 11-
- 3 Systems Operation 14-

Programs

- 1 Monitor Camera System, Report Anomalies
- 1 Monitor Communications System, Report Anomalies
- 1 Monitor Radar System, Report Anomalies
- 1 Perform Teleport Pickup Of Authorized Personnel On Demand
- 1 Plot Distance, Travel Times Between Specified Locations
- 5 Run Programmed Training Facility Simulation (Up to 5 Resident In Memory)
- 1 Scan and Enter Data
- 1 Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
- 1 Send Emergency Call to Team Members If Specified Protocols Are Not Met

Talents

- 3 *Clock*: Absolute Time Sense
- 5 *Memory*: Eidetic Memory
- 3 *Calculator*: Lightning Calculator
- 3 *Instant-On Feature*: Lightsleep
- 4 *Scanner*: Speed Reading (x10)

Total Abilities Cost: 106

Total Computer Cost: 145

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 145/5 = 29



VEHICLES



Superhero vehicles tend to serve one or both of the following functions in a campaign... and before a character buys one, he should find out from the GM whether the GM wants a vehicle fulfilling those functions. (The GM may prefer that the character have those functions as part of his powers instead.) These functions include:

Getting To Where The Action Is. This function helps a hero who does not have the power necessary to get from point to point in a timely fashion. This feature is especially appropriate for team vehicles, to carry the entire team across long distances (such as transcontinental trips or voyages to different star systems). Otherwise, some characters may have to resort to asking other characters to carry them, or get left behind.

Fighting And Rescuing. This sort of vehicle serves as an extension of the character, providing him with combat functionality he does not ordinarily have. There is a long tradition of supers using such vehicles (especially if the hero is essentially human), and vehicles of this type tend to be small one- and two-person craft.

SAMPLE VEHICLES

Each of the following vehicles is described both in game terms and in terms of its function within a campaign.

TEAM TRANSPORT

This vehicle is a super-tech jet aircraft large enough to carry a good-sized team around and get them quickly to where the action is. This vehicle has minimal computational power — just enough for it to navigate and to recognize when it has been acquired by another vehicle's radar lock.

TEAM TRANSPORT

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
60	STR	0	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 HTH
20	BODY	0	
10"x5"	Size	50	Mass 100 tons; -10 KB; -6 DCV
8	DEF	18	
13	DEX	9	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
3	SPD	7	Phases: 4, 8, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 84			

Movement: Ground: 6"/12"
Flight: 10"/1,250"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
75	<i>Jet Engines:</i> Flight 10", x125 Noncombat, 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Day; +½) [1cc]	
16	<i>Sealed Environment:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Safe Environments: Low Pressure/Vacuum, Intense Heat, Intense Cold)	0
6	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1)	0
19	<i>Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+14 versus Range Modifier); OIF Bulky (-1)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 116
Total Vehicle Cost: 200

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0
Total Cost: 200/5 = 40

TEAM TRANSPORT COMPUTER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 3				

Cost Skills

5	AK: Earth 14-
5	AK: Home Nation 14-
2	Navigation (Air) 12-

Programs

1	Monitor Radar System, Report Lock-Ons
1	Monitor Radio System, Report Team Alert Codes
1	Plot Distance, Travel Times Between Specified Locations
1	Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic

Talents

3	<i>Clock:</i> Absolute Time Sense
5	<i>Memory:</i> Eidetic Memory
3	<i>Calculator:</i> Lightning Calculator
3	<i>Instant-On Feature:</i> Lightsleep

Total Abilities Cost: 30
Total Computer Cost: 33

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 33/5 = 7

TEAM TRANSPORT OPTIONS

The standard Team Transport is very configurable. A team purchasing a Team Transport can modify it with any and all of the following options, if they can afford the point cost.

Cost	Optional System	END
20	<i>Aquatic Mode:</i> Swimming 15", x4 Noncombat	0
90	<i>Autoblaster I:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, No Range Penalty (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 250 Charges (+1) (180 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1)	[250]
60	<i>Autoblaster II:</i> RKA 2½d6, No Range Penalty (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 250 Charges (+1) (120 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1)	[250]
36	<i>Disguised Mode:</i> Shape Shift (Sight, Hearing, Touch, and Radio Groups, up to four predefined shapes), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
30	<i>Drill Mode:</i> Tunneling 6" through DEF 6 materials	0
2	<i>Insulated Cockpit/Cabin:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (5 points) (5 Active Points); Only Protects Versus Exterior Flashes Against Interior Personnel (-1)	0
5	<i>Polarized Windows:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points) (10 Active Points); Only Protects Versus Exterior Flashes Against Interior Personnel (-1)	0
30	<i>Space Travel:</i> FTL Travel (1,000 LY/year) (may require additional adaptations to vehicle's Life Support systems and the like)	0
12	<i>Stealth Mode:</i> Invisibility To Radio Group, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (15 Active Points); Radar Only (-¼)	0
10	<i>Sturdy:</i> +10 BODY	0

Individual Combat/ Rescue Vehicles

Vehicles such as this tend to be small, very maneuverable, and often designed to resemble or be decorated with the symbol of the owning character or characters. The most common variety is the super-car.

SUPER-CAR

This vehicle is designed to get a superhero, typically one who is mostly human, around the campaign city quickly and in style. The standard Super-Car is large enough for a driver and one passenger, is fast, is comparatively heavily armored, and possesses a number of offensive, defensive, sensory, and miscellaneous systems. A typical version looks like this:

SUPER-CAR

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
25	STR	0	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH
13	BODY	0	
2"x1"	Size	15	Mass 800 kg; -3 KB; -2 DCV
10	DEF	24	
18	DEX	24	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
4	SPD	12	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 75			

Movement: Ground Movement: 21"/168"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
40	<i>Engine:</i> Ground Movement +15" (21" total), x8 Noncombat	0
6	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1)	0
2	<i>Nightsight Systems:</i> Nightvision; OIF Bulky (-1)	0
5	<i>Headlights:</i> Sight Group Images, Increased Size (8" Cone; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Create Light (-1), Limited Arc Of Use (60 Degrees forward, same horizontal level; -¾)	0
4	<i>Heating/Air Conditioning:</i> Life Support (Safe Environments: Intense Heat, Intense Cold)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 57

Total Vehicle Cost: 132

Value Disadvantages

To be chosen by the players (if any)

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 132/5 = 26

SUPER-VEHICLE MODIFICATION

Vehicle	Cost	System
Helicopter	50 (+10)	Flight 20", x8 Noncombat
Hovercraft	25 (-15)	Flight 20", x8 Noncombat; Not More Than 1" Above Ground/Water (-1)
Jet	43 (-3)	Flight 20", x64 Noncombat; Stalls at Combat Velocity (-½)
Speedboat	12 (-40)	Swimming 20", x4 Noncombat; Surface Only (-1)
Submarine	15 (-37)	Swimming 10", x4 Noncombat
Tunneler	30 (-10)	Tunneling 6" through DEF 6 material

A character can take two or more movement options for a multiple-terrain vehicle. This can come as a real surprise to a supervillain who is used to thinking of a car as nothing but a car.

OTHER SUPER-VEHICLES

To design other sorts of individual super-vehicles, simply remove the Super-Car's extra Ground Movement (this leaves it with 6", costing 0 points — and the Speedboat and Submarine sell back even that). Then substitute any of the choices in the box on page 113. The costs in parentheses are the net costs after accounting for the Super-Car's reduced Ground Movement.

SUPER-VEHICLE OPTIONS

In addition to the equipment listed on the two vehicles above, the accompanying box contains some additional systems characters could install on their super-vehicles.

SUPER-VEHICLE OPTIONS

Cost	Optional System	END
Defense Systems		
19	<i>Retractable Armor:</i> +8 DEF (24 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase to activate; -¼)	0
15	<i>Vehicular Force Field Generator:</i> Force Field (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (30 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1)	0
Movement Systems		
3	<i>Emergency Glide-Wing:</i> Gliding 7" (7 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Maneuverability (-¼)	0
13	<i>Emergency Jets:</i> Flight 10", x32 Noncombat (40 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Maneuverability (-¼), 2 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (deactivated with off switch or by significant damage to vehicle; -¾)	[2cc]
4	<i>Gripping Tires:</i> Clinging (normal STR) (10 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½)	0
2	<i>Nitrous Oxide Injector:</i> Additional x2 Noncombat for Ground Movement (5 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1)	var

9 *Super-Springs:* Leaping 12", x8 Non-combat (22 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), 8 Charges (-½) [8]

Sensors

10 *Vehicular Cameras:* Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group 0

Weapons

27 *Flare Grenade Launcher:* Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1¼) (67 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by Darkness or water; -½) [4cc]

21 *Ram:* HA +7d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (52 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Only With Move Throughs (-1) 0

18 *Smoke Grenade Launcher:* Darkness to Sight Group 4" radius (40 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (removed by high winds or rain; -¼) [4cc]

40 *Vehicular Blaster:* Energy Blast 8d6, No Range Modifier (+½), 60 Charges (+½) (80 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1) [60]

40 *Vehicular Laser:* RKA 2½d6, No Range Modifier (+½), 60 Charges (+½) (80 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1) [60]

Miscellaneous Systems

30 *Grapnel-Thrower:* Stretching 10", x8 Noncombat, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (90 Active Points); Only To Grab And Pull (-1), OIF Bulky (-1)

2 *Waldos:* Extra Limbs (2) (5 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1) 0

Note that some of these powers are not built with the *Focus* Limitation because they are intrinsic to the vehicle itself; taking them off would mean disassembling the vehicle either partially or totally.



EQUIPMENT



Equipment is any sort of gear or gadgetry an individual character carries (as opposed to vehicles, buildings, and so on).

WEAPONS

Weapons are a staple of superhero-world technology — and weapons that allow a normal person to affect a super (or even just to leave him with the mistaken impression that he can) are among the most common types found. Some examples follow.

BLASTER PISTOLS

The blaster pistol is a staple of superhero environments, though it is often not powerful enough to do real harm to a superhero. It is, in essence, a handgun that fires energy charges (so it has special effects far more interesting than those of a real-world firearm), but otherwise functions much like ordinary pistols. Super-agencies — those organizations that employ colorfully-uniformed agents who, collectively, can often give superhumans a certain amount of trouble — often make use of blaster pistols, and each agency's specific design is unique.

Here are two types of blaster pistols. The first is a single-shot weapon appropriate for use by officers who carry them for largely ceremonial reasons. The second is a weapon that can fire five-shot bursts; it's more practical for combat against supers. Each type is shown in an Energy Blast configuration, but you can substitute an equivalent number of DCs of Ranged Killing Attack for the same cost.

Blaster Pistol (Single-Fire): *Energy Blast 6d6 (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 clips of 8 Charges each (-0). Total cost: 15 points.*

Blaster Pistol (Auto-Fire): *Energy Blast 6d6; Autofire (5 shots; +½), 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½) (60 Active Points); OAF Blaster Pistol (-1). Total cost: 30 points.*

BLASTER RIFLES

Blaster rifles, functionally, are more than scaled-up versions of blaster pistols. They are a super-agent's primary weapon rather than backup weapon. As with the Blaster Pistols, you can substitute Killing Damage for Normal Damage at the rate of 1 DC for 1 DC and keep the same cost structure.

Blaster Assault Rifle

The *Blaster Assault Rifle* is designed to project energy in single-shot mode. It does enough damage to pose a significant threat to most supers.

Its grenade-launcher attachment, which does not appreciably increase the size of the weapon, allows for the firing of small-scale explosive devices; the weapon can only hold one grenade at a time.

Cost	Power	END
24	<i>Blaster Assault Rifle:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve, all OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½)	
2u	1) <i>Blaster:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½)	[32]
2u	2) <i>Grenade Launcher:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, Explosion (+½); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), 8 clips of 1 Charge each (-1)	[1]
3	<i>Onboard Targeting Computer:</i> +2 with Ranged Combat; OAF (-1), Only With Blaster Assault Rifle (-1)	0
2	<i>Sight:</i> +2 versus Range Modifier; OAF (-1), Only With Blaster Assault Rifle (-1)	0
Total cost: 33 points		

Blaster Sniper Rifle

The *Blaster Sniper Rifle* is designed to allow an expert marksman to fire upon an enemy from a considerable distance. The design of its scope, which reduces range penalties and offers infrared targeting (but does not have to be used or even attached) means a sniper has to spend a Phase to acquire a target through the scope, but once that target is acquired, does not have to spend a new Phase each time he fires; however, when he wants to switch to a new target, he must spend the Phase again. (Optionally, the GM can rule that the sniper does not have to spend an extra Phase to acquire a new target who is very near his original target — say, within 2" of any point of his original line of sight.)

Cost	Power	END
22	<i>Blaster Sniper Rifle:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Increased Maximum Range (x5, or 1,125"; +¼); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), 8 clips of 5 Charges each (-0)	[5]
3	<i>Onboard Targeting Computer:</i> +2 with Ranged Combat; OAF (-1), Only With Blaster Sniper Rifle (-1)	0
11	<i>Sniper Rifle Scope:</i> +12 versus Range Modifier; OAF (-1), Only With Blaster Assault Rifle (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase to activate; -¼)	0
2	<i>Sniper Rifle Scope:</i> Nightvision; OAF (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase to activate; -¼)	0
Total cost: 38 points		

SHOCK-PRODS

A Shock-Prod is a melee weapon that applies a shock to the target. The effect is normally electrical, though variant types could be built (for instance, prods that inject mild neurotoxins). They do the same damage regardless of how much Strength the wielder uses with them. Their batteries carry only a limited amount of energy before running down.

Below are Shock-Prods at three typical levels of power.

Shock-Prod (Light/Medium/Heavy): *Energy Blast 6d6/8d6/10d6, 32 Charges (+¼) (37/50/62 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Range (-½). Total cost: 15/20/25 points.*

A Shock-Prod can be designed in any number of different physical configurations. It might look like a policeman's night-stick or tonfa, nunchaku, brass knuckles, baseball bats, cattle prods, and so on. In these forms, they are obviously weapons, but a variant type is designed to look like an innocuous item such as a set of gloves, a small umbrella, or a book. Disguised Shock-Prods are built with the Limitation IAF (-½) instead of OAF (-1).

THROWING BLADES

Many villains and supervillains use throwing blades. Some are run-of-the-mill throwing knives or the equivalent (shuriken, needles, and so on); they tend not to be of too much use against supers, but are sometimes used by supers against normal

targets. Others are scaled up in power and versatility to be of use against supers.

Throwing Blades can be used to fight in HTH Combat or thrown and retrieved. They come in Standard and Vicious varieties; the latter is sharper and deadlier. Alternately, some heroes carry bunches of smaller blades, designed only for throwing in groups.

Throwing Blade, Basic: *HKA ½d6 (up to 1d6+1 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (15 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** Ranged (+½) for this HKA (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA in HTH Combat until Charge is Recovered; -½) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 8 points.*

Throwing Blade, Vicious: *HKA ½d6 (up to 1d6+1 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (20 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) (total cost: 9 points) **plus** Ranged (+½) for this HKA (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA in HTH Combat until Charge is Recovered; -½) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 10 points.*

Bunch Of Throwing Blades: *RKA ½d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 8 clips of 5 Recoverable Charges each (+¼) (17 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼). Total cost: 7 points.*

SUPER-MULTITOOL

The Super-Multitool is an all-in-one gadget that incorporates one or more weapons as well as several other devices that can be useful in getting a hero out of a jam. Multitools can be shaped as billy clubs, bracers/vambraces, pistols, disks, or any number of other things (the accompanying version is bought as an OAF; other types might require OIF).

This device, whatever its shape, has four primary functions. It can act as a prybar or lever, tremendously boosting the character's STR for leverage-based purposes; it has a claw or hook that allows the character to grab onto an otherwise-difficult surface when flying or falling past it (note that this doesn't give the character the normal Clinging-based ability to run around on such a surface — just to stick to it); it lets the character add 6d6 to his punches when walloping someone; and it fires off and instantaneously retracts a swingline that allows the character to travel at a ferocious speed through appropriate terrains (such as skyscraper environments).

A Super-Multitool is not intended as a utility belt, mobile lab, or any other really elaborate set of gadgets. It's a comparatively simple gadget and normally should not have more than six to eight powers (*i.e.*, Multipower slots) in it.



Cost	Power	END
22	<i>Super-Multitool</i> : Multipower, 45-point reserve; all OAF (-1)	
1u	1) <i>Lever</i> : +30 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), No Figured Characteristics (-½), Only For Leverage-Based Tasks (-½)	0
1u	2) <i>Wall-Grasping</i> : Clinging (normal STR); No Movement Allowed (-½)	0
2u	3) <i>Club</i> : HA +6d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	0
1u	4) <i>Swingline</i> : Swinging 10", x8 Noncombat; OAF (-1)	1
Total cost: 27 points.		

DEFENSIVE GADGETS

The counterpart, and necessary complement, of weapons is defensive items — gadgets that protect their users from sustaining some or all of a weapon's damage.

ARMORED COSTUMES

In addition to the *Bulletproof Spandex* costume described on page 49, superhumans may use several other types of protective costuming. The first is Armored Costumes. These aren't powered armor battlesuits, but rather bulkier, more rigid, more protective forms of Bulletproof Spandex, with thick armored padding and other improvements (including, typically, plenty of pockets). Armored Costumes aren't nearly as comfortable as Bulletproof Spandex, but can be just as stylish.

Armored Costume (Standard): *Armor* (8 PD/8 ED) (24 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 16 points.

Armored Costume (Heavy): *Armor* (12 PD/12 ED) (36 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 24 points.

As with Bulletproof Spandex, characters can buy more Armor with their Armored Costumes if they want, up to any GM-established maximum (16 is a good ceiling for most games). They can also add additional, Nonresistant padding that simply boosts their normal PD and ED.

FORCE FIELD DEVICES

Force Field Devices are protective gadgets characters turn on only when they need them (unlike Armor, they use END, so keeping them on all the time isn't advisable). Superhumans who do a lot of fighting and have no other Resistant Defenses often wear powerful, reliable force field belts that can stay on for protracted periods (such as the Primary belt below). Other supers may have weaker force field devices that merely augment their other defenses, such as the Secondary belt. The last version described is used by physically weak masterminds when finally confronted or by very wealthy celebrities when suddenly endangered.

Force Field Belt, Primary: *Force Field* (20 PD/20 ED) (40 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 27 points.

Force Field Belt, Secondary: *Force Field* (10 PD/10 ED) (20 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 13 points.

Force Field Belt, Mastermind Emergency: *Force Field* (16 PD/16 ED) (32 Active Points); IIF (-¼); 2 *Continuing Charges* lasting 1 Minute each (deactivated by any electrical attack or getting wet; -¾). Total cost: 16 points.

MASK LENSES

Mask Lenses are little inserts fitted into a hero's mask in front of his eyes. (By a tradition whose origins are long forgotten, they are usually white, but other colors are possible; some villains prefer red or green.) The standard version, the Polarized Mask Lens, protects a hero from sudden bright lights such as an enemy's Flash attacks. Other lenses provide vision enhancements.

Polarized Mask Lenses: *Sight Group Flash Defense* (5 points) (5 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 4 points.

Heat-Sensitive Mask Lenses: *Infrared Perception* (Sight Group) (5 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 4 points.

Nightsight Mask Lenses: *Nightvision* (5 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 4 points.

UV-Sensitive Mask Lenses: *Ultraviolet Perception* (Sight Group) (5 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 4 points.

X-Ray Mask Lenses: *N-Ray Perception* (stopped by lead, gold, or Force Fields) (Sight Group) (10 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 8 points.

INSULATED EAR COVERS

Insulated Ear Covers fit in a hero's mask over his ears, or are otherwise inserted into his ear canals. They do not interfere appreciably with his hearing, but protect him from sudden loud noises such as explosions and Hearing Group Flashes.

Insulated Ear Covers: *Hearing Group Flash Defense* (5 points) (5 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 4 points.

PSIONIC SHIELD

Heroes who have had bad experiences with enemy mentalists sometimes wear psionic shield devices as part of their masks/helmets (or, sometimes, built into ornaments such as headbands or necklaces). Most of these are devices that generate an electromagnetic radiation field that interferes with the precise electromagnetic frequencies generated by psionic powers, thus reducing the effectiveness of incoming Mental Powers.

Psionic Shield: *Mental Defense (10 points, plus points from EGO) (10 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 8 points.*

PORTABLE BLAST SHIELD

This is an apparatus sometimes carried by super-agents; typically, only one member of a super-agent squad carries a Portable Blast Shield. This device, when activated, erects a temporary energy shield for up to two minutes. The protective value of the shield is roughly equivalent to that of a tank, and allows a unit to survive an anticipated explosion. The field also screens out the first wave of radiation carried by an explosion's shockwave, but can't protect against radiation beyond the two minutes of its operation.

Portable Blast Shield: *Force Wall (16 PD/16 ED; 16" long) (110 Active Points); OAF (-1), 2 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (deactivated by any electrical attack or getting the generator wet; -¾) (total cost: 40 points) plus Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation) (2 Active Points); OAF (-1), 2 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (deactivated by any electrical attack or getting the generator wet; -¾) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 41 points.*

SPACE RINGS

A team that journeys into outer space frequently — particularly if it has a space-based headquarters — might develop a device like this to protect its members.

Space Rings help keep their wearers alive in hard-space situations. They are not intended to be a member's sole source of life support, since the air and flight thrust they supply only last one minute before being recharged. But if a character is suddenly exposed to the cold, the vacuum, and the hard radiation of space, this ring protects him — long enough for him to reach a pressurized area, hopefully.

The device is built as a finger-ring, the logic being that a character is unlikely to take off something this small and convenient. It uses the character's body heat to project a force field that insulates the character (allowing him to preserve his body heat), reflects radiation, and holds tight against his flesh (preventing explosive decompression). The device also carries a tiny canister of pure oxygen which it can release once the wearer throws a tiny switch under the ring's flip-up stone; it's sufficient to allow the character to breathe for one minute. In addition, the character can flip another switch under the stone to vent excess pressure from an aperture in the force field that is situated at his back, allowing him to propel himself forward, but the thrust is so gentle that this only works in microgravity situations (such as outer space), and it, too, lasts for only one minute after being activated.

Cost	Space Ring	END
6	<i>Life Support Field: Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Vacuum, Safe Environment: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) (13 Active Points); IIF (-¼), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Minute (deactivated by any attack that inflicts STUN or BODY damage to the character; -1)</i>	[1cc]
2	<i>Pressure Vent Propulsion: Flight 5" (10 Active Points); IIF (-¼), Only In Microgravity (-2), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Minute (deactivated by any attack that inflicts STUN or BODY damage to the character; -1)</i>	[1cc]
Total cost: 8 points		

COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES

Superteams and super-agent units can live and die by their ability to communicate with one another, so communications devices are a very necessary part of the superhuman lifestyle. Some standard models include convenient hands-free headsets and more versatile handsets.

RADIO HEADSET

This model is worn as part of a hero's mask, beneath the hero's helmet, and so on. It is voice-activated and set to one frequency. It generally does not require any action from the user beyond turning it on at the start of the mission and turning it off at the end.

Teams concerned with security, which is most of them, sometimes add in a scrambler option. This is built as a Variable Power Pool of Languages (at native accent level) in a Focus. (Although Skills are Special Powers, and therefore cannot be bought in Power Frameworks without GM permission, GMs should permit this construct, which is interesting, fun, and not especially abusive.) A successful Cryptography roll can decrypt a scrambler "language," but superteams counter the actions of cryptographers by changing the computer-generated "language" at frequent intervals (this constitutes changing the Pool and requires 1 Minute; to change the Pool in just a Full Phase, the character must buy a Skill to do so, though GMs should consider allowing characters to use ordinary Cryptography or Systems Operation instead of making them buy a separate Skill).

Radio Headset: *Radio Perception/Transmission (10 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 8 points.*

Scrambled Transmission Option: *Variable Power Pool (Scrambler Pool), 4 base + 2 control cost; IIF (-¼), Only For One Language At A Time (-1). Total cost: 5 points.*

RADIO HANDSET, BASIC

Common radio handsets function exactly as radio headsets, but are either Obvious Accessible Foci (as in a walkie-talkie) or obvious microphone/speaker units built into a costume. The Scrambled Transmission Option for either version costs 5 points, as above.

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

Radio Handset: *Radio Perception/Transmission* (10 Active Points); OAF (-1). *Total cost: 5 points.*

RADIO HANDSET, ADVANCED

An Advanced Radio Handset includes much more functionality. It can broadcast and receive on a much greater number of radio frequencies. It can detect the source of radio transmissions and estimate range and transmission strength, allowing heroes to find homing beacons and other transmission sources.

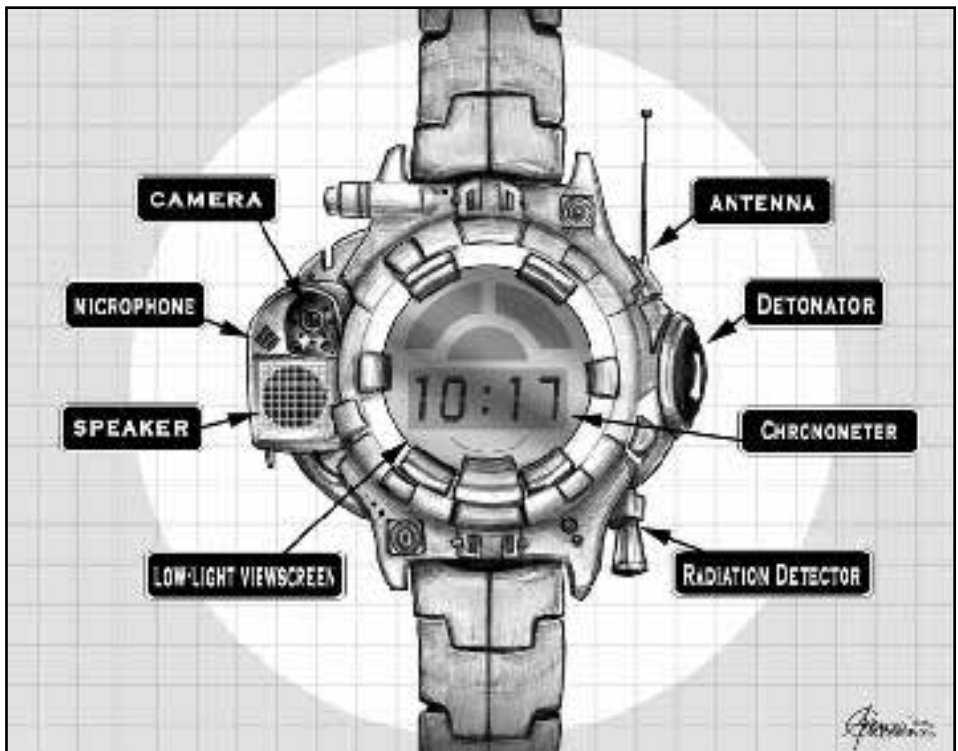
Additionally, Advanced Radio Handsets have powerful built-in computer functions, including: basic atlas entries on a city, national, and world scale; a user-maintained contacts database, including all team members, with private signal codes (allowing the user to send out a signal to a specific team member, to all members in a specific sub-group, to the team as a whole, and so on); and a sophisticated data management program that allows the user to specify handling of incoming messages (e.g., "Put MegaMan through to me immediately; take a message on all calls from Captain Norton").

Cost	Advanced Radio Handset	END
5	<i>Communications:</i> HRRP (Radio Group); OAF (-1), Flashed As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
11	<i>Broadcast Tracking:</i> Detect Source Of Radio Transmissions (PER Roll) (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Range; OAF (-1)	0
5	<i>Scrambled Transmission Function:</i> Variable Power Pool (Scrambler Pool), 4 base + 2 control cost; OAF (-1), Only For One Language At A Time (-1)	0
3	<i>Onboard Computer:</i> Computer (see below); OAF (-1)	0

Val	Char	Cost
10	INT	0
10	DEX	0
2	SPD	0

Cost Skills

2	AK: Earth 11-
2	AK: Home Nation 11-



- 2 CK: Campaign City 11-
- 2 KS: Contact Information 11-
- 4 PS: Personal Assistant 13-
- 3 Systems Operation 11-

Programs

- 1 Activate Homing Signal Upon Approved Remote Query
- 1 Automatically Signal Specific Team Member(s) On Verbal Cue
- 1 Automatically Dial Recorded Number On Spoken Cue
- 1 Prioritize Incoming Calls According To User Preferences
- 1 Send Emergency Call to Team Members If Specified Protocols Are Not Met
- 1 Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic

Talents

- 3 *Clock:* Absolute Time Sense
- 3 *Calculator:* Lightning Calculator
- 3 *Instant-On Feature:* Lightsleep

Total Computer Cost: 30/5 = 6

Total cost: 24 points

If a character prefers to have an OIF version of the Advanced Radio Handset, it costs 6 more points (total of 30 points).

HOMING BEACON

This is a device a superhero can hurl onto a fleeing enemy's back or getaway vehicle so he can track that person later. Tracking the beacon requires any specialized Radio-perceiving device, such as one of the radios described above (possibly

a specialized tracker, built using the same power as the “Broadcast Tracking” function of the Advanced Radio Handset).

The Homing Beacon can reliably be “picked up” on tracking equipment primarily within a 32” radius. However, much like a character can see the beam from a flashlight from far away without being inside the beam, characters outside that radius may still be able to track the Beacon, if the GM so permits: from 33-64”, the Image is at only +2 to PER Rolls; from 65-125”, it’s at +0; from 126-250” it’s at -2; beyond that it would require an Extraordinary Skill Roll to locate it.

Homing Beacon: *Images to Radio Group, +4 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (32” radius; +1¼), Usable As Attack (ranged, based on STR; allows character to “stick” the Image to a target; +1¼), 1 Continuing Recoverable Charge lasting 1 Week (stops functioning if it gets wet or experiences severe radio interference; +1) (76 Active Points); IAF (-½), Image Only Perceivable On Special Radio Frequencies (-0). Total cost: 51 points.*

MOVEMENT DEVICES

Heroes, villains, and super-agents need to get around, and have come up with a wide variety of devices enabling them to do so.

JET THRUSTERS

Jet Thrusters, whether installed in a backpack, boots, belt, or elsewhere, are a favorite means of super-transport. Two types are shown below: a faster, more efficient model used as the primary means of travel by some supers; and a slower model used as a backup means of transport or emergency movement system. The Primary version uses END as normal; you can easily substitute Charges (particularly Fuel Charges) if necessary.

Jet Thrusters, Primary: *Flight 20”, x4 Noncombat (45 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 30 points.*

Jet Thrusters, Backup: *Flight 10”, x4 Noncombat (25 Active Points); OIF (-½), 2 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (character must define deactivation method; -¾). Total cost: 11 points.*

SWINGLINE

Acrobatic supers living in the Big City have a fondness for swinglines, which allow them to move around the city’s skyscraper-heavy downtown with considerable panache (and without the need for subway tokens!). Two models are shown below, one based on an OAF (a billy club, hand-held line-shooter, or the like), and the other based on an OIF (such as a wristband or belt device). Both provide faster transport than the Super-Multitool described above, since they’re single-power gadgets and therefore better at a single specific purpose.

Swingline: *Swinging 20”, x4 Noncombat (25 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 12 points (or 17 points if OIF).*

FLIGHT RING

A team where every character is expected to have the ability to fly at a certain minimum speed, even if it’s not part of his natural or usual repertoire of abilities, might develop and issue flight gadgets to its members. To keep the device from interfering with or spoiling a character’s costume, it’s built into an inconspicuous ring. The ring is loaded with microcircuitry and an antigravity engine powered by the wearer’s body heat and kinetic motion.

In campaigns lacking technology this advanced, these devices should be larger than finger-rings, and probably as some other type of Focus (i.e., OAF, IAF, or OIF).

Flight Rings: *Flight 20” (40 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 32 points.*

SUPERVILLAIN GETAWAY TELEPORTER

This device gives ulcers to superheroes. It’s a small apparatus, concealed on a supervillain’s costume, that automatically teleports him to a pre-defined location from one to ten kilometers away when certain conditions are met. Those conditions include the villain speaking a certain keyword or not subvocalizing a word at least once per thirty seconds after speaking another keyword indicating imminent danger.

Supervillain Getaway Teleporter: *Teleportation 10”, MegaScale (1” = 1 km; +¼), Trigger (Trigger can change each time power is used; +½) (35 Active Points); IIF (-¼), 1 Charge (-2) (total cost: 11 points) **plus** 1 Floating Fixed Location (5 Active Points); IIF (-¼) (total cost: 4 points). Total cost: 15 points.*

RESTRAINT DEVICES

Superheroes and supervillains do a good job of capturing one another, and those who invest in researching and developing sophisticated restraint devices can also do a good job of holding on to their foes.

POWER NEGATOR

This device, once attached to a super who has the appropriate type of superpowers (as defined by the special effect the device effects), Drains all of the super’s powers. The high cost of the Power Negator, which must be paid for each super to which one is attached (and, in the case of supers with multiple known special effects, for each special effect) makes it prohibitively expensive for all but the most well-funded supers or agencies. More sophisticated models (built as Variable Power Pools only usable for this sort of Drain, and thus able to be tuned to any sort of special effect) are even more costly.

(At the GM’s option, characters may use this

device as if it were a sort of VPP already, by allowing them to make appropriate Skill Rolls to set the device to the special effect they want to Drain. If the characters miss the Skill Roll, the Power Negator fails to work correctly, the GM determines the consequences. Typical consequences include the Drain working only for a short time and then gradually wearing off (without the captors noticing) or the device exploding the first time the captive tries to use his powers.)

Power Negator: *Drain 5d6, Affects All Powers Of One Special Effect (special effect must be defined when device is built; +2), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (deactivated by removing device from victim; +½) (250 Active Points); OAF (-1), Can Only Be Used On Manacled/Restrained Subjects (-¼). Total cost: 111 points.*

SUPERCUFFS

You can't attach a Power Negator to a super who isn't already under restraint, and one of the most common restraints in a *Champions* campaign is "supercuffs" — hand- and legcuffs built especially to hold superhumans, and specifically constructed to cover the entire hand so the captive can't use Accessible Foci, or employ Contortionist or Lock-picking to escape.

Supercuffs: *Entangle 12d6 (standard effect: 12 BODY), 18 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½) (225 Active Points); OAF (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Set Effect (hands and legs only, -½), No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab Or Target Must Be Willing (-½), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼). Total cost: 45 points.*

HOT SLEEP CHAMBER

This high-tech apparatus looks like a large metal coffin. When a person is placed within it, the device affects his nervous system to render him unconscious. But since this takes a little while, several Phases at least, it is best used on a super who's already unconscious... otherwise he'll probably just tear his way out of it before it starts affecting him. As long as the captive remains in the Hot Sleep Chamber, he remains asleep (attendants monitoring the system feed and medicate him intravenously). The Chamber is large enough to hold a humanoid up to 10 feet tall and proportionately broad.

In game terms, the Chamber's Drain STUN keeps an occupant at a constant state of -31 STUN, so he only awakens at the GM's discretion (see page 412 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*). Since the character keeps getting "attacked" by the Hot Sleep Chamber, he gets no Recoveries — the Chamber has an effective SPD of at least 12 — but he'll start Recovering as usual if someone turns the Chamber off.

The Hot Sleep Chamber monitors the subject's brain waves to determine how close he is to awakening. If its primary sleep-inducing processes can't stop the subject from awakening for some reason,

the chamber can't do anything else to maintain the subject's artificial coma.

Cost	Hot Sleep Chamber	END
26	<i>Hot Sleep:</i> Drain STUN 3d6, Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (turned off via the deactivation switch or a power outage; +½) (90 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Only Works Against Captives Placed Within Chamber (-1), Cannot Drain Below -31 STUN (-0)	0
27	<i>Hot Sleep:</i> +12 SPD (120 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Only To Use Hot Sleep Chamber On Captives (-2)	0
7	<i>Hot Sleep Monitor:</i> Detect Captive's Condition Of Wakefulness (PER Roll +9), Discriminatory; OAF Bulky (-1½)	0
Total cost: 60 points.		

DEATHTRAPS

Deathtraps are charmingly overengineered contrivances supervillains use to try to kill superheroes in a gruesomely picturesque and memorable fashion. They usually fail, because in their desire to prolong the heroes' agony, the supervillains typically give the heroes enough time to figure out how to escape. Some versions, despite the name, are intended only to harm or delay, not kill.

Here are a few sample deathtraps, easily adaptable for most villains — just change the special effects as appropriate.

TIMER- AND STRUGGLE-TRIGGERED ENVIRONMENT PLUNGER

In general terms, this is a container into which the supervillain puts the victim — either a superhero, one of the superhero's loved ones, or an innocent plucked off the street. After a certain amount of time, one portion of the container opens, allowing something awful currently outside the container to come in or permitting the victim to fall into something awful. The "something awful" could be acid, lava, poisonous reptiles, and so on.

Time is one thing that triggers the device, but so is struggling. The more the victim struggles, the more likely he is to spring the trap prematurely. It's a deliciously vicious circle, from the supervillain's point of view. Ways by which a superhero can defeat this trap include being very, very stealthy while struggling (the device gets a PER Roll to detect struggles; it doesn't detect them automatically); escaping in a Half Phase (it takes that long for the trap to activate); or utilizing a pertinent Skill or power the supervillain didn't account for.

The Plunger is built with Continuous, to reflect the fact that the effect keeps coming after the victim every Phase — the sharks keep swimming in for another bite, the spikes growing out of the walls keep getting bigger, the acid keeps burning the character's flesh, or what have you.

The trap's SPD equals that of the villain who built it. The trap keeps functioning until the victim is dead, it's destroyed, or the GM judges it would for some reason stop (it runs out of fuel, gets tired and leaves, or what have you). Then the villain has to reset it.

Cost	Timer- and Struggle-Triggered Environment Plunger	END
63	<i>Deadly Effect:</i> RKA 6d6 (or less, depending on GM's discretion), Continuous (+1), Trigger (Trigger can change each time power is used; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (270 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), 1 Recoverable Charge (villain must reset trap for each new victim; -1¼)	0
11	<i>Deathtrap Sensors:</i> Detect Victim's Struggles 14- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Targeting Sense; OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
Total cost: 74 points.		

SANDBLASTER OF THE GODS

This trap turns an area the heroes are traveling through into a howling corridor of abrasive material that threatens to flay the skin from their very bones. Generally, it consists of a contained environment (such as a tunnel) and a device at one end that blasts material such as sand, sharp bits of metal, or other awfulness at them for 1 Minute (assume the device has the same SPD as the villain who built it). The force of the wind propelling the ammunition is sufficient to hold many heroes against the wall or floor, prolonging their agony.

Cost	Power	END
11	<i>Sandblaster of the Gods:</i> RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (14" Line; +1), Penetrating (x3; +1½) (52 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), No Range (-½), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Minute (-1), Linked (-½) [1cc]	
33	<i>Force Of The Blast:</i> Telekinesis (50 STR), Area Of Effect (14" Line; +1) (150 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), Set Effect (only to pin the characters to walls, floor, and ceiling; -½), No Range (-½), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Minute (-1) [1cc]	
Total cost: 44 points		

SENSORY OVERLOAD CAPTURE TRAP

As the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook correctly states, players hate to have their characters captured. One way to do it that allows the characters to stagger around in pain for a bit (and perhaps find a way to escape, thus mollifying the players by giving the characters a chance to avoid their fate) is to use something like the Sensory Overload Capture Trap.

The SOCT tends to activate when the heroes are all together exploring a chamber or passage-way deep in the bad guy's base. When it goes off, it fills the area with psychedelic images, startling 3-D hallucinations, painful shrieks, bone-rattling

vibrations, and other random, incomprehensible sensory cues. This sensory overload quickly causes them to collapse, though until they do fall down they are capable of using their powers on their surroundings (and thus, perhaps, escaping).

Mechanically, the SOCT works as a Continuous NND — and the supervillain, having attuned the device to the superhero team in question, is not likely to have set things up so that any of its regular members are immune. It has the same SPD as the villain who uses it.

Sensory Overload Capture Trap: *Energy Blast 4d6, Area Of Effect (16" Radius; +1¼), NND (defense is chosen by user; +1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Trigger (determined by villain who builds trap; +¼) (100 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (-2). Total cost: 22 points.*

FIELD OF MUCK DELAYING TRAP

Less of a menace than the previous three deathtraps, the Field of Muck Delaying Trap is simply an area of a villain's base filled with some sort of substance that retards the progress of anyone moving through it. Anyone can move through it at a rate of 1" per Phase, but supers who are used to traveling much faster may find that they cannot do so until they reach its far edge. This is a good way for a supervillain to delay pursuers until he can get away.

Field Of Muck Delaying Trap: *Entangle 10d6, 10 DEF, Area Of Effect (20" Radius; +1¼) (225 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Within Defined Area (-2), No Range (-½), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Victims Can Move Through Affected Area At 1" Per Phase (-1), 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 27 points.*

DESTROYING THE WORLD FOR FUN AND PROFIT: DOOMSDAY DEVICES

Finally, just for a bit of fun, here are three items of the sort that supervillains and criminal masterminds use to threaten the world. The threat of their use can be part of blackmail plot; their actual use can provide a serious challenge for the PCs to overcome.

EARTHQUAKE INDUCER

This apparatus causes earthquakes to take place. It takes five minutes to activate, and when it goes off, it creates an earthquake the equivalent of a STR 30 character shaking everything in a 56-kilometer radius for one minute. Because it's fully Indirect, not only can it affect everything within the area (objects inside buildings, for example), but Our Heroes can't easily figure out where the attack is coming from! Fortunately for the world, it can only

be used once per day, and its effects only last for 1 Minute (it has the same SPD as the villain who uses it).

Earthquake Inducer: *Telekinesis (30 STR), Area Of Effect (56" Radius; +1½), MegaArea (each hex is 1 km wide and deep; +¼), MegaRange (1" = 100 km; +¾), No Range Modifier (+½), Indirect (+¾) (214 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (5 Minutes; -2), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Minute (deactivated with off switch or a countervailing shockwave; -1), Only Affects Targets On The Ground (-¼). Total cost: 37 points.*

MIND CONTROL WAVE EMITTER

This classic mad scientist apparatus, designed to bring every thinking person on Earth under the domination of the supervillain, is a transmitter whose electromagnetic emissions saturate the minds of the worldwide population. Very strong-willed people might withstand its effects, but it's far better for superheroes to detect its effects as it undergoes final testing and discover some way to find and destroy it.

Mind Control Wave Emitter: *Mind Control 15d6; Telepathic (+¼), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), MegaArea (each hex is 13,000 km tall, wide, and deep; +1½), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (337 Active Points); OIF Immobile Fragile (-1¾), Extra Time (1 Week to activate; -2¼), No Range (-½). Total cost: 61 points.*

TSUNAMI BOMB

This device, dropped into the ocean some distance from shore and detonated, creates a tidal wave that travels (unlike natural tidal waves) in only one direction, toward the shore at which it was aimed. The wave takes several hours to reach its destination, during which time it is a surprisingly innocuous-looking swell in the ocean, but when it nears shore it rises to a monstrous height, then hits about 360 kilometers (224 miles) of coastline with enough force to shatter homes, destroy boats, and devastate the ecosystem. If heroes detect the swell early enough, perhaps they can find some pseudo-scientific way to cancel it... such as detonating a similar bomb ahead of the swell and pointed back the other direction.

In game terms, the tsunami is an Area Of Effect (Line), but it moves and strikes "sideways" from (parallel to) the point where the bomb is detonated, rather than "straight" (perpendicular to) that point.

Tsunami Bomb: *Energy Blast 12d6, Area Of Effect (36" Line; +1), MegaArea (each hex is 10 km wide and deep; +½) (150 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Only Versus Coastal Areas (-1), 1 Charge (-2), Extra Time (wave needs 6 Hours to reach shore and take effect; -3½), Attack Can Be Reduced Or Eliminated By Correct Techniques During 6-Hour Travel Time (-1). Total cost: 16 points.*





CHAPTER FOUR:

...COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

GAMEMASTERING CHAMPIONS

Chapter One discussed some of the general groundwork you need to do when preparing to run a *Champions* campaign — the considerations of genre you have to think about and decide on as the framework for your campaign. This chapter delves into some of the more nuts-and-bolts issues of gamemastering *Champions* — point ceilings, NPC creation, campaign characteristics, and more.

Of course, advice on gamemastering *Champions* campaigns overlaps advice on general *HERO System* GMing advice and campaign-building tips to a certain extent — just like advice on painting miniatures duplicates some general artistic advice. So, don't feel you have to confine the ideas described in this chapter just to superhero campaigns — you can use it in any *HERO System* game, if appropriate.

POINTS AND POWER LEVELS



When you're setting up your *Champions* campaign, the most significant decisions you're likely to make as a GM are how many points characters are built with, and how many points they can allocate to any one power. That in turn tends to dictate the characters' power level.

POINT TOTALS

The number of points players receive with which to build characters, both their Base Points and the additional points they receive for Disadvantages, affects the campaign and your job as GM. It does so more significantly in a *Champions* campaign than most other *HERO System* campaigns, since Superheroic characters have more points to work with, and a greater range of powers and abilities they can use.

The "Standard" beginning Superheroic character — the kind found in most *Champions* campaigns — has 200 Base Points and up to 150 additional points from Disadvantages. This results in a superhero character who's balanced for game purposes, and more or less resembles, in power levels and degree of effectiveness, many (though by no means all) of the best-known comic book superheroes as they were at the beginnings of their careers. (That last part, "beginnings of their careers," is particularly significant; see *Point Total Problems*, below.)

There are three factors you should consider

when setting the point totals for your campaign: total points; Base Points versus Disadvantage points; and your experience as a GM.

Total Character Points

First, how many total points do you want players to build starting characters on? The "Standard Superheroic" model of 200 Base Points + 150 Disadvantage points which this book focuses on isn't the only way to build superheroes in a *Champions* campaign. The Character Types Guidelines and Ability Guidelines tables (see next page) offer several different power levels for superheroes — and of course, the GM is always free to use any other point total or character creation guideline he wishes. The more points players have to work with, the more well-developed and powerful their characters will be — more Character Points not only allows them to buy more dice of effect and points of defense, it gives them the opportunity to buy all sorts of interesting abilities, Talents, Skills, and Perks they might not otherwise be able to afford. (This may depend, in part, on where you set your campaign's point and effectiveness ceilings, if you choose to impose any; see below. The more total points characters have, the higher the ceilings tend to be, typically — but keeping the ceilings lower than expected may force players to think about spending points on things other than extra damage dice.)

Base Points Versus Disadvantage Points

Second, how many of a character's points are going to come from Base Points, and how many



from Disadvantages? There's a practical limit to how many plausible Disadvantages a character can have; 150-200 points is about it, unless you want PCs to be hopeless cripples. The more points you allow characters, the greater the percentage of them that should be Base Points (as indicated by the Character Types Guidelines Table). You can tinker with the formulas in that table a little, but if you do so, you should increase the Base Points allotted rather than the total Disadvantages allowed. If you're sufficiently experienced at GMing *Champions*, and you have a group of players who won't abuse or exploit the privilege, you might even try making *all* the points Base Points — just let the players take whatever Disadvantages they feel help develop their characters. Since Disadvantages are primarily intended as character-defining tools, not sources of more Character Points, this method can lead to some really intriguing PCs and a great campaign... if your players are sophisticated enough to use it properly.

Gamemastering Experience

Third, you should consider your level of experience as a *Champions* GM when you set point totals for PCs. If you have little or no experience with *Champions* campaigns, or you have no particular preference between the campaign types, it's best to choose the Low-Powered or Standard levels. Those are the the easiest power levels for a GM to manage while allowing him to supply satisfying adventure situations. On the

other hand, if you have run *Champions* games before and feel you have a good handle on the *HERO System* and the genre, you could pick any model you want and still have plenty of fun.

Point Total Options

The most common point totals used for *Champions* campaigns appear in the tables on page 28 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook. The Superheroic portions of those tables are repeated here for your convenience.

Of course, the point totals and guidelines for the various categories of Superheroic characters are just that — guidelines, recommendations that work well in many campaigns. The GM can alter the point totals, point ranges, or any other part of the guidelines to suit his own preferences and campaign if he wishes. Here are some other things to consider when choosing one of the standard options:

General Considerations

There are a few general considerations to remember when choosing between or adjusting character point structures in your campaign.

First, the higher the point total is, the comparatively more powerful gadget-based heroes can become. If a 200 Base Point superhero has 100 of his points invested in an OIF powered armor suit, he functions at the level of a character with 250 points. He's not so much more powerful than his confederates that it more than makes up for the occasional difficulties he faces for having his Focus break down

CHARACTER TYPES GUIDELINES TABLE

Character Type	Base Points	Maximum Points From Disadvantages	Maximum Points From Any One Category Of Disadvantage	Total
Superheroic				
Low-Powered	150	100	50	250
Standard	200	150	50	350
High Powered	300	150	60	450
Very High Powered	400	200	75	600
Cosmically Powerful	500+	200+	75+	700+

CHARACTER ABILITY GUIDELINES TABLE

Character Type	Char	SPD	CV	DC	Active Points	Skill Points	Skill Roll	DEF/rDEF
Superheroic								
Low-Powered	10-30	3-8	6-11	6-12	40-75	25-80	8-14-	12/6
Standard	10-40	3-10	7-13	6-14	40-80	25-80	11-15-	20/10
High Powered	15-60	4-12	8-14	10-16	50-90	30-90	11-16-	25/15
Very High Powered	20-80	5-12	10-16	12-20	60-120	40-110	12-17-	35/25
Cosmically Powerful	30-120	6-12	12+	14+	75+	50+	13-+	40+/30+

NOTES

Char: The typical range of characters' Primary Characteristics. Some Characteristics tend to be on the higher end of (or even outside) the range (STR for "brick" characters, for example), and some (such as EGO) are typically on the low end of the range.

SPD: The typical range of characters' SPDs.

CV: The typical range of characters' base Combat Values.

DC: The typical range of the Damage Classes in characters' attacks.

Active Points: The typical range of Active Points in characters' Powers.

Skill Points: The typical range of Character Points characters spend on Skills.

Skill Roll: The typical range of Skill Rolls in characters' Skills.

Def/rDef: The typical level of the characters' Normal and Resistant Defenses.

or temporarily lost. But if a 400 Base Point superhero has 300 of his points in an OIF, he functions as a 550-point character, a more significant difference in power levels.

Second, higher point bases allow for more effectiveness with Power Frameworks — sometimes too much effectiveness. If the GM chooses a campaign power level higher than Standard, he should consider limiting Multipowers, Elemental Controls, and Variable Power Pools with point and effectiveness ceilings... possibly even to the Active Point, DC, and defense totals of the next lowest type of campaign.

Third, higher Base Point campaigns allow for the creation of characters who are that much more powerful than the rest of the world. It becomes less likely for human-level agencies and individuals to affect the PCs; only supervillains and super-technology can do so. This creates the risk of setting up an environment where only costumed characters matter in the campaign. There is less reason for supers to care about or interact with normals, and certainly less reason for them to be concerned about petty human laws. This is sometimes a disadvantage for the GM (such as when it causes the superheroes to become unconsciously arrogant and unheroic) and sometimes an advantage (when good roleplayers are willing to explore the themes of increasing distance from humanity and its resulting consequences on the personalities, lifestyles, and ambitions of the heroes).

Fourth, different point totals do allow for the simulation of different types of comics. If you want to play campaigns about the biggest and best superheroes getting together as a team after years of individual adventure, fighting world-shaking and galactic-empire-threatening menaces, then you definitely want to choose a higher total points for your characters. Lower point totals won't do the job.

Low-Powered Superheroes

Low-Powered Superheroic characters (150 Base Points + up to 100 Disadvantage points) are good for many different types of campaigns (some GMs reduce the point allotment even further, to 100 + 100). This level is most often used when representing “new” superhumans who just got their powers and have almost no experience using them. In some games they're teen heroes, whose powers have just manifested; in others all the PCs gain their superpowers from the same event or root cause (often first teaming up to stop the villain who initiated the event).

Given the relatively low number of points characters in this type of campaign have to work with, and the fairly restrictive Active Point guidelines GMs often impose, characters in this campaign often tend to have one or two major powers. Sometimes they represent different aspects of these powers with a Power Framework, but it's not uncommon for them to start with a single Power (Desolidification, Energy Blast, Flight, Mind Control, Teleportation...) and then build on that power with Experience Points. You might even want to consider not letting PCs spend some of their starting points right away, so you can allow them to



spend large chunks of the “saved” points at appropriate times to reflect the growth of their abilities and skills.

Standard Superheroes

The “Standard” Superheroic character is the “default” approach for *Champions* campaigns, including the Champions Universe setting depicted in many Hero Games products. That category describes the values that are the most common throughout starting superhero campaigns using the *HERO System* rules. It typically represents either (a) superheroes of average power just getting started, and/or (b) superheroes with at least

COSMIC-LEVEL POWERS

Here are a few examples of some cosmic-level powers superhumans might possess:

Godlike Awe: The character is as majestic and awe-inspiring as a god.

100 PRE. Total cost: 90 points.

Nova Effect: The character has the ability to make stars go nova, destroying not only them but everything in their solar systems. The effects of the blast are so extensive they “wrap around” planets and asteroids, making it impossible to take shelter from them in the lee of some world.

RKA 20d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Indirect (+¾), Mega-Area (each hex covers 10 billion km; +2¾), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (1,725 Active Points); Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), No Range (-½). Total cost: 575 points.

Standing On The Sun: The character is virtually immune to damage from energy.

Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75% (total cost: 60 points) **and** Armor (0 PD/90 ED), Hardened (x2; +½) (total cost: 202 points). Total cost: 262 points.

Translight Travel: The character can travel at many times the speed of light.

FTL Travel (32,000 LY/year, or about 1 LY/15 minutes). Total cost: 40 points.

Universal Transmutation: The character has Transform powers that can affect virtually anything. Major Transform 10d6 (anything into anything), Improved Results Group (anything; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½). Total cost: 375 points.



a small amount of crimefighting and adventuring experience predating the first game session of the campaign. It provides enough points for players to create well-developed characters with both combat and non-combat-oriented abilities, as well as a few quirky powers or Skills reflecting the character's background, interests, hobbies, or unusual life experiences.

High-Powered Superheroes

Gamemasters and players who find the Standard Superheroic level a little too confining and restrictive may want to consider High-Powered superheroes instead. The 100 extra points such characters get go a long way toward broadening a

character's suite of powers, and often allow him to buy a lot of “secondary” power effects based on his main powers. (For example, a fire-using character might be able to buy a Dispel Technology, defined as his ability to melt gadgets, as part of a Multipower otherwise filled with straightforward Energy Blasts and RKAs.) The additional points may also give a character the opportunity to sidestep Power Frameworks and create some interesting constructs with straightforward Powers.

Very High-Powered And Cosmically Powerful Superheroes

Beyond High-Powered superheroes, the sky's the limit — literally. With 600, 700, or more points to work with, players can create characters who spend most of their time in outer space, whose decisions and actions can affect the course of nations and worlds, and who fight foes that threaten the entire galaxy.

Besides allowing for higher power levels, and a broader range of power options within a given special effect, the point totals at the upper reaches of the Superheroic spectrum may lead to some unusual purchasing decisions. With that many points to play with, many players don't hesitate to spend a few on Total Life Support, extra STR, a couple of unique Enhanced Senses, and various exotic defenses, making it difficult to affect them with NNDs or restrict their actions in the usual ways. This is even more likely to happen if you place a relatively low point ceiling on powers (see below), since that just frees up more points for miscellaneous abilities.

Because higher-powered *Champions* characters have so many more options available to them, and roll so many more dice with their attacks, games using these point totals tend to play a little more slowly than other games. You might want to review the *Nine Ways To Speed Up Combat* listed on pages 380-82 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* and try them out to keep the campaign from slowing down too much.

Point Total Problems

Problems sometimes arise because players try to get around the letter or spirit of your point total guidelines.

One such problem is that many players, fans of the comic books, try to build characters who are competitive with the stars of those comics — characters who have been around and adventuring for many years. Over those years, their writers have found more and more things for them to do with their powers, and have generally assumed that various circumstances allow the supers to become more powerful with age and experience. Trying to match one of these “established” heroes with a starting *Champions* PC often isn't possible... though some players still try.

Similarly, some players design their characters solely for the sake of power or combat effectiveness, not as vibrant, three-dimensional characters in a *roleplaying* game. When a *Champions* player tries

to design a character primarily to be powerful, he tends to do things that may cause trouble later on.

Some of the problems you may encounter with point total “end runs” include:

Pile On The Disadvantages

One tactic is to take more Disadvantages (assuming you, as GM, allow this). This normally results in a character who's irritable and twitchy, whose Hunteds crop up in campaign adventures far more often than anyone else's, whose DNPCs are the single largest block of the campaign's cast of normals, and who with increasing desperation tries to keep secret the information that exposure to monosodium glutamate reduces him to help-less spasms. The character's player is unhappy and frustrated because of the restrictions, and the other players often resent the way his character seems to dominate things.

The most obvious way for the GM to prevent this is, of course, to limit the number of Disadvantage points a character may have. If you, as GM, would rather not do this, you simply have to “persuade” a character to buy off some of his Disadvantages with Experience Points by making them a real problem in the character's life.

Stretch The Rules Until They Snap

Another tactic is to hit on character design tactics that stretch and abuse the rules. Let's say, for instance, that a player builds a character with a set of powered armor. That means most of his powers are bought with the Limitation *Obvious Inaccessible Focus*. Now, our character-builder reasons, he can't use his powers without revealing his hero identity, therefore he also has a *Only In Heroic Identity* Limitation on his powers, too. He's able to buy everything at a $-\frac{3}{4}$ Limitation rather than the $-\frac{1}{2}$ for OIF. He also decides that most of the suit's systems are tricky to operate, so just about everything takes the *Requires A Skill Roll* Limitation (another $-\frac{1}{2}$), but they all default to the same skill (Power: Sam's Power Suit), which he buys up to such a degree that he'll still have an adjusted roll of 17- for even the most powerful system used at full strength.

That is rules abuse, and is only one example of the thousands of ways creative character designers can do end runs around the way the rules are supposed to work. The *HERO System's* flexibility and adaptability mean it's open to abuse by players (and GMs) who don't approach it with maturity, responsibility, common sense, and dramatic sense. *Champions* isn't about squeezing as many points as you can out of something and building as powerful a character as you can — it's about properly simulating the comic book superheroes genre in a roleplaying campaign, and creating awesome superhero stories with your friends based on your characters' adventures and escapades. As GM, it's your responsibility to make sure characters are properly designed not only in terms of rules, but in light of common sense and dramatic sense so they don't cause problems in the game. Review every potential PC carefully for problems, and reject (or require changes to) any character you think is likely to be trouble.



Establish All-Or-Nothing Conditions

A player may choose to shave some points by building most of his powers with a Limitation that causes him to become completely ineffective in certain rare circumstances. For instance, a character who is mystically tied to the life-force of the Earth might take a Limitation like *Only Works Within The Atmosphere Of Earth* on most of his powers. This is a valid Limitation; it means, for instance, that as the character flies up above the planet, his Flight power turns off once he's gotten past the outermost planetary limits.

The problem comes when the GM decides to have adventures that takes place off-world. Either the characters learn about this in advance and Earth-Link Boy bows out of the upcoming adventure, citing a need to remain on the Earth (with



his player arranging to take another character into space), or the heroes are suddenly transported to the new area and Earth-Link Boy is completely stripped of his powers for the duration of the outer space mini-series.

If the character's player is of the sort to consider this an opportunity to explore new horizons for his character, there's no problem. Earth-Link Boy may borrow an armored space suit and one of his pals' second-best laser pistol, and all is well. But if the player is likely to become frustrated and unhappy because his character is now nigh-useless, the campaign has a problem. The player is at last paying for his character's Limitations, but he's causing everyone else to suffer, which makes it the GM's problem as well.

RESOLVING CHARACTER POINT DIFFICULTIES

The best way to deal with these character design problems is to prevent them from ever happening. The GM can ride herd on the character

creation process, keeping a close eye on the construction of each character, and watching out for potential abuses of these types.

However, it requires experience to realize when a character design detail is likely to cause trouble in a campaign. An inexperienced GM will miss quite a few (and it is worth noting that troublesome character design details can be accidental rather than deliberate; players often don't know a character detail may cause difficulties). Even experienced GMs overlook some potential problems — no one can think of everything in advance.

Therefore, a GM should make it clear from the campaign's onset that he retains the right to insist on a change to a character design, even well after the campaign has started, if he concludes the character's design is causing problems for the campaign. The players may not like this, but if they're responsible gamers and good sports, they'll understand that it's for the good of the campaign and not quibble about it too much.

It may also be possible to prevent some of these problems by starting off with a different Base Points + Disadvantages structure (see above).

POINT AND EFFECTIVENESS CEILINGS

The previous chapters mentioned point and effectiveness ceilings on several occasions. These are limits the GM can establish to govern how powerful a *Champions* character's powers can be. These power limits aren't "official" (there are no specific rules for them, or requirements that you institute them), but they often have their uses. They help keep players from designing characters who are so one-dimensional they endanger themselves, or who create potential problems with the balance of play in the campaign. There are two types: point ceilings and effectiveness ceilings.

Point Ceilings

Point ceilings (also called "point caps") are restrictions the GM puts on the number of points a character can have in an individual power. Most point ceilings restrict the number of Active Points in any given power, but the GM can also (or alternately) place a cap on the Base Points (*i.e.*, points without Advantages or Limitations), or even the Real Points (the total cost of the power after all Advantages and Limitations are applied). For example, a *Champions* GM might establish a limit of 60 Active Points in any power, or 60 Base Points, or 50 Base Points and 75 Active Points, or 40 Real Points.

These are, obviously, artificial restrictions — they're not a part of the *HERO System's* official rules, and the *5th Edition, Revised* rulebook doesn't talk about them (except in general terms on page 338). No specific rule in the *HERO System* prevents a character from taking his 200 Base Points and his 150 Disadvantage points and plowing them all into Strength. A player who did this would end up with



is a character who has the phenomenal STR score of 360, with a PD of 72, REC of 74, and STUN of 195. Wow!

But he also has CON 10, SPD 2, ED 2, and a CV of 3. A well-trained ordinary human martial artist with a knife has a better-than-even chance of killing this super-strong monster without taking a blow in return. The ordinary human martial artist has a better DEX, and so goes first in every Phase; a better SPD, and so attacks more often; a better OCV and DCV, and so hits more often and gets hit less often. Naturally, the STR 360 superhuman can pick up a car as a club or knock a skyscraper over onto his foe, but not if the martial artist has slashed and Stunned him on the very first Phase of combat.

Effectiveness Ceilings

Some GMs impose *effectiveness ceilings* — restrictions on the strength of powers (typically attacks, based on the Damage Classes in the attack). A campaign might, for example, restrict all attacks to no more than 12 DCs, regardless of the Active Points, Base Points, or other point calculations involved. Effectiveness ceilings can also govern SPD, a character's CV with any given attack, Skill Rolls, the strength of Defense Powers, or many other game elements. A GM can use an effectiveness ceiling in addition to, or instead of, a point ceiling, mixing and matching them until he finds the right combination for his campaign.

Perils And Pitfalls

Point and effectiveness ceilings serve a useful function in many *Champions* campaigns. They allow the GM to have a certain confidence in the effectiveness of the PCs, letting him design the

NPCs (especially the villains) with equal confidence about the ease or difficulty the PCs will have affecting them. This helps the GM keep things balanced in his campaign, and ensures he can challenge the PCs without making their enemies unfeasible.

But point and effectiveness ceilings offer a equal problem: they tend to cause a certain sameness in the campaign. If the GM imposes a 75 Active Point limit for powers in general, and a 12 DC limit on damage, then just about every character in the campaign will have a 12 DC attack. Thus, no PC feels very special; it doesn't matter much that one character does 12d6 with his punch, one with his flame blast, and one with his wind-storm.

Additionally, point ceilings can cause problems because Active Points aren't always a very good way of evaluating the effectiveness or rarity of powers. A good tear gas grenade — something available to just about any law enforcement officer — can easily cost more than 75 Active Points, even though it's pretty common. An Attack Power with just a few DCs but a lot of Advantages tacked on to create an intriguing effect may exceed the campaign's point ceiling, yet not be very combat-effective, whereas a straightforward RKA 4d6 is well within the campaign's limits and much more useful on the average.

So, GMs interested in using point or effectiveness ceilings may want to consider ways to eliminate or diminish these problems. Here are some suggestions:

EXCEPTIONS FOR CHARACTER SCHTICKS

One approach to keeping reasonable limits on character powers is to impose such limits but to allow each character to exceed one limit by a certain amount. This usually reflects a character's "schtick," or special/primary form of attack — a brick chooses STR as his one big power, an energy

THE RULE OF X

Some GMs like to combine point and effectiveness ceilings into a single formula called *the Rule of X*. Basically what the Rule of X says is that the character's various abilities — attacks, defenses, SPD, and so on — cannot, when added together, total more than X. Each GM defines "X" based on how powerful he wants characters to be in his game. A typical Standard Superheroic *Champions* campaign probably sets X at around 30-40.

Each GM has to decide what game elements he wants to factor into the Rule of X calculation. Some possibilities for an offensive Rule of X include:

- the number of DCs in the character's most powerful attack (or the Active Points in the attack divided by 5)
- the character's highest possible OCV with his most powerful attack (assuming he uses all Combat Skill Levels for OCV; the GM may or may not also want to include bonuses

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from commonly-used
Combat or Martial
Maneuvers)

■ the character's SPD

■ the Active Points
divided by 5 in primar-
ily offensive powers like
Aid

Most GMs establish a
separate Rule of X for
defense. Its factors often
include:

■ the total points in
the character's most
powerful defense (or
the Active Points in that
defense, divided by 5)

■ the character's highest
possible DCV (assum-
ing he uses all applicable
Combat Skill Levels
for DCV; the GM may
or may not also want
to include bonuses
from commonly-used
Combat or Martial
Maneuvers)

■ the character's SPD

■ the Active Points
divided by 5 in primar-
ily defensive powers like
Invisibility or Desolidi-
fication

By implementing a Rule
of X, you can eliminate
hard-and-fast point and
effectiveness ceilings
in favor of more flex-
ible guidelines. A Rule
of X allows a character
to have a much more

projector chooses Energy Blast, and so on. Addition-
ally, the GM may rule that each Power or ability can
only have one character choose it to exceed the ceil-
ing.

For example, let's say the GM imposes a 60
Active Point limit on powers. Therefore a character
might have an Energy Blast 8d6, Explosion, or STR
60, but could not exceed those values. However, the
GM also allows each character to have one power
with a 75 Active Point ceiling. Each power in the
game can only have one exception like this; if one
character has 75 points in Flight, no one else can
have a 75-point Flight power. The players must agree
among themselves which character gets an exception
for which power.

Thus, one character might have STR 75; no
one else can have more than a 60. Another char-
acter might have an Energy Blast 15d6 (with no
Advantages); no one else can have more than a 12d6.
Someone else might have an HKA 5d6; no other PC
can exceed a 4d6. And so on.

This means that the campaign itself effectively
has an Active Point limit of 75, but each character
has the opportunity to be recognized as the most
powerful user of any specific ability.

EXCEPTIONS FOR LIMITED-USE POWERS

Similarly, the GM might allow exceptions to
point and effectiveness ceilings if the exceptions are
built as add-on powers usable once per day (or only
subject to some equivalent restriction). This means
a character, on those occasions when he really, des-
perately needs to call on additional power, can do so
— once.

*Example: Capacitor is a flying energy projector.
He has an Electromagnetic Pulse Blast, an EB
12d6. It pushes right up against the campaign's
60 Active Point power limit. But the GM allows
any character to have a +20 Active Point addi-
tion to one power, as long as it's only usable once
per day. So, Capacitor buys the following ability:*

EMP Blast Boost: *Energy Blast +4d6 (20 Active
Points); 1 Charge (-2), Increased Endurance
Cost (x10 END; -4). Total cost: 3 points.*

*With this power, it's as if Capacitor can Push
for an additional +20 Active Points (the END
cost is the same as for Pushing), and, once per
day, he can project a 16d6 Electromagnetic
Pulse Blast (18d6 if he actually Pushes on top
of using his one-shot Boost power).*

This approach permits some very dramatic
scenes in a campaign. However, unlike the comic
books (where the "GM" [the writer] controls the
"PCs" as well as the villains and all the events), a
character can sometimes miss with his once-in-
a-great-while power, which is undramatic in the
extreme. The GM may want to invoke "dramatic
sense" and provide a character an OCV bonus to
help him hit, if necessary.

EXCEPTIONS FOR VILLAINS

Even if the GM chooses to follow the cam-
paign point and effectiveness ceilings when build-
ing NPCs and villains (and he should, usually),
he doesn't *have* to. Character Point restrictions,
generally speaking, are for players. The GM should
design his NPCs however he needs to, to make
them effective and powerful. Remember, villains
and NPCs are often much less three-dimensional
than superhero PCs, and they're not "on camera" for
every scene and event of the campaign. Thus, they
can afford to build and use powers that would be
too restrictive or unbalancing for a PC to have. For
example, most master villains — world-conquer-
ing super-criminals able to take on entire groups of
PCs in combat — are going to have powers far in
excess of the campaign's usual point and effective-
ness ceilings. That's exactly how it should be; few
master villains inspire awe and fear if they're no
more powerful or capable than the PCs.

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ADJUSTING CEILINGS OVER TIME

In campaigns that last for a long time, point and effectiveness ceilings can cause another problem: they frustrate players who want their characters to grow, evolve, and become more powerful, but who are cut off by the points caps. You can deal with this problem by adjusting your campaigns ceilings periodically as the characters earn Experience Points.

For example, you might decide that, for every 50 Experience Points the characters earn, the Active Point limits of the campaign increases 10 points. Or perhaps each character gets to buy one more power up above the ceiling.

You should decide whether the raised ceiling applies to all characters, regardless of their current Experience Point totals, or only to those who have achieved the required point level. Generally the second option is best.

Other Point Total And Power Level Issues

MIXING CHARACTERS FROM DIFFERENT CAMPAIGNS

Questions of character damage and effectiveness become particularly important when a campaign allows characters from different campaigns to play — especially if they are already at different levels of experience. Each character might have been built under a different set of assumptions. Some could have power levels that are greater than your restrictions for this campaign. Some could have been built under more restrictive rules, making them uncompetitive in the environment of this campaign. There's no one perfect solution for this situation, but there are several remedies you can consider:

Rebuild The Heroes. The most direct solution is to require all players to rebuild their characters to be consistent with the current campaign's rules. This will oblige some players to lower power levels and allow others to increase theirs. Characters who were comparatively overbuilt will free up points you may want them to spend on lowering Disadvantages or allow them to put into such non-Power choices

as Money, Bases, Vehicles, and the like. Characters who were comparatively underbuilt may have to narrow their design conceptions, spend built-up Experience Points, or add Disadvantages to adjust themselves to more appropriate power levels. This whole process inevitably leads to some dismay and sometimes hard feelings, but it is ultimately a fair choice. It's important for you to stress to the players, individually or collectively, that there is nothing personal in obliging them to rebuild their characters — it is out of a concern for fairness and play balance. It is also sometimes helpful to explain that to the theoretical readers of the comic book that this campaign represents, the changes to the characters will be transparent. The characters themselves do not notice that they are suddenly "weaker" or "stronger." (In cases where the adjustments to character power levels are too dramatic

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powerful attack than his comrades — but at the expense of being slower or less accurate. Similarly, a character can have a high DCV, but not high defenses as well.

DESIGNING FOR POWER

Even with point ceilings, Rules of X, or other limits, it's possible for creative players to figure out how to get some character effectiveness that exceeds the GM's restrictions.

Sometimes this is done by stacking power effectiveness in unobvious ways.

Example: A martial artist has a Strength of 20, a +4d6 Martial Maneuver, and +4 Damage Classes. This gives him 12d6 damage, and the campaign's damage limit is 12 DCs. So far, so good.

But elsewhere on his sheet he's bought +10 REC, Only For Recovering END Spent To Push (-2), for a total of 7 points. This is fairly innocuous, especially when it's away from the context of his combat damage. It just means he bounces back very fast from Pushing. But within the context of his combat damage, it means he can Push a lot, getting +2d6 to his attacks on a frequent basis, and for fewer points than buying +10 to his Strength or +2 Damage Classes.

Players can also do this simply by taking normal advantage of the rules. If a character has STR 40, he might be well within a campaign's Active Point limit of 60 points. But if he also has Flight 30" and ten Combat Skill Levels with Move Through, he can do 18d6 with that maneuver (and hit pretty reliably with it), which is doubtless a violation of the spirit of his campaign's limits.

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As GM, you don't necessarily want to head off these player end runs. To do so is to punish creativity on their parts, and in some cases to prevent characters from having the opportunity for dramatic self-sacrifice. In the Move Through example of the paragraph above, it's the presence of the Combat Skill Levels that tips you off that the player plans for this to be part of the character's usual tactic. If you make the player remove the CSLs, the character still has the option to perform this mighty attack, but there are greater risks associated with it — he is much more likely to miss, so it becomes a last-ditch attack rather than a first-choice attack.

Similarly, once you get a feel for your how your players approach and play *Champions*, you can better judge whether they're trying to sneak around your point and effectiveness ceiling. A responsible, mature role-player who understands the genre might build a character with STR 40, Flight 30", and +10 with Move Through, but knowing how the genre works only use the full power of that attack as a last-ditch tactic — so, you can let him keep that ability without fearing he'll unbalance the game. On the other hand, a player who approaches the game as if it were a wargame, seeking to get maximum combat effect out of every power he buys and every Action he takes, is someone you need to keep a closer eye on and whose powers you need to evaluate more carefully — his conduct is much more likely to harm your campaign and ruin everyone's fun.

to be transparent, you can base an episode of play around the events that cause the characters' power levels to change — radiation accidents, sudden mutations, lingering physical deterioration from a supervillain's attack, punishments or blessings from one's supernatural patron, and the like are all valid explanations for the changes.)

Play The Ball Where It Lies. If you feel the campaign's players are sophisticated enough, and that you are a versatile enough GM, you may wish to allow all these disparate characters to be played exactly as they are. This may result in some characters being much more powerful than others. If the players with weaker characters aren't the type to feel overshadowed by more powerful characters, and if you're good enough to set up adventures where everyone is equally useful regardless of power level, this is a viable solution to the situation.

Raise The Bar. This is a variation on "Rebuild The Heroes." You might decide to establish a new power base for your campaign that is actually at the level of, or higher than that of, the most powerful character in your campaign.

HOW DO THE PLAYER CHARACTERS COMPARE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD?

It's useful for the GM to figure out how the PCs compare, in terms of power and competence, to the rest of the world — not just to other supers, but to the general population.

Super Versus Super

How powerful are the PCs in relation to other superhumans now existing and those who were active in earlier decades?

If they tend to be less powerful (which is a common occurrence when a GM populates his world with well-translated versions of supers from the comic books while the PCs are all built at the Standard Superheroic level), problems may result. The PCs could be beaten time after time, only to be rescued by established NPC superteams. This is extremely bad for the morale of players and characters alike, so you should avoid it whenever possible. On the other hand, if the world situation is such that beginning superhero teams are recognized as such, and established superheroes offer advice and training (but only if is asked), and accept the PCs as peers-in-the-making without demonstrating their inferiority at every turn, you can minimize or eliminate problems of this sort.

If the PCs tend to be about as powerful as other supers, they more readily gain the acceptance of the public as heroes and other supers as colleagues. This approach requires the least attention and work from a GM.

If the PCs tend to be more powerful than other supers, they'll have the opportunity to deal with the most dangerous super-enemies and threats to planetary safety. They'll be the ones the public turns to when world-destroyers land, when a tsunami approaches the shores of California, or when a hostile janitor steals the U.S. Department of Defense AeroSpace Defense Prototype (nicknamed "Deathmobile") and goes on a destructive rampage.



And the fact that these PCs are the most powerful can itself be the inspiration for one or more adventures. Why are they most powerful? Are the forces creating superheroes more full of energy now, and is it because some worldwide catastrophe is in the offing? Have mysterious forces perfected the art of "manufacturing" superhumans, and are now ready to unleash their own private army of New Men upon the world?

Over time, a player character team's comparative power can change. As years of play-time pass, a team that starts out comparatively underpowered can become the equal of other teams out there, and then, as members of those teams themselves retire

and are replaced by newbies, the PC team can become one of the most powerful in the world.

Supers Versus Normals

As noted above, the more powerful superheroes are, the less notice they have to take (and thus tend to take) of normal NPCs. In a campaign with low-powered superheroes, a thug with a gun or a group of agents with blasters represents a credible threat (even if it's one a PC can expect to handle pretty easily). The more power each PC has, the less likely it is that you can threaten him with such mundane opponents. Given enough points, a PC has nothing to fear but other superhumans, super-technology, and the like — which can have real consequences for their approach to the world. So, as you plan your campaign and decide how many points players get to build characters with, you need to decide how you want them to relate to “normals.”

Supers Versus The Environment

The more powerful player characters are, the more likely it is that accidents with their powers (most commonly, missed attacks in urban environments) will cause serious, even tragic damage to their surroundings. (For that matter, it's also more likely they can deliberately break their environment.) An Energy Blast 8d6 hitting a brick building punches through and hurts the average man about as badly as a normal person's blow from a baseball bat. The same thing happening with an EB 16d6 also punches through the average man, turning him into a fine red mist and his family into outraged survivors.

So, it's best to remind characters occasionally that they are not only adventuring in a world that's all too often delicate by their standards, but they need to be responsible for their actions. If they do not rescue those they've imperiled, help those they've injured, and accept responsibility (ethical, if not financial) for harm they've done, they'll soon lose any public acceptance they've gained. The public will call for laws to curtail their activities, and the nation's leaders will pass those laws. Heroes who scoff at these reactions will be surprised when the government assembles its own superhero team to deal with them — or when it turns teams of investigators loose to ferret out the PCs' Secret Identities.



CREATING AND RUNNING CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGNS



A *campaign* is a series of adventures featuring the same approximate cast of characters and setting, run over an extended amount of time — until its participants become tired of it, are unable to continue with it (which happens when some of them move away or have their time taken up by real-world concerns), or it reaches its intended end (which is the case with a mini-series or maxi-series). Running (and playing in!) *Champions* campaigns can be very complex — as complex as each GM and set of players allows it to be. This section discusses some of the factors that come into play, and how the GM and players can address them... or ignore them.

CAMPAIGN CHARACTERISTICS

The *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook, on pages 542–44, talks about several campaign characteristics — morality, realism, outlook, and the importance of the PCs. (The core rulebook also addresses the subject of campaign seriousness, but there is little for *Champions* to add to that topic.) This section examines those issues as they relate to superhero campaigns.

Morality

Questions of morality are perhaps more significant in a *Champions* campaign than many other types of *HERO System* campaigns, simply because the characters have the opportunity to express their versions of morality through more mighty powers. When characters have the power to effect tremendous change in the world, how they exercise that power becomes an important moral issue.

Campaign morality tends to fall into one of two camps: Black and White or Shades of Grey.

BLACK AND WHITE

Black and white morality means the difference between right and wrong in most situations is clearly defined and understood — both the players and the characters will recognize “the right thing to do” in almost all situations. In many ways, this tends to be the “default” morality for the superhero genre, though Shades of Grey becomes increasingly prevalent during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Here are some ways to implement black and white morality in a campaign.

Villain Motivations Are Always Selfish Or Delusional. A supervillain might decide to destroy the United States because he wants the wealth it represents,

wants its population bending their knees to him, or hates its admirable characteristics (personal freedom, democratic process, and so on). Regardless of his specific goals, his motivations are clearly Wrong and/or Evil; no right-minded person (and particularly no true superhero!) will sympathize with them, or with the villain himself.

Authority Figures Tend To Be Good. Politicians, peace officers, and well-known newsmen and commentators tend to act in the interest of the public good. When there is an exception, that individual is operating on his own, and others in similar positions won't help him when his misdeeds are revealed.

Victories Tend To Be Complete. Even when a supervillain escapes the heroes at the end of a story, it is with the understanding that his plan is foiled, his resources stripped away or destroyed. His situation has been reset to zero, and the heroes can leave with a sense of accomplishment.

Heroes Are Seldom Visited By Guilt. When heroes finish a successful adventure, they receive the congratulations of the authorities and the thanks of the people they've saved. The press writes up their adventures in a positive and supportive manner. When these circumstances are not in effect, the heroes know something's wrong: if a politician's not happy with their actions, he's probably crooked and is secretly benefitting from the villains' plan; if a newspaper publishes a scathing denunciation of the heroes' actions, it's probably unfairly decided to persecute the heroes for reasons of improving sales or benefitting a mysterious and evil patron.

SHADES OF GREY

Shades of grey morality means right and wrong aren't as clearly defined as in black and white situations. The heroes must make decisions about their actions based on complicated ethical situations and may come out of these decisions feeling less than satisfied and less than secure. Some characteristics of this type of morality include:

Villain Motivations May Be Only One Step Away From Heroic. A supervillain might decide to destroy the United States, or just do damage to it, for reasons that are all too close to the heroes' own viewpoints — for instance, to right wrongs done to the Native American peoples displaced by settler expansion, or to bring to an end some of the nation's less admirable characteristics (lack of empathy for nations in which it has no economic or strategic interest, presumption of national superiority, and the like). Once a hero truly understands a villain's motivations, he is likely to develop greater sympathy for that individual.

Authority Figures May Be Good, Bad, Or Somewhere In Between. They possess the same range of motivations as the rest of humanity. When one turns out to be operating in a selfish or villainous manner, he may be simply one cog in a system that is compromised or corrupt, and others in similar positions may try to cover up the truth of his misdeeds, keep him in a position where he can help them, and so on.

Victories Tend To Be Compromised Or Incomplete.

When the heroes win a victory in the campaign, it is often somewhat spoiled. They may realize some of their actions have actually been the result of the villain's manipulations, and that he may have taken a step toward winning a strategic victory even at the cost of a tactical loss. (For instance, his supervillain team may have been captured... but the battle in which it happened was so destructive that the government implements laws to curtail superheroes, thus forcing them into the role of vigilantes.) The death of a villain, far from being a cause for grim celebration, may be a time of mourning as the heroes recognize that they have had to slay a kindred spirit ("There but for the grace of God go I...").

Heroes Are Frequently Visited By Guilt. Heroes get to witness firsthand the effects of any of their mistakes — a concrete mixer hurled at a supervillain lands on a school, a missed Energy Blast destroys priceless art treasures in a museum. Authority figures praise them when it's in those individuals' best interests (as in a self-promoting photo opportunity) and criticize them at other times (as when a politician shifts blame for society's ills onto "vigilantes"). Media accounts of the heroes' actions might unfairly praise them or fairly criticize them as well as the other way around.

CHOOSING BETWEEN MORALITIES

The question of which of the two morality types to implement tends to be answered by what sort of players you have. Do they prefer simpler environments where they do not have to worry about real-world concerns? Then Black and White morality is the way to go. Do they enjoy wrestling with their consciences, prying victories out of complicated ethical situations? Then they should have Shades of Grey.

In some cases, the morality may depend on the type of campaign you have in mind. Black and White is almost required for Golden and Silver Age campaigns, and Shades of Grey is definitely the most common for *Iron Age Champions*; Bronze Age games can go either way. Of course, if you have a specific type of morality in mind for your game, you should always let the players know in advance what it will be.

In either case, remember that it's usually a bad idea to adhere strictly to one type of morality in a campaign. This becomes boring. Each type of campaign can be refreshed and enlivened by an occasional storyline featuring the other type.

You should remain alert for signs that players are becoming frustrated with the campaign's current type of morality. Players in a Black and White campaign begin to adopt a casual, flippant



attitude about their own place on the moral spectrum, always assuming they're right regardless of what they do; at that point, it's time to introduce a Shades of Grey storyline. Players in a Shades of Grey campaign tend to grow tired, frustrated, or even depressed at the prospect of having each of their victories cheapened or diminished by moral ambiguity; it is then helpful to have a storyline with a clearly-defined evil and an unquestioned victory on the heroes' part.

Realism

Most superhero comics and campaigns tend to be inherently unrealistic (what the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook correctly refers to as "romantic" — but since this book co-opts that term to refer to romantic relationship-based campaigns and stories, it uses "unrealistic" in this context). This book and most superhero materials presuppose that a superhero campaign will be unrealistic, and the advice in Chapter One concerning Appropriate Unlikely Actions follows that supposition. If you and your players prefer a more realistic campaign — albeit one in which superheroes appear — then you should choose not to use those Appropriate Unlikely Actions, and should follow these guidelines as well:

Establish A "Rejection" Model For The Law. Page 31 describes three types of legal atmospheres under which supers could operate; the "Rejection" model

ARTFULLY DODGING

In a *Champions* game, it's possible to get a reasonable approximation of the Artful Dodger character type mentioned in the text — you just have to find ways of representing the concept of “No one can hit me!” that don't literally involve not being hit in a game sense (*i.e.*, something other than a really high DCV and hoping). In short, you need to use Defense Powers to simulate the “unhit-table” concept. The idea here is that the defense represents not the ability to “bounce” the damage, but to “avoid” the damage altogether. The *Combat Luck Talent* (*HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 87) and *Missile Deflection* (page 208) are two good ways to do this, but there are plenty of other options. For example: **You Only Nicked Me!**: Armor (6 PD/6 ED) (18 Active Points); **Only Versus BODY** (-½), **Always Lets First BODY Through** (-½), **Applies Last Of All Of The Character's Defenses** (-0). Total Cost: 9 points.

This power gives the character incredible skill at dodging attacks. When he suffers an attack that would get BODY past his other defenses, the first BODY *does* go through, but the next 6 BODY are absorbed by this power. Visually, the power looks like one of two things: either the character avoids the blow at the last microsecond, so that he sustains only the slightest of injuries; or he seems to take the full blow, but is somehow less hurt than he first seems. Since this type of Armor doesn't prevent penetration by foreign objects, it's no more difficult to drug this character with a tranquilizer dart than it is any unarmed person.

best matches a realistic campaign.

Implement *Shades Of Grey* Morality Guidelines. It's difficult to establish a pattern of realism while playing a campaign where virtue is always rewarded and evil always scorned. Sadly, the “real world” doesn't work that way.

Ignore All The Advice Below About Superhero Physics On Page 163. That information assumes an unrealistic campaign.

Outlook; Importance Of The PCs

A superhero campaign can have a positive or negative outlook, and these two questions define that outlook:

- Are the characters making a positive difference in the world?
- To what degree are they suffering for their superhero activities?

“Making a positive difference” means the characters have some longstanding effect on their environment. If the campaign is global in scale, they may be preventing wars, stabilizing international politics, preventing population-threatening disasters, and the like. If the campaign is local in scale, they may be cleaning up crime in specific neighborhoods, solving kidnapping and murder cases that upset the community, and defeating villains who prey on the citizens.

Suffering refers to the sacrifices made by the PCs, individually and collectively. Suffering includes sustaining injuries in combat, seeing their relationships with their loved ones deteriorate, not being able to perform at work up to the expectations of employers, watching their personal goals slip away, and not living a life that even approaches the dreams they had in youth.

POSITIVE VERSUS NEGATIVE

If the characters make a difference and aren't suffering much, the campaign is *very positive*. This sort of approach is best suited to players who want a light-hearted campaign. Adventure and Comedy campaigns thrive in an environment like this. Such campaigns are usually set up with Black and White morality; *Shades of Grey* has little place here.

If the characters make a difference but are suffering for their efforts, the campaign is *positive*. This sort of approach is well-suited to Adventure, Drama, and Romance campaigns. In some ways, this sort of campaign is even more positive than the “make a difference/aren't suffering much” campaign, because the players have a sense of fairness and appropriateness; they know that not all victories are going to be handed to them on a platter and that the happiness they bring to others is bought at the expense of their own sacrifice. It seems more fair somehow... or at least more dramatically appropriate.

If the characters don't make much of a difference but aren't suffering much for their efforts,

the campaign is *negative*. This is an appropriate approach for campaigns involving vigilantes or other protagonists with non-four color ethics. It is appropriate to some Adventure, some Comedy (chiefly dark-humored), and some Drama campaigns.

If the PCs don't make much of a difference and are suffering, the campaign is *very negative*. This sort of campaign is only well-suited to players whose chief enjoyment comes from roleplaying and exploring the emotional depths of their characters, since they're not going to find much to reward them elsewhere. This sort of approach is well-suited to some Drama and some Romance (the tragic romance type) campaigns.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Here's some general advice on the running of *Champions* campaigns.

The Limits Of Superhero Genre Simulation

The *HERO System* rules are versatile enough to allow GMs and players to simulate just about anything that happens in comic books. However, just because something *can* be simulated doesn't mean it *should* be.

TYPES OF SUPERHEROES

Certain character types that are very common in comics don't work as well in *Champions* campaigns. They include:

The All Attack, No Defense Guy. Some people like to play walking artillery pieces, characters who deal out a tremendous amount of damage but can't take very much before falling over. In the comic books, such a character can be interesting; it's fun to see him devastate the enemy, comforting to know that it's only a matter of time before some thug with a baseball bat puts him out for the count. It's less entertaining to play such a character. In general, try to make sure the players build PCs with an appropriate balance of attacks and defenses so they can stay in combat for a reasonable amount of time.

Invulnerable Man. This character just can't be hurt. Nothing short of low-yield atomic weapons or fuel-air bombs even staggers him. This type of character is fun to read about in a wish-fulfillment sense — who doesn't want to plow through every obstacle without breaking a sweat? — but is more problematic in a campaign. To make adventures a challenge for him, you have to scale up your villains' attacks, which is a hardship for the other PCs.

The Artful Dodger. This character has comparatively low Defenses which are typically not Resistant. He also has a tremendous DEX and a formidable array of Combat Skill Levels. When he goes into battle, he just can't be hit — in the comic books, anyway. In *Champions* campaigns, unlike the comics, the writer (the GM) doesn't have direct control over the actions of the heroes (the PCs), or even over

some events because of the use of dice as a randomizing element. So, a villain inevitably makes a very low Attack Roll, or uses an Area Effect attack, and tags our hero, splattering him all over the nearest brick wall.

SEPARATING THE CHARACTERS

A common comic book event is for the members of a team to separate — to split up so they can accomplish several things at once. Even in a role-playing campaign, this works fine if the characters are doing things like performing investigations and managing their personal relationships. But when combat arises and the characters are separated, there's trouble. Everybody wants to be in on combat, especially a protracted struggle. When half the team gets to go through a combat and the other half has to sit back and watch, the non-combatants feel frustrated and left out.

Here are some things you can do to keep this from becoming a too-frequent event:

When Only One Group Has Combat, Make It Fast. If

it's inevitable that one solo hero or a small group of heroes are going to get into a combat without the others being present, make the combat as short as possible, turning it into little more than a prelude for the big event. For example, suppose you've set things up so that the team would run into the bad guy's main lieutenant, resulting in a skirmish that would eventually point the heroes to the bad guy's location. Unfortunately, only one or two heroes show up for this event. Instead of going forward precisely as planned, substitute a lesser bad guy minion for the lieutenant. Heroes occasionally have fun demonstrating their superiority by mopping up the floor with belligerent normal thugs and martial artists, and you can use the scene to accomplish the same result (getting the heroes to the big fight). This takes far less time, and the players who miss out aren't as annoyed — it was, after all, only a low-level minion, not someone tough.

Run Multiple, Plausibly-Concurrent Combats. It's not difficult to have several fights at different places break out at once. (Logically, they probably aren't taking place at the exact same time, unless the heroes or bad guys have set up a coordinated simultaneous assault — but they can be close enough in time that it's not strange for them all to be run at once.) You don't have to separate the character information among several pieces of paper, though it may prove useful to use a colored highlighter to mark the names of each participant, using a different color for each combat (e.g., yellow for everyone at the Hightower rooftop fight, orange for the poor sods thrashing around in the sewer fight, and so on).

Fudge Arrival Times. If combat involves only one character or group of several, but more distant characters could plausibly arrive before the combat is over, don't concern yourself too much with calculating how many Phases it takes each hero to get to the site at his maximum Noncombat Movement speed. Instead, gauge what order the heroes would get to the scene of the combat (without worrying about exact travel time), and then decide that the first one arrives, say, three Segments into the combat, the second six Segments in, the third nine Segments in, and so on. Sure, ignoring the characters' actual movement abilities is illogical... but it works much like similar story events in the comic books, and everyone gets to participate in the combat.

Whenever Possible, Get Them Together First. Finally, if you see a situation emerging that will soon lead the characters into combat, but hasn't done so yet, you can always try to find a way to get the PCs back together before trouble erupts. One character might stall the bad guys in conversation while another secretly sends out an alert call or a telepathic dis-

Continued from last page

Avoiding The Blow: Physical And Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% (60 Active Points); Luck-Based (-1/2), Nonpersistent (-1/4). Total cost: 34 points. This power applies the same Limitations used to build the *Combat Luck* Talent to Damage Reduction. It represents a character's ability to twist out of the way of attacks. A character could substitute *Requires A Skill Roll for Luck-Based* if he prefers.



stress signal. An honorable or particularly arrogant villain might issue a challenge, with a meeting place and time, rather than attack at just this moment. (He might have set up a trap there, of course.)

UNNECESSARILY KEEPING CHARACTERS INCOMMUNICADO

Characters in comic books are not much inconvenienced by not being able to get in touch with one another. All comics fans are familiar with the scene of the superhero realizing that imminent danger confronts someone far away, and then moving toward that scene at pushed-to-the-limit speeds. That creates fun dramatic tension — will Our Hero get there in time?



But practically speaking, in the parts of the game where characters perform investigations and research, keeping them from exchanging routine information and leads results in frustration more often than dramatic tension. Most *Champions* campaigns work best if, early in the campaign, the PCs develop a convenient means of communication — team radios (see page 114), cell phones, or even a team telepath with an appropriate Mind Link power. When drama calls for it, you can always find a way to sever the characters' communications — through radio jamming, mental jamming, sabotage, or the like.

PERMITTING CASUAL USE OF POWERFUL ENABLING DEVICES

An *enabling device* in fiction is basically anything that permits the exploration of a story that would under normal circumstances not be possible. Comic book and science fiction stories feature some of the more extreme versions of enabling devices, including extradimensional travel apparati, time travel devices, faster-than-light spacecraft, amnesia-inducing machines, body-switching magical spells, and so on.

In a comic book or movie, there's nothing wrong with powerful enabling devices, because the writer controls exactly how the protagonists can use them, their attitudes toward them, and how long they have access to them. But remember, in a *Champions* game, the "writer" (the GM) doesn't control the protagonists (the player characters) or all the events of the story. That means enabling devices can cause problems, because the player characters either refuse

to give them up after the immediate need for them has passed, or use them in dramatically inappropriate ways. Once characters get their hands on such devices, they're seldom willing to let them go. Note how fast a campaign's technologically-oriented PCs want to buy a Science Skill for the appropriate esoteric sciences once they have access to such devices. Note also that their expectation is that such Skills mean they can recreate the devices' effects even if they lose the original devices. Ultimately, this means characters will sometimes try to use these devices for purposes not even indirectly related to the plots of the adventures the GM wants to run.

For example, heroes who have come into possession of a bad guy's time travel machine may, in a later adventure, decide they could use it to accomplish some personal goal. A heroine might decide she has to go back in time to save the life of her murdered husband. A hero might realize that if he went back in time, he could change some event in a supervillain's past to reduce or even eliminate the villain's evil impulse. A hero being crushed by debt might want to make a brief trip into the future to learn about this week's sports results so he can place a few bets, make some money, and pay off his creditors. Whether their motivations are selfish or noble, these characters are obviously now thinking of the enabling device as a resource they can utilize whenever they feel like it, and this poses danger to a campaign.

There are several methods you can employ to reduce or eliminate this problem altogether.

Talk Things Over With The Players

The first tactic, of course, is to appeal to the players' sense of responsibility and maturity, and their desire for fun adventures. Talk, GM to player, with the players who want to use the troublesome device. Explaining, "Guys, if you fire up the time machine whenever an adventure doesn't go your way, you're pretty much abandoning your roles as superheroes. Now you're super-editors, and your job can be done by a technician, a spy, and a chimpanzee in a cute set of overalls. Are you sure you want to do this?"

Sensible players will realize you're right. Less sensible ones won't. When the group as a whole doesn't choose to abandon this tactic, you can turn to additional tactics of your own.

Make Every Use An Event

If use of the enabling device is sufficiently complex, and/or has a sufficient lead-up time, you can take control of its use on each occasion, making that use pertain to a GM-directed adventure. In other words, you can inflict unintended side effects on the PCs as a consequence of their abuse of the enabling device. In the process you can create some great stories.

For instance, let's say the hero Graycat had once been just an extraordinarily successful professional kickboxer. When his kid sister died in a gang drive-by shooting, he decided to take vengeance on the gang, but couldn't bring himself to kill its members. Subsequently, he adopted the super-name Graycat and began his superhero career. This was six years ago, but his sense of guilt and loss have never faded.

Now his team, the Razor Knights, has gotten its hands on an interdimensional gate that gives them access to an endless number of alternate Earths, each similar to this one. Graycat decides to spend his spare time visiting these alternate Earths, trying to find one where his kid sister survived and he died. He could then bring his sister to this world, and they could be together again.

Obviously, it's a loony notion. If there's an infinity of alternate Earths, it might take an infinite amount of time to search through them for one that meets his criteria. Also, there's nothing to say that his kid sister would want to come to this world; she might want Graycat to come to hers. But it has story potential, so Morgan (the GM) decides to take control of this casual and improper use of the interdimensional gate and make Graycat's quest the subject of a story plot.

He'll introduce it first as a subplot. He lets Graycat conduct his search in secret, furtively going to the team's base at odd hours when no one else is there. All the other heroes know is that he's showing up tired to his civilian job and tired to team activities, passing off the problem as the result of trouble sleeping or work he has to do at home in what would have been his spare time. Morgan gives Graycat the results of his first several investigations in synopsis form: he finds a world where his kid sister is dead and he became a jobless alcoholic instead of a hero; he finds a world where the family apparently never existed; he finds a world where the Vikings colonized the Americas and world history is too different for the search even to be relevant.

At a certain point, the other PCs are going to find out what Graycat is up to. They might choose to stop him from this dangerous quest (leading to a conflict within the group, always a fun source of drama), or might choose to help him (since he's obviously determined to continue). In the latter case, their participation will speed up the process; in addition to having additional manpower to search, their scientific skills might help design some technique by which alternate dimensions might be "pre-screened," eliminating the need to personally visit most of them.

Then comes the day when the Graycat's Sister Search story becomes the primary plot for an adventure. Graycat finds a world where his sister survived and he did not. Now the plotline can really get under way, and you can find many methods to complicate the situation into a full-fledged adventure and teach Graycat not to meddle with enabling devices. Some ideas:

Retrieving The Sister. Graycat may discover he has no idea how to approach his sister. When he does, it's worth remembering that she's six years older and not quite the person he remembers — she's 18 or so, may have a boyfriend, may want to finish her education at her current school. If, though thrilled to see him, she doesn't want to come with him, will Graycat kidnap her? And what if she isn't thrilled to see him — what if, after finally becoming accustomed to his absence, she regards this new brother as an imposter, an unnatural undead revenant, a cruel hoax, or a pathetic man who doesn't have enough emotional strength to cope with reality?

There's An Alternate Graycat Loose. On the alternate Earth, a supervillain Graycat also has access to a dimensional gate, and has been looking for an alternate world — one in which he's not being sought for his crimes. Just as the real Graycat brings his sister back to the "real world," the alternate Graycat, attracted by the energies emitted by Graycat's frequent use of the enabling device, travels there — thereby setting up an adventure whose obvious theme is "using great power for selfish aims leads to tragedy."

Sis Is A Villainess. On the living sister's world, she watched as her brother was cut down in the gang's drive-by shooting. She spent the next few years learning and perfecting her brother's martial art, then tracked down the gang members. Unlike her brother, she did not hesitate to kill every one of them. Since then, she has embarked on a career as Deathcat, supervillainess for hire. She's more than happy to accompany Graycat back to his world, for, just as in the "There's An Alternate Graycat Loose" plotline, she's anxious to elude the forces of the law, which are now closing in on her.

Deterioration From Separation. Graycat may bring his sister home or go to his sister's world, but either way, there is potential tragedy in the making. It may be that people separated from their dimension of origin must either be magically powerful or they'll begin to experience a physical, mental, or mystical deterioration from being separated from their homes. This leads to adventures where the heroes try to find a cure for the mystery disease, only to discover that nothing but a return to the home dimension can save the deteriorating character's life.

Consequences Of Device Use

In many comic book universes and campaigns, powerful mystic forces keep an eye on the kinds of processes utilized by enabling devices. Time Police scour the timeways, putting a stop, sometimes gently and sometimes with ruthless efficiency, to unauthorized use of time travel devices. A society of magicians may head off the establishment of regular interdimensional corridors. The subject of an amnesia-inducing device may turn out to be the only person on Earth who knows/knew how to save the world from an upcoming catastrophe.

One of the classic "consequences" storyline involves the effects of time travel. A hero team travels into the past to accomplish some noble end, only to discover when they return to their normal timeframe that their actions in the past have changed the world for the worse. The change could stem from some major alteration in time (preventing a supervillain from coming into existence also keeps one of his positive scientific developments from benefitting the world) or a minor one (telling someone back in time, "Don't worry, kid, you'll do fine" gives that individual the confidence to achieve more than he otherwise would have, depriving some other NPC of his own goals, resulting in elimination of the events that would have allowed superheroes to come into existence). The heroes must then accept the changes or go back in time once more to fine-tune their adjustments and set history back on its proper course. (It's entertaining to a GM to set things up so that, no matter how well they

succeed, something, however minor, is different when they return — Freedom Fighter's red, white, and blue costume may be blue, red, and white, for instance.)

Use The Device Against The Heroes

It's not surprising that a group of PCs would enjoy using an enabling device to easily defeat their foes and accomplish their objectives. But it's also not surprising that they won't be too pleased if their foes do the same thing in return. If both sides end up with the same or similar enabling devices, perhaps you can negotiate a "truce" in which they each, having realized the dangers the situation poses, destroy their device.

Eliminate The Device

The most draconian but effective way to resolve this sort of situation is to remove the enabling device from the campaign. Any number of ways will suffice to do this — it's retrieved or destroyed by its builders, it blows up the first time the PCs use it, or the like.

Probably the best way to eliminate an enabling device is for the PCs to use it in an adventure, but to lose it at the adventure's end. That way it serves a purpose in the storyline and allows the PCs to achieve some goal, leaving them with a sense of gain even when it is removed.

Campaigns As They Age

Just like television series and movie series, campaigns age and change. If left to their own devices, they're likely to become tired and familiar, causing their players to want to switch to another setting, another game system, or (possibly worst of all) another GM. But there are ways to make the natural

changes occurring in a campaign mostly beneficial ones. It just requires a certain amount of anticipation and work.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE CAMPAIGN

In its first several episodes, a campaign seems very fresh. Player characters explore the limits of the opportunities available to them. Characters who are destined to become series regulars make their first appearances; not yet set in their final personalities and methods, they probably do and say some things they would not in later episodes of the campaign. But they also do and say things that cement their personalities and abilities in the players' minds, defining them for the rest of the game.

As the players settle into the campaign, their characters' working and personal relationships become familiar. You can introduce more and more NPCs who are part of the PCs' regular work, home, and adventure environments. Specific villains begin to make repeat appearances, some becoming favorites with the players.

The campaign soon enters a sort of middle age where characters begin to achieve life's goals (or realize they never will); as restless as a spouse with the seven-year-itch, they experiment with new costumes, powers, tactics, partnerships, and relationships (professional and personal). You, seeking ways to make new adventures with some of the same old plots compelling, experiment with new playing formats, use of themes, and so on.

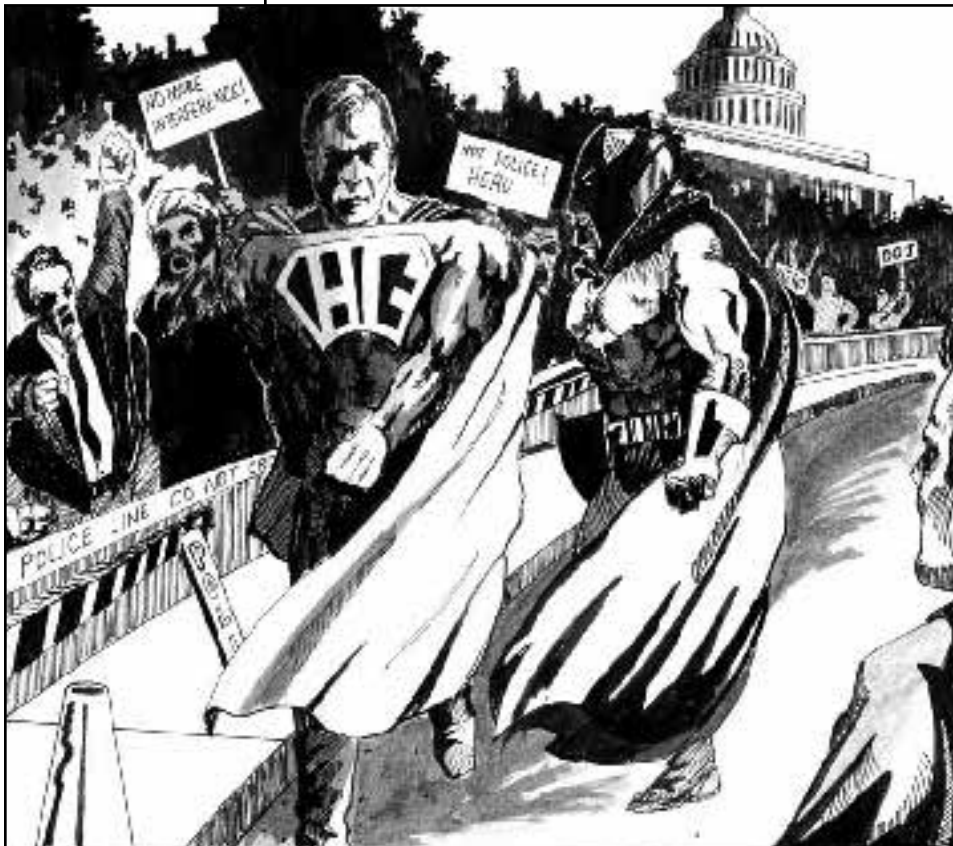
Gradually, problems begin to accumulate in the campaign like fatigue toxins in muscle tissue... but unlike fatigue toxins, mere rest doesn't serve to get rid of them. One character's uncompromising and

high-handed methods for dealing with problems increasingly grate on other characters' nerves. Characters begin achieving long-time personal goals and a certain amount of their inner fire goes out; they continue to be valid heroes, but lack some of the old drive, determination, and energy that made them what they were in the early days. The campaign may lose crucial players as they move or can no longer find the time to play. Over time, the spirit and energy leave the campaign and its participants decide to bring it to a conclusion.

How long this birth-to-death process takes varies widely. Some campaigns can be introduced, age, wither, and perish within a handful of episodes. Others forge ahead in a near-perpetual state of vigorous middle age for many years and hundreds of play-sessions. The important thing is not to guess how many episodes a campaign is likely to last, but to notice when it's aging faster than it should and take steps to arrest the decline.

SLOWING THE AGING PROCESS

Some tips for keeping a campaign as fresh as possible, allowing it to con-



tinue for an impressively lengthy run, include:

Pacing And Theme. Alternate lengthy mini-series with a succession of shorter adventures. Alternate adventures heavily involving one theme or even special effect (e.g., mystical monsters) with a very different one (e.g., a visit to the gigantic spaceship/city of the Freeni). Rotations like this help keep players from getting tired of same-seeming adventures.

Introduce New Players And Characters. As long-standing players leave the campaign, bring in new ones instead of just running the now-orphaned characters as NPCs. New players bring new energy to a campaign. Also, you should suggest that these new characters have Hunteds, DNPCs, Contacts, and other background details that are new to the campaign rather than using the same old ones employed by the original generation of players — this, too, brings new life's blood into the stories. (But allow the new characters to have *some* association with the old backstory elements, so they have emotional ties to the campaign.)

Likewise, a long-standing player might not leave the campaign, but become restless with his usual character. Allow him to retire that character, either temporarily or permanently, and bring in a new one. If you realize a character is causing trouble in the campaign but that the trouble lies with the character and not his player, you can recommend that the player create a new character; this will wash some of the "fatigue toxins" out of the campaign.

Rotate The Focus Characters. Early in a campaign's development, a portion of the characters usually emerge as its focus. Their Hunteds are the more popular ones; their leadership skills keep them in the spotlight. This is initially good for establishing a flavor and tone to the campaign, but even when the other players don't mind it eventually serves to fossilize the campaign with those characteristics. Over time, you should find a way to shift the focus to other characters. Techniques include suggesting (perhaps with increasing significance) that it's time for the leadership of the team to pass to another character; resolving long-lasting subplots (especially involving Hunteds) that have long dominated the campaign, and bringing to the fore subplots that pertain more to the other characters; and creating a set of adventures showcasing the other characters. The process of introducing new PCs also helps rotate the focus, but you should be careful to ensure that the focus rotates to different players instead of just to new characters belonging to the same players.

Introduce New Goals. Over time, characters accomplish tasks that were an important part of their psychological and historical makeups. If a PC has wiped out his personal archnemesis, married and settled into an at-last-comfortable relationship with his sweetheart, and ironed all the kinks out of his problematic superpowers, he's not likely to act as a firebrand in the campaign, sparking new stories, themes, and events. When a character has been comfortable and complacent for a while, you should speak to the player, saying something like, "Now that Graycat's problems with Death-Weaver and his

family life are settled, what's on his mind? What are some of his other original objectives that haven't yet been resolved?" This sets into motion the process by which new goals, and story complications resulting from them, are created.

Revamp NPCs And Relationships. Having PC-to-NPC relationships change, especially in a dramatic way, can bring a lot of new interest into a campaign. Sometimes this is nothing but a function of age: a PC's child may suddenly be a teenager (and possibly a nascent super); a teenager may suddenly be a college student or independent adult. Sometimes this is a function of lack of fulfillment: a PC's spouse may suddenly have had enough of the PC living out a life of power while the rest of the family waits at home for him to return, and may choose to separate, divorce, have an affair, attempt to become super-powered, start a new career, or the like. Fiancé(e)s can decide they've waited long enough, it's time to get married; family members and friends can suddenly turn out to be not what they were thought to be ("Mom! You were Lady Nuclear? Isn't there still a murder warrant out on you?"); or changes in DNPCs' jobs can affect the PC (such as when a husband or wife is suddenly put in charge of Operation Super Roundup, or a significant other is appointed to head up an operation the PCs know is a front for an evil eugenics experiment).

Revamp PCs. With players who enjoy this sort of surprise, or with those who agree to the change, it's often refreshing to cause a total rebuilding of the character. The PC might go through a radiation accident causing all his powers to change in odd ways; may decide to toss his power suit and undergo a series of gene therapy treatments to give himself natural superpowers; or may at last overcome the hellish curse that gave him his powers and now concentrate on mastering his martial arts.

Send The Campaign Off-Course. Changing the very nature of a campaign, temporarily or permanently, can pump some energy into it. Are the PCs members of a well-respected, above-board superteam with fan clubs and action figures? Have the team framed for crimes against humanity and force them to go underground, trying to clear their names and still fight crime with only a fraction of their usual resources. Are the heroes mutants chased by the governments of all nations? Give them a maxi-series that takes place on another planet or in another dimension where their heroic natures are recognized and unquestioned. Are things pretty settled on the Earth? Plunge the entire nation into a war... or trap the heroes in the post-apocalyptic future after the end of that war.

Rotate The Entire Campaign. Rather than playing a campaign until it becomes a sad thing the players can never bear to return to, you should play it until you begin to grow weary of it, then set it aside for a few months. When you return to it later, your creative batteries may have been recharged, and your players' enthusiasm for the campaign may be renewed.

CREATING AND RUNNING EPISODES

With the characteristics of the campaign ironed out and its principal PCs and NPCs built, you can begin running “episodes” (i.e., individual game scenarios and sessions).

Simple adventures need to include the following elements:

- Villain
- Plot

More complex adventures should include the following additional elements:

- Theme
- Subplots

Villain

A later section of this chapter, “Villains,” goes into considerable detail about the types and use of villains in campaigns. For now, it’s enough to remember two things.

First, the villain of an adventure isn’t necessarily villainous, evil, or even selfish. Technically, he’s the “antagonist” rather than the “villain.” Whatever his role or usual outlook, his job is to set into motion a series of events that cause superheroes to oppose him for some reason.

Second, the adventure should bear the personality stamp of its antagonist. This doesn’t mean it should be obvious from the first moments which antagonist is responsible for which series of events — only that what’s going on should be characteristic of the villain’s personality.

For instance, world-conquering alien invaders don’t usually rob banks. This doesn’t mean an adventure involving a world-conquering alien invader can’t have him arranging for the robbing of a bank. But if he’s responsible for such a crime, there should be clues and leads left behind to indicate that something is not normal.

Example: *In a bank robbery, a team of five well-motivated, well-disciplined robbers enter the bank building, keep an eye on the bank customers, fill their bags with money from the vault, pry open a wall of safe deposit boxes and take their contents, and leave a minute before the first police and superheroes arrive. So far, there’s nothing unusual about this crime except the professionalism displayed.*

But two events stand out. First, of the five robbers, four did all the talking. The fifth, whose face was more completely concealed than the others’, did not speak once. Second, one of the safe deposit boxes robbed had some unusual contents. Perhaps it belonged to one of the PC superheroes and held a mysterious device the hero took from an unknown robot in a previous adventure. Perhaps it belonged to an archaeologist and held a piece of tooled metal the scholar took from a dig

site dated to 2800 BC in Turkey. Perhaps its contents are unknown, but when the heroes uncover the renter’s identity, it turns out to be a cover name for a supervillain who died a month ago, burned to death by a hitherto-unknown radiation-emitting device.

So suddenly we have a bank robbery with some unusual characteristics, and it is those anomalous features that will gradually but inevitably point toward the one true villain of the piece.

Plot

The standard plot, whether it belongs to a comic book story, a short story, a novel, or a movie, breaks down into three phases.

- Phase One: Get someone in trouble.
- Phase Two: Get that someone in more trouble.
- Phase Three: Get that someone out of trouble.

This sounds simple, but it’s infinitely versatile. This sequence is not so much a formula for events as it is a formula for pacing, and most people in Western society are attuned to that rhythm of story-telling whether or not they’re aware of it.

To set up the basic framework for an adventure plot, you have to determine the following:

The Antagonist’s Goal. This may be simple (a madman wants to win the affection of a supermodel, a criminal scientist needs a specific meteorite to power his new invention) or complicated (a world-conqueror decides to bleed the U.S. dry economically by plunging the Middle East into a war where America must intervene militarily).

How The Antagonist Is Going To Achieve The Goal. This, too, may be simple (the madman kidnaps the supermodel and locks her in a bunker, where he talks to her endlessly about his love and financial prospects; the scientist invents a mini-tank and drives it into the museum to fetch the meteorite) or complicated (the world-conqueror must get better munitions into the hands of every conceivable participant in a Middle East war, then trick a prominent politician of one side into taking an action that can only be interpreted as a mortal insult by another faction, then initiate a scandal in the U.S. House and Senate to distract them and the public while the Middle East situation worsens, then... and so on).

What First Goes Wrong With The Antagonist’s Plot. The antagonist plans his operation from beginning to end, but inevitably something goes wrong, bringing it to the attention of the PCs. This is usually simple — in fact, the more complex the antagonist’s plan, the more simple the event that causes the first detail to go wrong. (The supermodel kidnapped by the madman is the cousin of one of the PCs; the scientist disabled all the museum’s security devices, but, being rooted in an earlier decade, forgot to account for the museum-goers’ cell phones; the Washington, D.C. madame whom the world-conqueror enlisted to start off the scandal recognized the danger he posed and, unwilling to approach the police or State

Department, came to visit a circumspect set of superheroes.)

With these elements in place, you can predict how the interaction of the antagonist's plot and the player characters' actions will go. Of course, your "prediction" about how the PCs react and the adventure unfolds is likely to be incorrect in some respects — the only universal constant in gaming is "the players never do what you expect them to do." You can usually make some pretty safe assumptions, or at least prepare an "event tree" which lists the major options and how the story will develop depending on the players' choices... but you should always be ready to react to the unexpected and take the story in a new direction.

Example: *Dr. Hallyburton, inventor and sociopath, invents a miniaturized tank about the size of a station wagon; it's capable of taking on one or more superheroes, and its driver's compartment can teleport out of the main unit as an escape mechanism. He will use it to crash into the Challenge City Museum of Natural History, break into the meteorite display, and steal the remnants of a meteorite that fell to Earth ten years ago; he has recognized it as a sample of polydescartium, a compound with some remarkable properties.*

He uses remote-controlled micro-robots to disable all the museum's security. He drives the tank to the museum, crashes in through the front door, and heads straightaway to the meteorite display. Thirty-three museum-goers immediately hit 911 on their cell phones and the PCs are alerted.

This is the setup for the adventure; the GM can decide that all these events have taken place, and the PCs' actions don't enter into the equation until after that last event. Now they will. So the GM must first figure out how he thinks subsequent events will go.

Dr. Hallyburton has a considerable head start, so the GM predicts, based on what he knows about his PCs' movement rates, that Hallyburton can get to the meteorite display and retrieve the meteorite before they reach the museum. His estimation is that they'll arrive just as he's reaching the door out.

Doubtless they'll demand he surrender; doubtless he won't; doubtless they'll attack. Battle ensues. Hallyburton's micro-tank isn't capable of holding them off forever, so after the area around the front of the museum is trashed, he teleports away in his driver's compartment, leaving the rest of the tank behind.

With the battle over, the PCs are in possession of a tank and eyewitness reports that point them to the meteorite display. Scientific analysis of the



display indicates that, though it is not radioactive, the meteorite must have had some sort of odd emissions, as the metals of the case itself have been weakened. Mechanical examination of the micro-tank points to Dr. Hallyburton, the supplier of fine vehicles to supervillains for over 30 years.

Hallyburton's motivation remains a mystery, and detective work to establish his whereabouts indicates they are unknown; he is wanted for parole violation, as his parole officer cannot reach him. The PCs will have to find him.

The GM knows of two ways they can do this. Another museum has a smaller sample of polydescartium; if the heroes can get that and determine the nature of its emissions, they can build a device that detects them, allowing them to track Hallyburton to his hideout. The mini-tank included several rare parts normally used only by amphibious vehicles manufactured for the military; examination of the builders' records points to only one set of local deliveries, which is to Hallyburton's hideout. The GM assumes the players can come up with more ways to find Hallyburton. He is now satisfied they can track him back to his house.

He anticipates that by the time they reach his home, Hallyburton has completed assembly of his device, a time-travel machine that will send him forward in time to a point where he is presumed dead and his crimes are forgotten. Either the heroes stomp Hallyburton before he activates the device, ending the story, or Hallyburton leaps into the temporal effect and disappears into the future, which ends the story if the PCs let him go or continues it next time if they jump in after him.

RAZOR KNIGHTS SUBPLOTS

Black Swordsman — His Father's Return: After Sabreur's first appearance, Black Swordsman, at home, will be visited by his father, the original Black Swordsman. The old man has had a prophetic vision that he (the old man) is soon to die, and wants to stay with his son while that's happening. Is this more than a superstitious notion? And does it relate to Sabreur's presence? Sabreur isn't supposed to know about the Secret Identities of the Black Swordsmen.

Freedom Fighter — Romancing Snow Leopard: In our last thrilling episode, Freedom Fighter's courage and gallantry really had an effect on the beautiful villainess Snow Leopard and made her reevaluate her situation. She concluded she would miss him more than she'd miss the thrills of her profession. So she's ready to make a switch. But her team, Z-Force, is involved in a plan to steal Dr. Hallyburton's cloning apparatus, and team leader Death-Weaver, already suspicious of her, is watching her very closely now. Can she find some way to communicate with Freedom Fighter without alerting Death-Weaver?

Graycat — Poisoned by Dementia: In a recent episode, while Graycat was in his Secret Identity, his wallet was stolen by a 13-year-old, who fled through a junkyard. Graycat followed, getting nicked and cut in the tight passages the boy took, before getting his wallet back. What he didn't know was that the theft and the boy's route were chosen by Dementia, who poisoned sharp metal flanges all along the route. Now Graycat is suffering a physical deterioration leading to congestive heart failure if he doesn't discover he's been poisoned and find the antidote in time.

This is how the GM sees the adventure as proceeding. But no adventure plan ever survives contact with the players. How the adventure actually plays out is revealed below, on page 148.

Theme

A *theme* is a subject that a story tries to explore in a meaningful way. The story's theme can normally be expressed as a sentence or question, such as, "Does a combination of power and lack of consequence cause people to abuse that power?" or "Acts of vengeance also destroy the avenger."

The events of the story must relate to the theme. However, whether the events or the theme comes first tends to vary from adventure to adventure. Sometimes you discover the theme once the events begin to take shape, and sometimes it's the other way around.

Example: One of the PCs has a teenaged nephew who knows about his super identity and is always begging to be allowed to try on the hero's power armor suit. The PC always laughs and says, "You're too young."

The GM decides that this is a good launching-point for a story. What if the teenager, frustrated beyond endurance, steals the suit to prove he can drive it? What if the teen accidentally activates some of its combat simulations and it goes on a rampage as it reenacts the hero's last battle? We have a plot, and the theme for it soon becomes obvious: "You can't keep a child in diapers forever," or, "Goad someone into a foolish move and you are as responsible as he is."

Example: The GM decides on a theme he wants to explore: "To assume you're always right is to be oblivious to your every mistake." He has a supervillain concoct a plan whereby a superhero can be tricked into freeing an ancient evil — one the villain cannot reach because his spirit is not sufficiently pure to allow him proximity to it. Then he sets up a series of encounters and clues he's sure a specific hero will interpret in a particular way, without reflection, without acknowledgment of others' contrary opinions. He sets it into motion; the PC in question lets the ancient evil out; the PCs must track it down and end its rampage; the supervillain gets away; the hero, if he has any self-reflection left to him, is chastened.

Furthermore, the theme should be something that has a significance to one or more of the player characters — else why explore it? So you should make sure that it relates in some way to one or more personality traits of the PCs.

Example: In the story of the teenager and the stolen power suit, the GM might contrive things so some of the dialogue between the teen and the power-suit hero resonates with conversa-

tions other heroes have had with their side-kicks, children, or other junior relatives.

Example: An appropriate theme for the Dr. Hallyburton storyline might be, "It does no good to run away from the consequences of your actions; they are always with you." But that's not a theme the GM can explore unless Dr. Hallyburton escapes into the future. And to explore it, the GM has to find some way for Dr. Hallyburton's past crimes or the personality traits that led him to perform those crimes to trip him up. In addition, for the theme to have any significance to the player characters, they have to recognize it as relevant to themselves, so the GM should base it on a Hallyburton personality trait that one or more of the PCs share.

The use of themes is always optional, and it may be that even the most theme-friendly GM doesn't want to use them all the time, since players don't always like being "preached" to (even subtly). But themes do give stories greater significance, and can sometimes make them more memorable experiences.

Subplots

A *subplot* is any sort of plot that doesn't have to carry the weight of an entire adventure or story on its back. In other words, it's one of any number of secondary sets of events that take place around (or parallel to), and sometimes interact with, the adventure's main plot.

A subplot doesn't necessarily define where a story begins or ends. With a self-contained storyline (such as most movies), subplots tend to begin at the same time as the main plot and end at the same time. But with a series — and most *Champions* campaigns are presented in serial form — the subplot can begin and end without regard to where main plots begin and end. Thus, subplots are one of the things that help define a campaign; they twine from episode to episode rather than being confined to specific storylines, so they provide the campaign with a sense of continuity. They also provide individual characters with senses of accomplishment as subplots related directly to them are resolved.

Subplots can involve entire superteams, or just one or two PCs at a time. They often relate to a character's personal goals (for instance, a romantic interest) or a character's Disadvantages (such as a Hunted that doesn't involve the hero's allies).

Example: In the current episode of the Razor Knights campaign, Black Swordsman's nemesis, Sabreur, appears to return from the dead, showing up as a distant figure whose minions execute a set of attacks on seemingly-unrelated university professors. This is the main plot of the episode.

In earlier episodes in the campaign, Black Swordsman's teammate, Freedom Fighter, has been romancing the villainess Snow Leopard

and trying to persuade her to abandon her criminal life. This is a subplot.

In this episode of the campaign, hero Graycat discovers his health is deteriorating. In the midst of battle, he feels shooting pains in his chest. After the battle, if he chooses to, he can go to a doctor and discover there's a mysterious buildup of fluid around his heart. If he does not go to the doctor this time, there will be another, worse, incident in the next adventure. Either way, this is the start of another subplot.

It is sometimes useful to keep track of a campaign's subplots on a sheet of paper. Before each play-session begins, review this sheet and update it to include subplot details that you intend to introduce in the upcoming episode. See the sidebar on page 146 for an example featuring the Razor Knights' subplots.

Gaming It Out

Having done all this preparation work — deciding on the villain, the plot, and optionally theme and subplots — you and your players can game out the adventure. Note that all this preparation doesn't have to be a lot of work; it can be anything from a few minutes' worth of thinking to several hours' worth of meticulous planning, depending on your preference. Some GMs prefer the confidence and ease of game play that comes from preparing in advance — after all, as the Chinese say, “The strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink.” Other GMs, for various reasons, would rather do little (if any) prep work and instead “wing it” based on their confidence in their gamemastering skills.

NARRATION VERSUS CONVERSATION

Many *Champions* campaigns muddle along with a certain lack of dramatic flair and an unfortunate absence of character development. One common reason for this unfortunate state of affairs is that, while players interact, their characters really don't. The GM and players allow narration to substitute for interaction. An example:

Graycat's Player: “I'm going to call Black Swordsman on my radio and tell him that I've got an idea that might draw Z-Force out of hiding.”

GM: “All right.”

With this sort of approach, you get no character interaction. Instead, it should go something like this:

Graycat's Player: “I'm going to call Black Swordsman on my radio and tell him that I've got an idea that might draw Z-Force out of hiding.”

GM: “All right. Black Swordsman, your dagger-hilt beeps at you, incoming call.”

Black Swordsman's Player: “Black Swordsman here. Damsel-saving a specialty.”

Graycat's Player (to GM): “I just told you what I was going to say. That was pretty much it.”

GM: “Right. Now tell him.”

Graycat's Player (to GM): “Fine.” (To Black Swordsman): “Very funny. Listen, I've got an idea on how we can draw Z-Force out of hiding.”

Black Swordsman's Player: “Let's hear it.”

Graycat's Player: “Not on an open frequency, no. Let's meet back at base in fifteen minutes. But come in by the tunnel access, just in case the main doors are being watched.”

Black Swordsman's Player: “Gotcha. Have you already called Freedom Fighter?”

Graycat's Player: “No, and I don't want you to, either. I mean, I trust him, but he's got this thing with Snow Leopard going, and I don't trust her. And, hell, he may talk in his sleep.”

Freedom Fighter's Player: “Hey!”

GM: “You're not in this conversation.”

Freedom Fighter's Player: “Right, right.”

Black Swordsman's Player: “See you there. Black Swordsman out.”

This approach takes longer, but not much longer — it's nothing compared to the amount of time combat takes, and it's wonderful for establishing character and personality.

In the example above, Graycat's player conveyed the same amount of information, but the conversation established his suspicion of Snow Leopard (a valuable point for the GM to note — it suggests a conflict he can exploit in the Freedom Fighter/Snow Leopard Romance subplot), got a laugh from the players (from Freedom Fighter's player's reaction), and allowed both players to act as their characters. Over time, all this roleplaying rounds out the characters' personalities and better establishes their relationships with one another.

An inexperienced GM should start by playing out all conversations except those involving NPCs who are both completely irrelevant and utterly without personality. In the latter case, narration is appropriate. A player says, “We're lost. I'm going to ask directions of the first likely-looking person I see.” The GM replies, “Well, the guy operating the newsstand says Michigan Street's two blocks up — you're almost there.” But the GM can, if he wishes, use such an opportunity to introduce an NPC he considers interesting or pertinent to the storyline, particularly if he has the character ready and is just waiting for an opportunity to bring him in. As the GM gains experience, he learns where to allow conversations to be narrated and where the players and he should continue to roleplay them.

On the other hand, there is one area where narration — or, to be more exact, synopsis, should stand in for conversation. That's when characters are obliged to repeat information that their players have already heard. For instance, if Freedom Fighter gets the details about the clone-tank heist from Snow Leopard (in a gamed-out conversation enlivened by their frisky repartee) and then bumps into Graycat, he'll want to provide the same information to Graycat. Neither the players nor the GM

COMBAT RECORD SHEETS AND PLAYER CHARACTER CHECKLISTS

The *HERO System Resource Kit* contains a “Combat Record Sheet” and other game aids that can make it much easier for a GM to keep track of what's going on during the game, which characters act during each Segment (and when), and so forth. They're particularly useful for *Champions* GMs, since there's so much going on in super-human battles.

Another handy tool for a GM to keep on hand is a Player Character Checklist. This consists of nothing more than a list of every player character participating in the current adventure, with a checkbox to the left.

Any time a PC gets to do something that is a moment uniquely his (especially a moment where he gets to show off) — a battle with a bad guy, a distinctive use of a skill or a power, a conversational exchange where he gets the better of someone he dislikes — the GM should put a check beside his name.

As the adventure progresses, the GM can use this list to figure out which characters have had personal moments and which haven't. This is useful because every PC should have such a moment in every adventure, and no PC should have a lot more moments than any other. This tool allows the GM to keep track of which PCs have been under the spotlight and which have not. It can help keep the players' satisfaction level high and ensure fairness in the GM's attention.



really want to hear the same exact details offered up again, so it's appropriate for the player to say, "I'll give all that information to Graycat" or "I'll recap for Graycat." (This is a tactic known in the author's campaign as "pushing the recap button.")

When recapping, it's also appropriate for the character providing all the information to indicate how it might differ from the information he received. For instance, "I'll recap for Graycat, but I'll leave out the part about Snow Leopard's kid sister, since that might allow him to figure out her identity."

DR. HALLYBURTON'S PLOT

An example above detailed the plan of Dr. Hallyburton and the GM's estimation of how the adventure of the museum attack will progress.

The GM is wrong. The GM is almost always wrong in some way where these estimations are concerned. If the GM is not usually wrong in at least some respects, he either has a frightening real-world prophetic ability or he's forcing the PCs down a too-limited set of character options and not allowing them the freedom of action that is one of the best features of roleplaying games.

As it turns out, shortly after the museum attendees pull out their cell phones and call 911, the GM has the police department's superhero contact officer call the Razor Knights and tell them about the museum assault. Freedom Fighter, the superhero on duty, takes the call, and his player asks the GM something unexpected: "The Museum of Natural History? Doesn't Black Swordsman work just a block from there?" The GM, taken aback, searches his memory and realizes a previous adventure did establish that Black

Swordsman worked a block from the museum — he and his girlfriend, Lillian, often go to the museum on their lunch breaks. "Fine," Freedom Fighter says. "I'll call Black Swordsman and tell him to get over there now, and that backup is coming."

This puts the GM in the position of having to deal with a sudden bobble in his plot. If Freedom Fighter can get through to Black Swordsman on his team radio, which he should be able to, then Black Swordsman can get to the museum a full minute ahead of the rest of the team. With that amount of extra time, Black Swordsman may be able to interrupt Dr. Hallyburton as he's still trying to retrieve the meteorite. This fouls up the GM's whole prediction about how the rest of the adventure will run. What to do?

The GM can either manipulate events to put his adventure back on track, or can incorporate the characters' corrosive effects on his plot. In spite of the temptation to do the former and not have to abandon lots of preparatory work, it's usually better to give the characters their logical influence on the plot. Roleplaying

games are about *group* story creation, not the GM creating a story and telling it to the players. Sometimes the players get to affect the outcome of events, too.

The GM has Black Swordsman get to the meteorite display just as Dr. Hallyburton pops the hatch on his tank. The two see each other. Dr. Hallyburton curses, slams the hatch back shut, and jumps into combat with Black Swordsman. Black Swordsman stalls the mini-tank until his teammates arrive. Dr. Hallyburton has to teleport to safety... and doesn't have his meteorite.

What now? In the plot as envisioned, the heroes would eventually track Dr. Hallyburton to his house just as he's firing up his meteorite-fueled time machine. Now, things are different, and the GM must improvise.

Fortunately, the GM already established in his own mind that there is another piece of polydescartium at another museum. Since Hallyburton can't get the one from this museum, he races home, packs up his time machine, and rushes off to steal the other piece. By the time the Razor Knights get to his house, he's gone. But they find some of his technical illustrations, allowing them to figure out where he's gone and why. So, in the all-new, improvisation-plotted last half of the adventure, the PCs confront him in a new city, at a different museum, stealing a different meteorite. Perhaps he'll have his time machine installed in his tank this time, allowing him to try the time-jump the instant he has the meteorite in hand; perhaps they'll just catch him and prevent all the time-travel ramifications from taking place.

Either way, the GM has planned and run his

adventure, and has done so successfully despite the way his plot was derailed. He even incorporated plot details (the other meteorite) that would otherwise have been wasted when the original plot was circumvented.

And that, ultimately, is the way most *Champions* adventures play out — designed, plotted, partially or completely abandoned, and completed in a way that synthesizes both the GM's and the players' ideas, input, and goals.

Instant Plot Generator

If you're stuck for a plot, you can utilize this Instant Plot Generator to put together the framework of a play-session. It will generate fairly simple plots, but you can then flesh them out and fine-tune them according to the details of your campaign.

To use the Instant Plot Generator, consult the following series of charts, rolling dice where indicated to determine which elements will become part of the plot. Throw out any that simply don't feel right for your characters and re-roll those options. Choose additional events that make the story work better; add events that don't appear on the tables below when appropriate.

STEP 1: GENERAL NATURE OF STORY

Roll 1d6:

- 1-4 Man versus Man
- 5 Man versus Nature
- 6 Man versus Himself

Man Versus Man

This is the most common sort of superhero plot — one in which people come into conflict with the superheroes. To determine the nature of the antagonists of the story, roll 1d6.

Roll Antagonist

- 1 *Hunters*. This episode's bad guy is an occurrence of the *Hunted* Disadvantage of one of the PCs.
- 2-3 *Criminals*. The PCs interfere in a criminal plot currently hatching — a robbery, corporate takeover attempt, blackmailing, murder attempt, or the like.
- 4 *The Law*. Legitimate law enforcement forces seek the heroes. The heroes may have been framed, or there may be a legitimate complaint against one or more of them, but this intrusion comes at a time when the PC must be free to pursue some personal agenda.
- 5 *Avengers*. The antagonist is pursuing an agenda of revenge. It may be a hero trying to avenge a crime, a villain trying to avenge a hero's interference, or a normal trying to avenge any sort of offense.
- 6 *Invaders*. A force set on conquest or destruction is planning a mission. This may be a mission of infiltration, subversion, kidnapping, sabotage, or assault. They may be aliens, foreign nationals, terrorists, or representatives of a secret society.

Man Versus Nature

In this sort of plot, there's no real "villain" — some sort of natural disaster or event provides the danger and must be countered. Roll 1d6:

Roll Threat

- 1-2 *Encroachment*. A natural disaster pops up in one place and moves toward innocents; it can be intercepted by heroes, but not necessarily stopped in an easy fashion. Examples: volcanic eruption, tsunami, meteor, forest fire.
- 3-4 *Punishment*. A force of nature assaults an area and stays there, continuing to do it harm. Examples: hurricane, plague, giant Japanese monster (which keeps returning to the city).
- 5-6 *Aftermath*. A disaster takes place in a short amount of time; the rest of the adventure consists of dealing with the consequences. Examples: earthquake, factory explosion, radiation leak, tornado. Appropriate problems to solve include coping with fires, dealing with breakdown of services and local infrastructure, stopping looters, finding missing persons, rescuing victims, and heading off starvation and dehydration.

Man Versus Himself

The classic literary convention of a story in which the protagonist struggles with one of his own traits or weaknesses doesn't normally translate well to a simple superhero story, or into a roleplaying game session in general in most cases, but you can approximate it. Choose one PC and pick out one of that character's Psychological Limitations. Then either roll on the Man Versus Man chart or the Man Versus Nature table and put together an antagonist who bears directly on that Psychological Limitation in such a way that the character will have to overcome the Psychological Limitation (at least temporarily) or be ineffective in the adventure.

STEP 2: REVELATION OF MENACE

Here, you find out how the adventure's antagonist or problem is revealed to the PCs. Roll 1d6:

Roll Manner Of Revelation

- 1 *Dying Clues*. A person who's been murdered, or who's just now in the process of dying from an attack, leaves behind clues pointing indirectly to the problem confronting the heroes.
- 2 *Ongoing Investigation Or Mundane Mystery*. If a PC is engaged in an ongoing investigation, his search unearths clues about the upcoming event, even if it is not directly related to his investigation. Alternatively, one or more PCs, enjoying the normal Secret Identity lifestyle, stumble across some things that are Just Not Right, pointing him toward the problem.
- 3 *Series Of Strange Events*. The GM calculates how the adventure's menace and determines a set of side effects the heroes can experience, but which individually don't explain what's about to happen.

- 4 *Big Boom.* The heroes become aware of the developing situation when the first overt signs of it appear — bombs are dropped, laser bolts fly, radiation breath melts City Hall.
- 5 *Powers/Equipment Point To What's Coming.*

EVENTS OF THE STORY TABLE

First Roll	Second Roll	Event
1-2	1	The characters must hurry to a specific location, perhaps in competition with a rival/opposed group after the same objective.
	2	A partial or complete solution to problem involves an object (magical item, invention, or the like) held by secondary antagonists; the PCs must take the object by trade, force, or coercion.
	3	A partial or complete solution to problem lies with an NPC who's hostile, unhelpful, or mysteriously missing; the PCs must convince him or find him.
	4	The characters temporarily lose critical resources — destroyed by disaster, stolen by villains, a breakdown due to character negligence, or the like.
	5	The characters' plot/tactic completely fails; characters are driven into retreat/captured (if captured, must escape or survive deathtrap)
	6	A DNPC tries to help, but just gets into the path of danger.
3	1-2	The characters must invent a partial solution to problem (spend time in the laboratory, develop a magical spell, field-test a new weapon, or the like).
	3-4	A mysterious NPC/group repeatedly interacts with situation, but doesn't seem to be on the side of the PCs or the antagonist.
	5-6	The characters must solve one or more mundane crimes using their investigative abilities.
4	1	The characters must get a crucial item/person from point A to point B; the trip may be long, the route dangerous, or the item/person aggravating or problematic.
	2	The characters' plans keep being leaked to the enemy; the characters must find the mole in their organization, spy devices in their quarters, or whatever is causing the leak.
	3	A character's superpowers interact with antagonist's powers/effects in strange and unpredictable ways.
	4	A character's family/loved ones are discovered to be tied into the plot.
	5	Characters' plot/tactic succeeds, but result in the deaths of a lesser number of innocents; they must either find a way to undo what they did, or accept and explore the moral consequences of their actions.
	6	The characters must fight a rear guard or delaying action to allow innocents to escape, or to allow an NPC or fellow PC to get to a specific place by a specific time.
5	1	An NPC falls in love with/professes love for/develops a crush on a PC.
	2	A DNPC or loved one stands to profit from actions that are unhelpful to the PCs' mission or tactics.
	3	The characters discover that needed allies/resources benefit if antagonist wins and are not planning to help fight the antagonist.
	4	The characters find evidence of inexplicable change that must relate to antagonist tactics — physical laws are different, material properties have changed, peoples' behavior is different, people are missing — but the relationship is unclear.
	5	Research into a menace reveals that its causes are older than previously suspected.
	6	The authorities refuse to cooperate with PCs (they may believe their tactics wrong, seek them on criminal charges, or the like).
6	1	An injury to a PC causes temporary amnesia.
	2	A character's loved one demands more time/attention from him.
	3	A character is poisoned, cursed, or otherwise weakened.
	4	A character undergoes a "radiation accident" after an encounter with antagonist; develops new powers, Disadvantages.
	5	A character discovers that the PCs' preferred tactic actually benefits the antagonist.
	6	The characters are ejected from the vicinity of trouble and must race back to the scene of the action.

Characters with Danger Sense, prophetic powers, equipment that relates to the scientific field most closely related to the approaching menace, or the like begin to accumulate data that alerts them to what is going on.

- 6 *Warning From An NPC.* An NPC could have gone through any of the experiences shown above for rolls of 1 through 5 and decide to bring that information to the PC team. The NPC could be an ally, a psychic, even a supervillain.

STEP 3: EVENTS OF THE STORY

By following the two previous steps, you now have a sense of the general nature of the story's antagonist and how the PCs are led toward their enemy. You can take the reins from here and simply decide, based on logic, what happens next. If you wish, you can add detail to the story by rolling on or selecting from the accompanying table additional story elements. Roll 1d6 twice to generate the two numbers you need.

When using this table, remember the Phase One, Phase Two, Phase Three plot structure described earlier in this chapter under "Plot." When rolling/selecting events of the story, divide them between the three phases of the plot, putting them in whatever order best raises dramatic tension.

STEP 4: OPTIONAL TWISTS

With the plot structure and a number of events in hand, you can optionally decide to add one or more "twists" to your adventure. A twist is an unexpected event or revelation that causes the heroes to reevaluate previous happenings and actions, and perhaps adjust their tactics or their goals. Roll 1d6:

Roll	Optional Twist
1	<i>Supposed Friend Is Really Enemy.</i> One of the heroes' allies actually turns out either to be an agent of the other side or to be a self-serving wretch who accomplishes a personal goal at the expense of the PCs' chances for success.
2	<i>Supposed Enemy Is Really Friend.</i> One of the forces the heroes have been fighting turns out to be working in their best interests.
3-4	<i>Source Of Menace Is Not As Expected.</i> The forces or enemies blamed for the events turn out not to be their cause; the heroes must find and confront the true cause.
5	<i>Menace Is Nothing But A Distraction.</i> All these events have merely been a way to keep the heroes out of the way while some other malfeasance goes on elsewhere, unnoticed. (The bigger the events have been, the bigger the other malfeasance must be. One doesn't set off a volcano to keep the heroes away from a bank robbery.)
6	<i>Menace Is Actually A Good Thing.</i> It turns out the bad consequences of the story's menace are actually working in the heroes' best interests (e.g., the kind-hearted scientist the heroes are protecting from kidnappers turns out to be engineering a medicine-resistant

strain of the Black Death in his basement; the kidnappers are time-travelers who want to stop him from killing 78% of the Earth's population).

EXAMPLE OF USE

Morgan, the GM of the Razor Knights campaign, is pressed for time, so he decides to make use of the Instant Plot Generator.

For General Nature of Story, he rolls a 6 — Man Versus Himself. He's dubious about that, but, since it calls for him to re-roll to provide the underlying structure for a Man Versus Himself story, he decides he'll abandon Man Versus Himself if it turns out not to be what he wants. His second roll is a 5, Man Versus Nature.

For further details on Man Versus Nature, he rolls a 4: Punishment. Whatever this force of nature is, it keeps pounding whatever area it visits.

For Revelation of Menace, he rolls a 6: Warning From An NPC. That's a good way to do it, and certainly won't waste much time in getting the PCs into the story.

Now, it's time to determine Events of the Story. He decides to start with two events per phase of the plot, and his rolls net him these events:

Characters Are Ejected From Scene Of Trouble

Characters Must Hurry To Specific Location

Characters Discover Needed Allies/Resources Benefit If Antagonist Wins

Character's Loved One Demands More Time/Attention

DNPC Tries To Help, But Gets Into Path of Danger

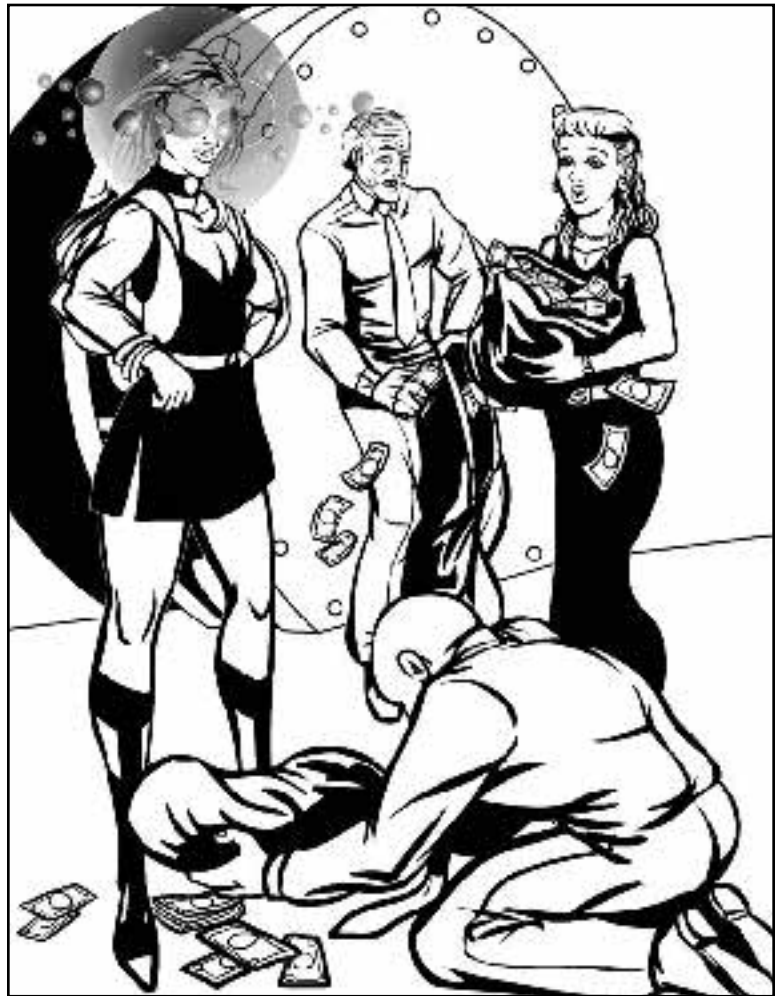
Characters' Plot/Tactic Is Complete Failure

Finally, Morgan decides to roll on the Optional Twists table and see if he likes what he gets. He rolls a 3, Source Of Menace Is Not As Expected. He'll use it if he can find an interesting way to do it.

He considers what he's got here, and, actually, he thinks there's a way to implement the Man Versus Himself structure — it interacts nicely with the Source Of Menace Is Not As Expected twist. What if the menace is actually a projection from the hero's own mind?

That makes sense. A superhero might develop a temporary power that creates remote projections of his own inner turmoil. Morgan decides that, in this case, the projection is a big monster that manifests out of storms (nicely symbolic of that turmoil), rampages across the city, and then disappears into the storm again, and just can't be stopped.

What hero to use? Morgan looks through his list of PCs and decides on Graycat, the martial artist whose sister was gunned down before his eyes. Morgan decides Graycat's guilt and self-loathing will manifest themselves in a way that threatens to destroy both Graycat and his city.



The Revelation Of Menace result was a Warning From An NPC. Growing more cheerfully malicious, Morgan decides the NPC is Graycat's dead sister. She'll appear to him and warn him he's very close to joining her... there's no way he can defeat the doom coming to visit his city.

But Graycat is essentially a normal martial artist who stays at superhero levels through constant (fanatical) training. Morgan has to find some way to explain why he can suddenly manifest giant monsters. This suggests he should have some sort of radiation accident that provides a plausible reason for the temporary power. Morgan adds that to the set of events the characters experience.

Morgan rearranges the events of the story to make them progress in a way that logically builds toward the climax and resolution of the story. In his new order, and with details provided by the decisions he's been making, they look like this:

Phase One

(New Event) The characters' superpowers interact with an antagonist's powers/effects in strange and unpredictable ways. In an apparently unrelated incident, the Razor Knights clash with agents of a mystical society that have set up an arcane ritual in the Challenger City Museum of History, in the display on ancient Viking culture. It appears the bad guys are enacting a spell to give one of their number great power. The Razor Knights foul things up and capture them. Morgan contrives things so Graycat first touches one of the several artifacts being used in the ritual, but that part of the event is completely innocuous.

(Revelation Of Menace) Warning From An NPC. A few nights later, during a pounding thunderstorm, Graycat's hears a noise in his apartment, gets up to investigate, and finds his dead sister looking through his scrapbook. She issues her warning about him being close to death. During a blinding clap of lightning, she disappears. The scrapbooks have actually been moved, opened, looked through.

(Event) Character's Loved One Demands More Time/Attention. Graycat's girlfriend, Debra Uecker, made increasingly frustrated by his fanatical training and crimefighting, insists he retire, or at least cut back on his costumed activities.

(Event) DNPC Tries To Help, Gets Into Path Of Danger. Immediately after Debra's demand, the monster, a mountain-sized frost giant straight out of Norse myth, manifests for the first time. Graycat rushes off to join his

team. Debra, not satisfied she's gotten through to him, follows. During the monster's first rampage, she is nearly killed by accident (the giant doesn't attack her directly). The monster disappears.

Phase Two

(New Event) Characters Must Invent Partial Solution To Problem. The PCs correctly conclude that the giant relates to their Viking cultists of the other night. They analyze its tactics and perhaps magical energy traces left behind, and develop methods they think will defeat the giant.

(Event) Characters Are Ejected From Scene Of Trouble. The next time the giant appears, the heroes rush to the scene... but despite their stealth, the giant knows they are coming. Unlike its tactic when dealing with city forces and the National Guard (smash with club, hit with ice storm), it waves its hand and they are magically teleported to a distant location, unhurt... all except Graycat, whom it smashes. As soon as Graycat is unconscious, it disappears back into the storm.

Phase Three

Morgan decides to get rid of the "Characters Discover Needed Allies/Resources Benefit If Antagonist Wins" event, since he can't find a way to make it fit within the texture of the story.

(Event) Characters' Plot/Tactic Is Complete Failure. In the next encounter or encounters with the giant, the PCs' special tactics, gadgets, or spells prove to be inexplicable failures. Evidence mounts that the giant hates Graycat and yet won't deliberately harm to things Graycat likes (Debra, his friends, his favorite landmarks, and so on). They may use Graycat as bait to lure the giant away from habitation, but won't be able to figure out how to defeat the thing until they realize, through research or use of SS: Psychology, that it's a projection of his guilt/self-loathing.

(Event) Characters Must Hurry To Specific Location. Once the heroes know what the problem is, they might come up with any of several possible solutions, many of which require fast trips to specific destinations. Possibilities: to the warehouse where the artifacts from the Viking ceremony are held, so they can re-interpret the items and their function in light of Graycat's problem; into the dream-world of Graycat's sleeping mind, where they can confront the giant (now revealed as a version of Graycat himself) and Graycat might be able to speak to a dream version of his sister and find closure related to her death.



NEW AND ADJUSTED RULES

The *HERO System* rules are designed to simulate any of heroic fiction. However, as generic rules, they often work best if “fine-tuned” a bit for each genre. This section contains a few optional adjustments to existing rules, and new rules, that make the game work more like a comic book superhero story.

ATTACKING WHILE COVERED

It's a terrible idea in real life, but characters in the comics and movies occasionally attack someone who has them Covered with a gun or other weapon, and manage to do so without getting attacked. If you and your players want to implement this essentially ridiculous fiction convention, you can allow a character to make an attack (usually a Disarm) while Covered, without the Covering character going first, under the following circumstances:

- if he has Fast Draw and makes his roll by more than the Covering character makes his Sight Group PER Roll;
- if he has Sleight Of Hand and makes his roll by more than the Covering character makes his Sight Group PER Roll; or
- if he makes a DEX Roll by more than the Covering character makes his DEX Roll.

Before attempting to break the Cover, the character must decide which of the three methods to use. If he fails his roll, the character Covering him can choose to attack him with the Covering attack.

BOUNCED ATTACKS

Superheroes often use blunt missile weapons — thrown billy clubs, shields, weighted disks, and the like — against their enemies, carefully planning the ricochets to hit multiple targets (a form of Rapid Fire, usually) and/or to make the weapon bounce right back to the character so he can catch it and throw it again right away. In game terms, a character can do this with the *Bouncing An Attack* rules on page 377 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*. The character simply devotes one applicable Combat Skill Level to make the weapon return to his hand. The CSL doesn't improve his OCV with the attack, it just guarantees he threw the weapon with the right “spin” to make it ricochet back to his hand. (Alternately, the character can simply define the attack as a power without the *Focus* Limitation — thus ensuring, as a special effect, that it always “bounces back” to him, because the rules let him use the attack again and again without anyone being able to take it away from him.)

CHARACTERS AS WEAPONS

Superhumans often like to pick up other superhumans and use them as impromptu clubs or missiles with which to attack other foes. This has the benefit of causing damage to both foes.

Before a character can use another character as a club/missile, he must Grab the club/missile. If the club/missile is conscious (even Stunned), this requires the normal Attack Roll and imposes the normal penalties to the character's OCV and DCV. If he's unconscious, the character still has to make a Grab, but suffers only the standard -1 OCV and -2 DCV penalties (he doesn't have the usual halved DCV in general, and halved OCV against other targets, if his Grab succeeds).

Once the character has successfully Grabbed the club/missile, he may use the victim as a club against any target in HTH Combat range, or as a missile against any target within range of his throw (see the Throwing Table on page 35 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*). He may do this as an action that takes no time, just like normally smashing or squeezing a character or object. However, unlike just causing damage to a Grabbed character alone, using another character as a club/missile requires an Attack Roll against the chosen target. If that roll succeeds, both the character used as a club/weapon and the target character take the attacking character's STR damage. If it fails, the club/missile may still, in the GM's discretion, take damage from hitting something else.

Using another character as a club entails a Weapon Size/Shape penalty of -2 OCV (if the “club” is unconscious) or -4 OCV (if he's awake). A character used as a missile is neither balanced nor aerodynamic (-4 OCV).

DIRECTED AND RANDOM KNOCKBACK

Sometimes a character wants to aim his attack so that the Knockback the attack causes propels the target into a third character, thus causing both of those foes to suffer the Knockback damage. To do this, the character must do Knockback with his attack against the first target — enough Knockback that he could reach, and hit, the second target. If so, the character must make an Attack Roll using only his base OCV (as calculated from DEX, without Combat Skill Levels, maneuver bonuses, or the like) against the second target's DCV. If that roll succeeds, the first target hits the second target, and they both take 1d6 damage per 1” of Knockback.

With some types of attacks (for example, a whirlwind created by an air-manipulating character), the direction of the Knockback is random — it doesn't have any relation to the direction the attack came from. To represent this, a character can take a -0 Limitation, *Random Knockback*. Alternately, the GM may allow a character to take a -0 Limitation, *Variant Knockback*, and define an attack as always doing Knockback in a particular direction other than straight away from the character.

EXTRA COMBAT FUNCTIONALITY AND REVELATORY PRESENCE ATTACKS

You can use these optional rules, which are most suited for adventure- and drama-oriented campaigns, if you wish. See pages 35, 39 for details.

FASTBALL SPECIAL OPTIONS

CHANGING FORMS

The fastball special rules assume the “fastball” keeps the same size, form, and mass he had when thrown. However, Body-Affecting Powers can interact with a fastball special maneuver in various ways. The easiest thing is for the GM to just ignore this entirely, except for purposes of determining the character's mass (and thus how far he can be thrown). But GMs desiring greater “realism” (and thus complexity) should consider using the following rules.

Density Increase: If a character has Density Increase active at the moment he's thrown, use it to determine his mass. If he activates the power in the middle of the maneuver, recalculate how far the thrower could have thrown him. If he's already traveled that far or further, he immediately drops to the ground. If he still has some inches left to travel at his higher mass, he travels them, but no further. If a high-mass character falls on a target, use the rules for dropped objects on page 436 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* to determine how much damage he does (possibly adding a die or two to account for the velocity from the throw, if appropriate).

Desolidification: A character has to be solid to be thrown (unless the thrower has STR that can affect Desolidified objects, in which case consider the Desolidified character to have his normal mass for purposes of calculating the throw distance). However, the character could activate Desolidification after making a Half Move, and thus move through solid objects in his path. The problem with doing so is that the rules would not normally allow him to turn his Desolidification off in

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time to hit the target and injure him. In this case, the GM can either grant an exception to that rule, or allow an exception if the character succeeds with a roll with an appropriate *Power Skill* or other *Skill*.

Duplication: If a character Duplicates while in mid-throw, the Duplicates have his same velocity and trajectory, and hit the target if he would. The GM may impose restrictions, based on common sense and dramatic sense, regarding how many “fastball Duplicates” can hit a single target (two or three is usually a good maximum).

Growth: Growth functions just like Density Increase regarding the way it increases mass. At the GM’s option, a Growing character can use growth momentum against the target (since the target is sort of “above” him as he travels); this may require the character to succeed with a roll with an appropriate *Power Skill* or other *Skill*.

Multiform and Shape Shift: If a character uses one of these powers to alter his form in a way that increases his mass, apply the rules for Density Increase to determine what happens. If his change of shape alters his balance and/or aerodynamic qualities, apply the worse of the two modifiers from the *Range Modifiers For Thrown Objects* table (*HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 35) to the thrower’s Attack Roll. For example, if the character starts out neither balanced nor aerodynamic (-4 to thrower’s OCV), but changes shape to a balanced object (-2 OCV), the thrower still suffers the -4 OCV. Similarly, if the character starts out balanced and aerodynamic (-0 OCV), but changes form to be non-aerodynamic (-2 OCV), the thrower suffers a -2 OCV penalty.



THE FASTBALL SPECIAL

A “fastball special” is a special form of Grab By, Move By, or Move Through in which a character without significant movement abilities of his own is thrown by a high-STR character at a designated target. It works like a normal Grab By, Move By, or Move Through, except that the “fastball’s” velocity depends on the high-STR character’s ability to throw him. Use the Throwing Table on page 35 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* to determine how fast and far a character can be thrown. For example, if a character has an extra 25 STR with which to make a Throw, and he makes a Standing Throw as part of a fastball special, the “fastball” has a velocity of 10’.

To perform a fastball special, have the thrower make a normal Attack Roll against the target; the CV modifiers for the maneuver the fastball plans to use do not apply to the throw, but the normal -4 OCV penalty for throwing an unbalanced, non-aerodynamic missile do. If the throw succeeds (*i.e.*, the thrower put the “fastball” in a position to make a HTH Combat attack against the target), the “fastball” then makes his own Attack Roll; CV modifiers for the maneuver he uses do apply to his roll.

Example: *Ironclad (STR 60, OCV 7) is going to throw Nighthawk (STR 20, OCV 8) in a “fastball special” so he can perform a Grab By to snatch a magic amulet out of a villain’s hands. Nighthawk weighs 100 kilograms, so Ironclad has 50 STR more than he needs to lift his friend. Ironclad’s running throw allows him to toss Nighthawk 40’. The villain is DCV 7. Ironclad makes an Attack Roll and rolls a 7, which allows him to hit the villain — the -3 OCV for a Grab By doesn’t apply to his roll, but Nighthawk is unbalanced and non-aerodynamic (-4 OCV). That means Nighthawk is in position to perform his maneuver. Nighthawk has an OCV of 8, +1 Overall Level, for 9, but suffers the -3 OCV penalty for the maneuver (and -4 DCV). He rolls an 8 and hits! He gets +8 STR for the maneuver, giving him 5½d6 for his attempt to wrest the amulet*

from the villain.

The “fastball” character gets a full Phase in which to act, since his movement is being supplied by another character. Typically he devotes the whole Phase to making the attack. However, before being thrown, or after traveling halfway to his target (*i.e.*, making a “Half Move”), the character could use a Zero-Phase Action to activate a power. That could be something simple (making his claws grow so he can use them with the attack), or something complicated like activating a Body-Affecting Power or Movement Power (see accompanying sidebars).

At the GM’s option, the “fastball” can use another Combat Maneuver or Martial Maneuver, such as a Grab, Martial Disarm, Martial Strike, or Passing Strike, as part of the attack, but still get the typical velocity bonus

to damage/STR as if performing a Move By. This can cause game balance problems, but may be appropriate for some situations.

OPTIONAL EFFECTS OF DAMAGE

Most of the Optional Effects of Damage from pages 414-21 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook — Wounding, Impairing, Disabling, Knockdown, and Bleeding — are inappropriate for *Champions* campaigns. (They’re not illogical, they’re not bad — they just don’t have much of a place in a superhero environment.) On the other hand, the rules for Knockback are extremely appropriate for the superhero genre, and should be used in all but the most “realistic” games.

The rules for Hit Locations and Placed Shots are generally inappropriate for *Champions* games; most GMs don’t use them. However, it is appropriate to use the Hit Location chart on occasions when you want to determine randomly where an attack strikes a target, purely for descriptive effect (just don’t use any of the modifiers or multipliers). Characters can also use Placed Shots for such heroic actions as shooting a gun out of a thug’s hand, and perhaps even for things like bypassing a target’s armor.

RESTRICTED RECOVERIES

HERO System combats can take a long time; superhero combats even more so. It’s possible to protract a combat beyond the point that anyone is having fun by having each unconscious character Recover to consciousness at exactly the rate prescribed by the rules. Instead, if a combat has turned substantially against the supervillains, have the unconscious ones regain STUN from Recoveries at a slower-than-normal pace so the combat ends in a more timely, dramatic fashion. If necessary, just don’t give them any Recoveries at all. (If nothing else, you should do this to put a stop to the markedly unheroic and totally game rules-oriented habit of hitting an unconscious foe “just to make sure he stays down.”) If all the PCs are unconscious at the

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same time, allow them to remain so — the assumption being that the villains did whatever it took to keep them unconscious — regardless of how close they might have been to waking up. (The players won't like this, but will probably understand the fairness of the tactic.)

SUCKER ATTACKS

Sometimes characters want to trick an enemy into attacking them in such a way that the attack misses and accidentally hits one of the attacker's comrades. Usually this involves tricking one foe into shooting another foe with a gun or blaster, but it may mean sidestepping so that two characters trying to perform a Move Through on the same target run into each other instead.

To make a sucker attack, the character has to have a Held Action available. He waits until the first attacker is just about to attack, then Dodges so the second attacker takes the hit instead. First, he must make a DEX Roll against the first attacker's DEX Roll to time his Dodge just right — if he fails, the first attacker's attack goes off before he Dodges. Second, the first and second attackers must be properly "lined up" for one to have a chance to hit the other. If so, the first attacker must make an Attack Roll using only his base OCV (as calculated from DEX, without Combat Skill Levels, maneuver bonuses, or the like) against the second attacker's DCV. If that roll succeeds, the second attacker takes the damage intended for the character.

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantages are one of the most useful tools you have when running a *Champions* campaign. They give you insight into a character's personality, hooks with which you can compel or entice them into performing certain actions, and weaknesses you can exploit.

General Guidelines

Here are a few tips that apply to any Disadvantage.

TOO MANY, TOO FEW

Some players have a tendency to overload their characters with Disadvantages, exceeding the point limit you impose for the campaign. The trouble is, they often have good reasons why their characters should have each and every Disadvantage they've selected.

You can respond to this situation one of three ways:

Insist That The Character Be Built According To Specs. You can simply require the player to build his character to the limits already established for the campaign, paring his Disadvantages total back to the maximum points permitted and trimming his Characteristics, Skills, Powers *et al.* back to the points he now has available. This is fair, though

sometimes harsh.

Allow The Character To Be Played As Built. If a player really does have convincing arguments for the presence of all these Disadvantages, you can choose to allow him to keep them. This creates a few problems for the campaign; this character could be somewhat more powerful than his fellows, due to the extra points he has, and could cause more trouble in the campaign, owing to his extra load of Disadvantages. In addition, the precedent this character poses may convince other players that they, too, wish to exceed the described campaign limits, and that they should have a right to do so. Each GM will have to decide, based on the roleplaying skills and maturity of his players, if he can afford to choose this option.

Allow The Extra Disadvantages, But For 0 Points. A last tactic is to allow the character to have all the Disadvantages his creator has chosen, but not to receive points for those that exceed the campaign limits. This is a test to see whether the player is actually committed to them as a part of his character's psychological and physical makeup, or is chiefly after the extra points. This approach, too, is fair, and sometimes humorously malicious to boot.

DISADVANTAGES AREN'T AN EXCUSE FOR PUNISHMENT

Sometimes a GM, especially an inexperienced one, falls into a trap concerning Disadvantages: when a player character takes one he considers foolish, he punishes him for it in subtle ways.

As an example, a GM who considers the Code Versus Killing to be ridiculously impractical might punish a character with that Psychological Limitation by having his Disadvantage result in harm and tragedy over and over again. The character catches a villain and turns him over to the police; the villain escapes and kills someone important to the character. The character catches him again; the villain escapes and kills again. This cycle continues until the hero is maddened enough to violate his Code Versus Killing and murder the villain, at which point the GM has triumphed over a Psychological Limitation he considers stupid.

This, obviously, is bad GMing. If a GM feels a Disadvantage won't work within his campaign, he should tell the player so as soon as he recognizes the problem, then allow the player to change the Disadvantage to something more appropriate.

Disadvantages are hooks that allow a GM to direct a character's actions and anticipate his responses. They shouldn't be hooks that dig into a character's flesh and puncture his organs.

Specific Disadvantages

Here are some specific suggestions about each individual Disadvantage and its appropriateness for, or use in, *Champions* campaigns. You should also review the player-oriented notes on Disadvantages beginning on page 64.

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Beyond that, the GM should use his common sense and dramatic sense to determine the effects of changing shape. For example, some shapes may be so broad or flat that they slow the character down, subtracting inches from his velocity.

Shrinking: Fastballs often start out Shrunk, since that allows the thrower to toss them a long way (and doesn't effect the STR with which they strike!). If they increase their size in mid-flight, apply the rules above for Density Increase to determine how much they slow down. As discussed under *Growth*, above, they can use growth momentum damage when they hit their target.

Shrinking in mid-throw has an effect opposite that of Density Increase. When the character Shrinks, determine how far the initial throw would have thrown him at his new mass. Add *half* the extra inches to the character's inches traveled and velocity for damage purposes.

Stretching: If they succeed with a DEX Roll, characters with Stretching can time their use of the power just right so they can add Stretching velocity damage to the damage they do from being "fastballs." Stretching may also allow a character who won't travel quite far enough because of the throw to "add" a few inches onto the end of the maneuver and manage to strike his target. Unusual alterations of form via Stretching should be dealt with as discussed under *Multiform And Shape Shift*, above.

MOVEMENT

The basic fastball special rules assume the "fastball" doesn't have Movement Powers that would allow him to reach the target, or that his Movement Powers aren't powerful enough to let him get

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that far and still attack. But that may not always be the case, and a proper combination of throwing velocity and Movement Powers can yield some interesting results.

A “fastball” with any amount of Flight can use 1” of Flight as a Half-Phase Action to change the direction he’s traveling as a fastball by up to sixty degrees (one hex side) without losing any of his fastball velocity (or adding to it). At the GM’s option, if the character applies one Movement Skill Level, or makes a DEX Roll at -4, he can turn up to 120 degrees (two hex sides) without losing any fastball velocity. This is a good way to make a Surprise Move or hurl the fastball around a corner.

At the GM’s option, if the “fastball” has more inches of Flight than the number of inches he’s been thrown, he can add the excess to the throwing inches, thus increasing both his distance traveled and velocity-based damage. For example, if Ironclad

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DEPENDENT NON-PLAYER CHARACTER

The line between DNPC, normal NPC, and Follower is sometimes a bit blurry. Use the following basic set of questions to determine what role any specific NPC plays.

If the character:

■ Is around a lot, mostly when there’s trouble, can be counted on to get in trouble or position himself below falling debris in combat situations, usually makes the wrong decision in times of crisis (or at least the decision that gets him in the most difficulty), and has some sort of emotional tie to the PC that keeps the PC from throwing him to the fishes even in times of greatest aggravation, then the character is probably a DNPC.

■ Is around a little or a lot, mostly when there’s no trouble, possibly can be relied upon to get to safety when there’s trouble and to help the PC in more peaceful circumstances, is evenly divided between making the right or wrong decisions in times of crisis, has earned the character’s affection through deed or personality, then the character is probably a normal campaign NPC.

■ Is around a lot, mostly when there’s trouble, can be relied upon to help the PC, in times of crisis usually makes the decision most helpful to the PC whether it’s in the NPC’s best interest, has demonstrated loyalty to the PC and has earned the PC’s own loyalty through deeds, then the character is probably a Follower.

One character’s DNPC could be another



character’s normal NPC, but one character’s DNPC should not be another character’s Follower (or even the same character’s Follower). You should be leery of letting two characters take the same NPC as a DNPC; that tends to diminish the problems the Disadvantage causes for each one, and also reduces the number of story hooks you can work into the game.

HUNTED

Hunted are one of the most prevalent Disadvantages affecting comic book superheroes. They all seem to have recurrent enemies (“He’s my arch-nemesis!”), which is what a Hunted normally signifies.

The most important thing to remember about a Hunted is this: the Hunting character or group should be interesting, appreciated by the players even if he/it is not appreciated by the characters. The thought that the Hunter is near should whet the players’ appetites even if it dismays the characters. It’s not difficult to determine when this isn’t the case. If a Hunter appears for the second time and each subsequent time, and the majority of players offer tired sighs or groans out of character, you know the player in question has come up with a Hunter no one likes.

Most Hunteds are fairly ordinary and predictable: particular master villains, villainous organizations, secret government cabals, and the like (see page 66). These can get boring quickly if you don’t find ways to liven them up. To make a Hunter more appreciated, you should always feature some reward, however intangible, associated with his appearances in a campaign. This usually means the Hunter has some personal connection with one or more of the heroes. The Hunter might be the source of answers to questions and enduring mysteries that plague a campaign — even as the Hunter is bedeviling the PC, he is also providing clues and even facts that advance the hero toward his goal of acquiring more information. The Hunter might be romantically pursuing one character even while inconveniencing or endangering the whole group. Or he might amuse the PCs — he could be a witty, charming character as well as a thief and liar. Other intangible rewards include the opportunity a Hunter usually provides for heroes to show off — one who is a particular hero’s opposite number, evenly matched with that PC, offers the hero a chance to have a battle royal.

Don’t underestimate the worth of Hunters who are honorable opponents simply driven by motivations or cultural assumptions that differ slightly from the PCs’. Not all Hunters have to be despicable, soulless pockets of pure evil. In fact, the most interesting ones seldom are.

Possible Hunted Actions

Depending on the nature of the character doing the Hunting, the nature of the target, and the background of/explanation for the Disadvantage, a Hunted might do some or all of the following things as a way of attacking the character:

- Try to kill him
- Try to maim or significantly harm him

- Try to learn his Secret Identity
- Try to make his superheroing life more difficult (show up to help another villain fight him, frame him for crimes, tell other villains about his weaknesses, and so on)
- Assuming he knows the character's Secret Identity, try to make his civilian life more difficult (get his boss to put more pressure on him at his job, trick his significant other into breaking up with him, slash his tires, and so on)
- Stalk/harass the character, or play (potentially harmful) pranks on him
- Do any of the above to the character's DNPCs and beloved NPCs

PHYSICAL LIMITATION

Physical Limitations work just as described in the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook, and, chosen in moderation, are very appropriate to superheroes. Once upon a time, superheroes tended to be perfect physical specimens (with the exception of heroes who were blind but compensated with special sensory powers). But since the 1960s, there has been an increasing number of supers with physical disabilities — bad hearts that had to be maintained by high-tech pacemakers, paraplegics who build power suits that enable them to walk, characters suffering from dwarfism who use their skills and wit to compensate for their short size, and so forth. So, it's perfectly all right for a player to come up with such a character for *Champions*; you should work with him to integrate the PC into the fabric of the campaign, not assume that "he'll be useless" because of his Physical Limitation.

The chief virtue of Physical Limitations in a *Champions* campaign is that you can place a character with this Disadvantage in situations where he has to cope with his disability — possibly for an increase in the drama of the episode, possibly to the detriment of his self-image. With the right player, it can make for some fascinating roleplaying and great stories.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITATION

Along with Hunteds, Psychological Limitations are perhaps the most common sort of Disadvantage among superheroes, and are likewise the best-suited to use as character hooks. Psychological Limitations help define how the character thinks, what sorts of events or concerns really eat at him. Bait formed in the shape of a Psychological Limitation trigger and dangled in front of a hero can lead him into danger, or at least into the next stage of a story. See page 67 for some discussion of Psychological Limitations that are particularly prevalent in the superhero genre.

REPUTATION

Reputation works exactly as described on page 337 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*. Don't forget that it's supposed to be a Disadvantage; if a



Reputation is mostly helpful, you should require the character to buy it as a Perk. Of course, it's entirely possible that a "positive" Reputation can have such negative effects that it merits a Disadvantage. For example, a character who has the Reputation of being honorable might have problems because enemies could exploit that personality trait for their own ends (assuming he really is honorable — if he's not, being known for his honorable nature doesn't really disadvantage him at all).

RIVALRY

Rivalry works exactly as described on page 338 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*. But as the GM, you should remember that Rivalry isn't just a Disadvantage — it's often a subplot as well. If you go too many adventures without characters' Rivalry actually affecting events in the campaign, it's time to introduce a new subplot to exploit the character's Disadvantage. Since most Rivalries can't be dealt with as easily and satisfyingly as Hunteds (with whom the heroes can fight), they often create more dramatic tension and make for great roleplaying.

SOCIAL LIMITATION

The best-known Social Limitation in *Champions* campaigns is the *Secret Identity* (see the sidebar example on pages 338–39 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, and the discussion of the subject beginning on page 48 of this book). As long as a character has a Secret Identity, you should use it as the basis for subplots and main plots — it is a Disadvantage, after all. Things you can do to make use of a Secret Identity include:

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throws Sapphire 10", and Sapphire has Flight 15", she can add (15-10) 5" to her distance traveled and velocity for damage purposes.

Alternately, but also at the GM's option, if the "fastball" has any number of inches of Flight, he can add those directly to his fastball velocity, "stacking" both of them to achieve a much higher velocity (and thus greater distance traveled and damage done). Using the example above, that would allow Sapphire to travel 25" and do a total of +8d6 damage with a Move Through. This option can be extremely unbalancing for the game, though, so GMs should consider carefully before allowing characters to use it in the game.

If for some reason a "fastball" with Flight wants to slow down, he can apply half his inches of Flight to counteract his thrown velocity as a Half-Phase Action.

If the "fastball" has Teleportation, he can make a Half Move with his Teleportation during the throw to either increase the distance he's thrown (but not the damage from velocity), or to alter his direction of attack and thus possibly gain a Surprise Move bonus (this tactic works best if the fastball has the *Position Shift* Adder for his Teleportation).



- Have NPCs and DNPCs accidentally or deliberately come close to discovering it.
- Have NPCs and DNPCs actually discover it.
- Have villains discover it, if only temporarily
- Have the PC's Secret Identity job interfere with his superheroing time.
- Have the PC's Secret Identity job give him insight into a potential villainous plot — but making it impossible for him to follow up without revealing that he's a superhero.

- Have the PC make promises in one identity that his other identity forces him to break, or nearly break.
- Have one type of relationship with an NPC in one identity and a very different type in the other identity.
- Have the character experience success in one identity and failure in the other, or admiration in one identity and contempt in the other.
- Have duties of and demands on each identity take up 80% of the character's available time.

SUSCEPTIBILITY

This Disadvantage works as described on page 339 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*. It's a common and popular one in the superhero genre — aliens living on Earth suffer injury and weakness when exposed to chunks of their home planet, mystic villains can't tolerate the touch of holy objects, and so on (see page 68). *Champions* GMs may want to take one factor into account that the standard rules do not: whether the substance triggering the Susceptibility is merely in the vicinity of, in direct contact with, or internalized within the character.

With this optional rule, the default for Susceptibility is "character suffers effect when exposed to the substance." This means the Susceptibility affects the character if he's within 4" of the substance and the substance is not contained within an object that suppresses or insulates its unusual properties. (In your discretion, at ranges beyond 4", the substance still affects the character, but at one-half its listed effect per 2x the distance. Thus, a substance that normally does 2d6 damage instead does 1d6 at 5"-8", ½d6 at 9"-16", 1 point at 17"-32", and no damage at 33" and beyond).

If the substance must be brought into direct contact with the character's skin, the value of the Susceptibility is reduced by 5 points. If the substance must be ingested by the character, the value is reduced by 10 points. (See sidebar page 159.)

You may also, if you wish, allow the effects rules for the *Dependence* Disadvantage to apply to Susceptibility as well. For example, instead of suffering damage when in the presence of the dangerous substance, a character could suffer incompetence, weakness, or loss of powers.

Alternately or in addition, a character can apply Limitations to Powers and Characteristics pertaining to the Susceptibility substance — for example, a character could buy his STR so it does not work in the presence of the substance to which he's Susceptible. The Limitation value depends primarily on how common the substance is (-¼ for Uncommon, -½ for Common, -1 for Very Common), but you may want to take proximity and other factors into account and adjust the value accordingly.

It's also appropriate for a *Champions* character to have other Disadvantages associated with his Susceptibilities. If the substance is supposed to do more than simply damage him, he can take other Disadvantages associated with it. For instance, Psychological Limitations such as *Freezes When Seeing Substance* (Total Intensity; frequency varies with substance) and Physical Limitations like *Blind In The Presence of Substance* (Impairs Greatly; frequency varies with

VULNERABILITY FREQUENCIES

Special Effect(s)	Frequency
Acid Attacks	Uncommon
Attacks (All), Physical/Normal	Very Common
Biological Attacks	Uncommon
Blasters/Particle Beam Attacks	Very Common
Bullets	Very Common
Chemical Attacks/Gas/Poison	Common
Chemical Attacks, Air-Based	Uncommon
Cold Attacks	Uncommon
Cold Attacks + Water Attacks	Common
Darkness Attacks	Uncommon
Dimensional-Manipulation Attacks	Uncommon
Earth + Fire + Water Attacks	Very Common
Electrical Attacks	Very Common
Electrical + Magnetic Attacks	Very Common
Electromagnetic Pulses	Uncommon
Electromagnetic Radiation Attacks	Very Common
Energy Attacks (All)	Very Common
Explosives	Very Common
Fiery Explosions	Uncommon
Fire Attacks	Common
Fire Attacks + Heat Attacks	Common
Force Attacks	Uncommon
Gas Attacks	Common
Gas + Poison Attacks /Chemical	Common
Gravity Attacks	Uncommon
Gravity Attacks + Magnetic Attacks	Uncommon
Heat Attacks	Uncommon
Heat Attacks + Fire Attacks	Common
High-Tech Attacks	Very Common
Holy Attacks	Uncommon
Iron Attacks + Steel Attacks	Very Common
Light-Based Attacks	Uncommon
Magic, all types	Common
Magic, specific type	Uncommon
Magnetic Attacks	Uncommon
Magnetic Attacks + Gravity Attacks	Uncommon
Melee Attacks, Physical/Normal	Very Common
Mental Powers, generally	Common
Particle Beam Attacks/Blasters	Very Common
Physical Attacks (All)	Very Common
Plasma Beams	Uncommon
Pleasurable Attacks	Uncommon
Poisons	Uncommon
Radiation Attacks	Uncommon
Silver-Based Attacks	Uncommon
Sonic Attacks	Uncommon
Spirit Attacks	Uncommon
Sunlight Attacks	Uncommon
Technology Attacks	Very Common
Undead Attacks	Uncommon
Water Attacks	Uncommon
Water Attacks + Cold Attacks	Common
Wood-Based Attacks	Uncommon
Wood-Based + Silver-Based Attacks	Uncommon
Special Situations	
Ambushes + Treacherous Attacks	Very Common
Attacks When Obviously Outclassed	Common
Electrically Grounded —	
If a Flyer	Very Common
If a Non-Flyer	Common
Falling/Knockback Damage —	
If a Normal Character	Very Common
If a Predominantly High-Altitude Character	Common
Struck in HTH Combat	Very Common

VULNERABILITY FREQUENCIES

Specific Powers/Game Mechanics	
Armor-Piercing Attacks	Common
Affects Desolidified Attacks	Uncommon
Dispel Magic	Uncommon
Drains	Common
Ego Attack	Common
Entangles, EGO-Based (Mental Paralysis)	Uncommon
Find Weakness-Aided Attacks	Uncommon
Flash Attacks, Sight Group	Common
Flash Attacks, all Sense Groups	Very Common
Images, Sight Group	Uncommon
Images, all Sense Groups	Uncommon
Killing Attacks, Energy	Very Common
Killing Attacks, Physical	Very Common
Knockback	Very Common
Mental Illusions	Uncommon
Mind Control	Common
Mind Scan	Uncommon
Presence Attacks, generally	Very Common
Presence Attacks From Desirable Opponents	Common
Transform	Uncommon

SUSCEPTIBILITY: PROXIMITY OF SUBSTANCE

Value	Proximity Is
-0	Substance Affects Character Within 4"
-5	Substance Must Touch Character's Skin
-10	Substance Must Be Ingested/Injected

substance) add new and interesting dimensions to the character's weakness.

VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability works as described in the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 341, but there is a factor at work that's far more important in *Champions* campaigns than most other *HERO System* campaigns. Superhero characters are exposed to so many more powers than most other sorts of characters that you have to keep track of a bewildering number of attacks — specific powers, special effects, particular maneuvers, and so on — and gauge how frequently they appear in your campaign so players can figure out what their characters' Vulnerabilities are worth.

As an aid to the beginning *Champions* GM, the accompanying text box contains a list of many different special effects, special situations, powers, and other game effects that can be used as the bases for Vulnerabilities. This is a "default" list, representing how common various special effects and attacks are in typical *Champions* campaigns (including Hero Games's *Champions Universe* setting). You should review this list, then modify it to reflect your perspective and predictions on how common these elements are in your campaign, add to it and continue to change it as your campaign develops, and regularly make it available to your players.

Note that the frequency of a Vulnerability may also depend on common campaign knowledge. Silver-Based Attacks are typically Uncommon, but if they're widely known to be especially effective against werewolves, a werewolf character could justify labeling them as "Common" for Vulnerability purposes, since a lot of his enemies will know to use them against him.

SUPERHERO ENVIRONMENTS



EXAMPLE RESISTING OBJECTS

The following are suggested STR and movement values for various resisting objects characters might encounter in a *Champions* game:

Asteroid/meteor, small*: STR 40-60, movement 500"

Asteroid/meteor, medium*: STR 60-100, movement 500"

Asteroid/meteor, large*: STR 100-150, movement 500"

Avalanche, small*: STR 30-40, movement 20"

Avalanche, medium*: STR 40-50, movement 20"

Avalanche, large*: STR 50-60, movement 20"

Bus/truck: STR 40-55, movement up to 100" Noncombat

Car: STR 30-40, movement up to 125" Noncombat

Tidal wave, small*: STR 30-40, movement 80-120"

Tidal wave, medium*: STR 40-50, movement 80-120"

Tidal wave, large*: STR 50-60, movement 80-120"

*: Character may need a Force Wall or large, flat object to "Grab" this "object."

The "Environment" chapter of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook talks about the world player characters live in — how dangerous it can be, how its components break. Those rules all apply to a *Champions* environment, but GMs need some additional details relating specifically to superhero campaigns.

STOPPING MOVING THINGS

Superheroes occasionally need to stop moving objects. You can find rules for catching falling objects on page 434 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, and there are basic rules for using STR to stop moving objects such as vehicles on page 365 of that book. *Champions* GMs also need rules for much bigger moving objects — avalanches and landslides, meteors and comets, and the like.

Any object that applies constant force in its forward progress is referred to as a "resisting object." This category includes vehicles that are operating under their own power or objects that are being drawn by gravity or Telekinesis powers.

All these objects have two significant characteristics: their movement rate and their Strength. For objects moved by gravity or Telekinesis, calculate the strength of the gravity/Telekinesis rather than that of the object. Gravity has a STR value equal to the amount of STR necessary to pick up the entire resisting object in the first place — if it's a normal-sized man, gravity acts on it with STR 10; if it's a 100-ton space shuttle, gravity has STR 60. If the object doesn't have its own STR Characteristic naturally, and isn't being affected by gravity, you should assign it a STR based on its size, mass, and any other factor you deem relevant.

A character trying to stop a moving resisting object must first put himself in a position to apply movement (opposite to its current direction) to some portion of it (preferably its most forward point — that tends to be most efficient, and is most visually appealing). This usually means the character must use his own movement abilities to get to that point, normally without making a Move Through or Move By attack against the resisting object. Once he's in position, use the rules from page 365 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* to determine if he can get a hold on the object and start to slow it down. Typically, a character needs to have an appropriate Movement Power to stop a resisting object — a superhero who lacks Flight usually can't Grab a flying object and use his STR to slow it down, since he has no way to counter its forward momentum. You may waive this rule in

appropriate circumstances.

Generally, a character can only stop a resisting object if he has enough STR to lift that object when it's not in motion. Weaker characters who try to stop a resisting object simply suffer a Move Through from the object and get knocked out of the way or dragged along. Characters may also find it more difficult (or impossible) to properly Grab and stop some types of objects, such as tidal waves or avalanches; they may need to have Force Wall, or a large, flat object, to use as a tool in this situation.

The basic rule, designed for simplicity and ease of use, allows a character to subtract inches of movement from the resisting object's velocity each Phase automatically, based on his STR. To make the situation more dangerous, difficult, and dramatic, you may want to change this a little to make the outcome less certain: the character must make a STR Versus STR Roll against the resisting object each Phase; if he loses, he doesn't get to subtract any inches of movement from it that Phase.

BREAKABLE OBJECTS

In a *Champions* campaign, the list of "breakable objects" is somewhat more generous than that of any other campaign type. Breakable objects can include fallout shelters, aircraft carriers, mountaintops, and civic centers. A few additional rules are needed to allow the joy of breaking everything within sight to better resemble what happens in the comic books. For example:

PROJECTILES INTO BUILDINGS

When characters send projectiles into buildings, worry only about the DEF and BODY of the exterior walls. Consider everything within a building — furniture, personnel, interior walls and partitions, you name it — that's within the path of a hurled/Knocked Back projectile or superhuman to not be there. The projectile punches through or brushes aside any such obstacles without diminishment of its speed. When calculating the effects of Knockback damage on a person, worry only about the effects of those exterior walls. The result is city mayhem wherein supers blast through buildings with startling speed, just as it happens in the comics. If an object has enough momentum to penetrate one exterior wall but not the other, it has come to rest somewhere within the building — not necessarily against the far wall. The GM can decide for dramatic effect where the object stops.

When people within those buildings might be hit by projectiles, use the attacker's original Attack

Roll and calculate whether it hits the potential target, assuming the attacker is OCV 0 and the target has half DCV (unless the target saw the incoming object coming, in which case he gets full DCV). If the attack hits, then the projectile strikes the target, with the usual effects for a thrown attack.

BREAKING BUILDINGS

Sometimes characters do so much damage to a building that they make it fall down!

A building's integrity is endangered when it sustains damage equal to a multiplier times the BODY of its exterior walls. The accompanying table indicates the multiplier, which depends on the size and sturdiness of the building. For example, suppose a large building (x10 multiplier) has reinforced concrete exterior walls (8 DEF, 5 BODY). When it sustains 50 BODY in damage, its integrity is compromised. This means it's in danger of collapsing. At 10x BODY in damage, it has a 15- Activation Roll (made at the end of every day) to remain upright. For every additional 10x BODY it sustains, the building's Activation Roll is lowered by one line on the Activation Roll chart, and the time interval is lowered by one line on the Time Chart (see the accompanying table).

For Area Of Effect attacks, Explosions, vehicle collisions, and other attacks that impact large amounts of a building at once, the GM may, in his discretion, apply a multiplier to the BODY done, solely for purposes of determining building collapse. For example, suppose a Giant Dinosaur (STR 75) has an Area Of Effect attack (Tail Sweep) it can make with his STR. It does 18 BODY to a building. Given the nature of the attack, which would cause a lot more structural damage than even a powerful Energy

BREAKING BUILDINGS TABLE

Multiplier	Example
x3 to x5	A small or flimsy building (a small home)
x6 to x9	An average building (a typical detached residential home, a small office building)
x10 (or more)	A large or especially sturdy building (most superhumans' bases, skyscrapers, large office complexes)

Building Has Taken	Activation Roll	Roll Every
1x Multiplier BODY	15-	Day
2x Multiplier BODY	14-	6 Hours
3x Multiplier BODY	13-	1 Hour
4x Multiplier BODY	11-	20 Minutes
5x Multiplier BODY	10-	5 Minutes
6x Multiplier BODY	9-	Minute
7x Multiplier BODY	8-	Turn

Blast, the GM chooses to double the BODY, but only for purposes of determining whether (and when) the building falls down.

If a building collapses, everyone in it takes a number of dice of Normal Damage equal to the BODY rating of the exterior walls, +1d6 for each floor above the ground the person is on. For example, a person on the eighth floor of a building with 5 BODY walls takes 13d6 Normal Damage if the building collapses. At the GM's option, a character may be able to make an appropriate Skill Roll (such as Break-fall or Contortionist) to reduce this damage somewhat — or, even better, leap out the window before the building falls down.



If a collapsing building falls *on* a character, that character suffers damage based on the weight of the building. Determine how much STR it would take to lift the building (or the discrete chunk of it that hits the character), and then use that STR to apply Normal Damage to the character.

Of course, there are plenty of other dangers involved in a building collapse. Characters might get electrocuted by damaged wiring, find themselves trapped in a fire, or impaled on a sharp object of some sort. See the *Living In A Dangerous World* rules on pages 444–46 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for more information.

At the GM’s option, these rules can also be used for breaking other large, roughly hollow objects, such as a supervillain’s secret mountaintop aerie. Simply assign the object an appropriate DEF score (if it doesn’t already have one). Based on the shape, structure, and nature of the object, the GM may want to change how often the Activation Roll is made.

CRUSHING DAMAGE

Sometimes characters or objects get crushed under heavy objects (or characters using Density Increase). Determine the STR required to lift the heavy object. Then use that STR to apply damage to whatever it’s crushing (to save time, you may want to apply the Standard Effect Rule, and have the STR do 1 BODY and 3 STUN damage per d6). As always, the GM may modify this rule to prevent abuse, or in the interest of game balance, common sense, and/or dramatic sense.

BOUNCING

Characters with Acrobatics have a lot of opportunity to interact with their environments in creative ways. Most commonly, they find flexible surfaces to bounce off — to gain themselves more altitude, to hurtle back at a villain in a surprise maneuver, and so forth. You can represent these maneuvers as bonuses to the character’s movement rates. This means a character who intelligently and correctly uses these surfaces in his actions can move faster and farther than normally expected, sometimes

allowing him to go what would have been a Full Move’s worth of distance and then still take a combat action, or permitting him to close the distance to a target or rescuer before the bad guys realize what he’s doing.

In any such situation, you decide whether there are flexible surfaces in the hero’s vicinity, what directions they can launch a character, and so forth. To use them, a character must make a successful Acrobatics roll for each bounce. Each bounce gives the character additional inches of Leaping. Some surfaces are difficult to use this way and impose penalties to the Acrobatics rolls. See the accompanying table for guidelines.

The “Direction of Movement” column is only a general indicator of direction. Someone leaping onto a diving board, for instance, can bounce straight up, up and forward, up and backward, up and to the side, and so on.

Example: *Freedom Fighter is in combat with Splatter, Z-Force’s flying knife-wielder. Splatter is chasing Freedom Fighter all over downtown.*

Freedom Fighter, using his Leaping 18” as his primary means of movement, announces, “I’m going to delay my next movement so it takes place at almost exactly the same time as his, giving him the opportunity to pursue me at almost hand-to-hand distance. I’m going to head toward the nearest set of telephone poles on the ground, leap up into the air at the wires, and try to bounce off the wires right back into Splatter’s face as a surprise maneuver.”

The GM says that this is possible on this Phase. He has Freedom Fighter make his Acrobatics roll at the -4 penalty for using the telephone wires; even with the penalty, Freedom Fighter makes it by 2. The GM then makes Splatter’s PER Roll to see if Splatter detects or anticipates the surprise maneuver; he gives him a -2 penalty (from the skill of Freedom Fighter’s Acrobatics) and another -2 (because Splatter is indeed following Freedom Fighter too close to react well). Splatter misses his roll.

Freedom Fighter bounds to the wire, bounces up to them, inverts, hits them with his feet, and bounces straight back at Splatter. His movement rate is 22” (18” for his Superleap, +4” for the bonus from the wire), giving him +7d6 to his Move Through.

You can determine any way you choose whether there are flexible surfaces in the hero’s vicinity. Typically, downtown city buildings have one or two flagpoles and awnings each. You can choose to have the character make a Luck roll to determine whether a particular building has any more flexible features than that, with results other than a 6 indicating the pickings are pretty sparse.

You may find that characters who like to use these bounce rules tend to ask for incredible amounts of information about local architectural details when they’re in combat. It’s best to settle the question of whether there are flexible surfaces nearby very quickly, such as with a Luck roll.

FLEXIBLE SURFACES

Surface	Movement Bonus	Direction of Movement	Acrobatics Penalty	Where Found
Awning	+2”	Upward	+0	Downtown, residential, shopping malls
Banner (Huge)	+2”	Out From Face	-2	Shopping malls, parade routes
Billboard	+2”	Out From Face	+0	Everywhere
Diving Board	+4”	Upward	+0	Swimming pools
Flagpole	+3”	Opposite Angle of Approach	-2	Downtown, government buildings, some homes
Power or Telephone Line	+4”	Opposite Angle of Approach	-4	Everywhere
Tent	+2”	Upward	-2	Campgrounds, fairgrounds

SUPERHERO-WORLD PHYSICS

Superhero-world physics differs from real-world physics in important ways. If you want to run a campaign that simulates the comics, follow these guidelines; if not, stick as close to “reality” as you prefer.

A Good Explanation Is More Important Than Scientific Accuracy. To put it another way, “pseudo-scientific reasoning outweighs real-world scientific reasoning,” and the dramatic needs of the story/character trump real-world science. Typically, it’s enough for a player to have a good working knowledge of scientific buzzwords rather than hard science — the skill to string together an effective rationale for how a character’s power works is more important than a grounding in real physics. In short, if it sounds good, it works!

To take this “law” one step further, if a player/character has a “scientific principle” that supports or explains a power, any real-world scientific principle that would oppose or negate that explanation can conveniently be ignored. The same applies to any real-world scientific principle that makes a power, maneuver, or stunt “impossible.” For example, “realistically,” a high-STR throw could easily destroy many objects. But that’s annoying and undramatic for the superhero genre, so *Champions* gamers ignore it.

On a related point, it’s worth noting that characters in superhero stories almost never question the scientific implausibility of what they do. When a brick picks up a building, he doesn’t wonder why it holds together so well — he just accepts that it does so.

Characters Ignore Inconvenient Science. If, realistically, a character’s power would have some sort of negative side effect, typically he isn’t affected by it or can ignore it. Thus, speedsters don’t burn up from the friction they generate (or destroy the surfaces they run on), characters who can move at high velocities can breathe without difficulty, energy bolts don’t cause painful “recoil” within the character’s body (or any action/reaction at all, unless the character wants them to), high-STR leaps don’t cause a devastating release of energy behind them, and so on.

Big Things Have Lots Of Physical Integrity When Lifted/Thrown. Buildings, capital ships, and other large constructions are so well engineered that when a superhero picks them up, often tilting them at angles they were never meant to endure, they remain intact. (On the other hand, these objects are no harder to damage than normal if directly attacked.) For perhaps related reasons, the human components of cyborgs are as tough as their artificial components where the two come together; the machinery never tears free of the flesh and bone, no matter how drastically they are stressed in ordinary use.

Energy Can Take On Physical Form. Characters can create objects or weapons of solid energy, create

fields of shaped energy, or have bodies of solid energy, even though uncontained energy normally dissipates.

Extra Mass Comes From/Goes Into Alternate Dimensions. If a player has no better explanation for the question of where a character gets any extra mass required by the special effects or nature of his powers, or loses mass to, don’t be shy about invoking the notion that it all has to do with alternate dimensions of reality. The “extradimensional energy” explanation works for a lot of other powers, too, if properly tailored.

Physical Laws Are Universal, Not Multiversal. The so-called “universal laws of physics” may function very differently (or not at all) in other dimensions. In a “Ditkospace” dimension, for example, the landmasses may be discrete chunks floating through the aether at various angles, with no common direction of gravity among them.

Size Alteration Does Not Impair Function. Characters who are significantly larger or smaller than normal human size don’t lose effectiveness because of it, and can conveniently ignore the square/cube law. Superhumans with Shrinking are as strong, and have as many inches of movement, as normal; characters with Growth don’t collapse (or break bones) under their own weight.



VILLAINS



A *Champions* adventure's villain is the character (or process, or force of nature) that sets bad events into motion, causing superheroes to try to counter them. Truthfully, the correct term should be "antagonist" rather than "villain," since people who cause trouble this way aren't necessarily villainous, evil, or even selfish in motivation or action. An antagonist can be the most noble of superheroes if he goes about his objectives in a manner the PCs feel they must oppose.

Except in some comedy campaigns, an adventure's antagonist should have a well-detailed personality and be as believable (and maybe even as sympathetic) as the player characters. Even more importantly, he should have one or more goals you understand. The players do not have to understand the character's goals, but you, in portraying the villain, should always have those goals uppermost in your mind; this allows you to create a consistent portrayal of the villain. (Later, when the PCs do figure out the villain's goals, that portrayal may take on additional meaning for them.)

A good villain should have a self-image that doesn't include the word "villain." Each villain, no matter how he's perceived by the rest of the world, has anything from a complete degree of assurance that his actions are correct, to a set of excuses that convince him his actions have been inevitable. In his own mind, the villain is the hero of his story (perhaps a tragic hero, misunderstood because of the actions destiny has forced him to undertake) or, at the very worst, the victim of someone else's story.

LEVELS OF VILLAINS

Villains in a *Champions* campaign tend to occupy any of several ecological niches. Some are bottom-feeders (despite their flashy costumes); some exist to support someone with grander aspirations; some plan to change the universe.

GANGSTERS AND HOODLUMS

Supervillain gangsters and hoodlums are people who have attained superpowers but still cling to traditional roles as low-level criminals. They use their powers to rob banks, mug pedestrians, steal, intimidate, and so on. Their ambitions never rise to equal their new levels of power. Some are happy with their low-level existences; some carry the air of tragedy about them, recognizing that their exceptional qualities have never quite made them exceptional people.

Of course, you can always use non-superpowered gangsters, hoodlums, and criminals. In lower-powered campaigns, they can be a credible obstacle

for the PCs to face, especially if played intelligently. In higher-powered campaigns, they range from comic relief (a street encounter for a hero to wade through without difficulty) to dangers that confront NPCs, DNPCs, Followers, and the like.

Gangsters and hoodlums make good short-term encounters for heroes, but their lack of ambition and organization mean they'll never constitute a credible threat for a superteam.

HENCHMEN

Henchmen are villains who do the grunt work for more charismatic or more organized villains. They may be normals or supers. In most respects they're similar to gangsters and hoodlums, but they serve someone on a regular basis. It's good for any Henchman the PCs interact with to have a distinctive personality, but they do not have to be as fully-detailed as more prominent villains.

Henchmen tend to be built on fewer points than the PCs, so they're no match for the heroes individually, though they may be a match en masse.

INDEPENDENT/FREELANCE VILLAINS

Some villains choose to act alone, or to hire their skills out on a temporary basis to others. These characters sometimes pursue their own agendas, perhaps while aiding the plans of more ambitious organizers. The independent villain may live by a code unique to him (sometimes a code of honor understood, though not necessarily duplicated, by the heroes).

Independent and freelance villains are useful as regular encounters in a campaign. They sometimes succeed with their individual missions, escaping into the night ahead of pursuing heroes. Those with a semi-cordial relationship with heroes might help the PCs on an occasional basis and even forge relationships of grudging respect (or strained romance) with them. Others, especially those with more antisocial and amoral attitudes, become long-term enemies of individual heroes. But because they seldom work in concert with one another (and when they do, they aren't necessarily very coordinated), they tend to hatch plans and adventures that don't threaten the fabric of society or the world.

Independent villains tend to be built on the same approximate number of points as PCs. One such villain is usually a pretty good match in a combat with a player character.

LIEUTENANTS

Lieutenants are villains who act as middle and upper management for more charismatic or organized villains. They don't have the ambition or the vision of master villains, but may be even more

satisfied with their criminal lives and careers than the bigger fish.

Lieutenants should be fully-developed and distinctive characters. They don't all toe the party line within their criminal organization; some pursue private agendas and goals while also serving their masters; some develop individual relationships with PCs (love, hate, love/hate, professional respect, and so on) that their employers do not appreciate.

Lieutenants tend to be built on the same approximate number of points as PCs. One lieutenant is usually a pretty good match in a combat with a player character.

A lieutenant who develops enough personal contacts, wealth, power, and ambition might be promoted at some later time to the level of master villain; on the other hand, he might continue as a lieutenant villain, become a superhero, retire, go to prison forever, die (temporarily or permanently), or suffer a similar fate. If the master villain he serves is killed, captured, or retires, the lieutenant may try to assume the mantle and take his former master's place.

MASTER VILLAINS

The master villain is the one with the power and the plan. Typically, he wants to change the world in a significant way. He might want to rule a nation, or the entire world. ("Bolivia is nice, but it really should be renamed Destroyerland.") He may wish to wipe out Earth's human population, or turn it into amphibians. He might want to change the very nature of reality in minor or major ways — making the Earth the front porch of Hell, permitting an ancient pantheon of gods to return and take over, paving the way for an alien invasion, causing one Earth cult or religion to become dominant in all nations among all peoples.

He should have a distinctive, or at least effective, manner of speech and behavior; these characteristics help make him memorable. A bland, mild-mannered supervillain is not memorable, unless you are capable of portraying his blandness and mildness in such a way as to be creepy or disturbing.

It helps if he has a memorable visual style, too — a costume that sets him apart not only from common man but also other supers with unusual garments. He might be larger than most humans, or smaller, or burning with an inner fire (literal or figurative), bearing symbols the heroes find difficult to ignore (Nazi swastikas, the emblems of fallen nations, the chest-symbols of superheroes he's slain over the years, icons of death or destruction). He might be horribly scarred or inhumanly beautiful.

Typically, master villains are built on far more points than player characters, allowing one master villain to stand toe-to-toe in combat with an entire PC team. However, this isn't always the case. Sometimes a master villain who rules by sheer charisma or brilliance is physically normal; once the heroes get to him, Kid Sidekick can annihilate him with a 4d6 Punch.

Master villains are always shepherding plots from conception to completion — though super-

heroes usually end them before they reach completion. A master villain's plot should bear the stamp of his personality, or at least be consistent with his nature (Dr. Devastation is not likely to base a plot around laughing-gases released from the big red noses of circus clowns, for instance, and the Harlequin's not going to launch a scheme using lots of ordinary military weaponry).

Villainous Agencies

Many *Champions* campaigns feature another intriguing type of villain who fills roughly the same niche as the master villain — the *villainous agency*. This is a large organization of criminals devoted to typical comic book villain sorts of goals — conquer the world, rule America from behind the scenes, steal all the world's gold, and the like. Unlike more traditional organized crime groups or terrorist organizations, villainous agencies adopt the trappings of the comic book world: their "agents" (rank-and-file members) wear gaudy costume-like uniforms and use super-tech blasters; their leaders are powerful and mysterious costumed beings (often superpowered); and they employ supervillains (often of their own creation) in their schemes.

A good villainous organization can add a lot of flavor and depth to a *Champions* campaign (particularly since it's much harder for the heroes to remove an entire organization from the campaign world than to utterly defeat a single supervillain or villain team). On the other hand, a badly thought-out or dull villainous agency can hinder a campaign. Here are some things to consider when creating villainous agencies for your game:

What Are The Agency's History And Goals?: When creating a villainous agency, think about its goals and reason for existing. It didn't spring to life one day simply to oppose Our Heroes during a game session. When did the agency get started, and who started it? What was that person's reason for starting it (*i.e.*, the purpose/goal of the agency), and has the agency's focus changed since then? Many villainous organizations' aims and goals are the same as those of master villains: rulership of Earth; domination of humanity; conquest of a particular nation; obtaining vast wealth; maintaining technological superiority over everyone else. But you (and your players) may find it fun to create villainous agencies with less stereotypical goals, such as radical environmentalism, destroying all high technology, committing genocide against some hated group of people, or being the first group of humans to make it to other planets (and, by implication, to rule those planets). As long as the goal allows the agency to be either (a) an intriguing one-time opponent, or (b) provides sufficient rationale for the agency to become a long-standing foe of the PCs, it works.

What Is The Agency's Structure?: Is the agency a monolithic hierarchical organization answering to a single all-powerful leader? A cartel of lesser allied groups? A network of loosely-connected cells? A vast family, linked by ties of blood and marriage?

VILLAINS BY LEVEL

Chapter Five of this book includes writeups of seven sample villains from the *Champions Universe*, the official Hero Games setting for *Champions*. Here's how they break down according to the categories described here:

Devastator:
Independent villain.

Green Dragon:
Hoodlum.

Icicle: Independent villain.

Mechanon: Master villain.

Pulsar: Hoodlum.

Tachyon: Independent villain.

Talisman: Independent villain.

A shadowy cabal or mysterious cult? If you know this, you know what types of agents and leaders the organization has, how easily it can react to changing situations, and so forth.

What Are The Agency's Methods?: How does the agency go about achieving its goals? The typical villainous agency, as mentioned above, uses super-technology like blasters, artificially intelligent computers, hovercraft, hidden bases, and grandiose schemes to accomplish its goals — it's like a supervillain team or master villain writ large. But some agencies may prefer other methods — particularly if they don't want to attract the sort of attention that a colorfully-uniformed private army tends to. For example, a secretive conspiracy-based agency might concentrate on secretive manipulation of politicians behind the scenes; a coven of villainous wizards might have ordinary people as its mind-controlled agents and work its will through spells instead of gadgetry.

What Are The Agency's Resources?: How much money, men, and materiel does the agency have to work with? Can it afford high-tech blasters, or must it restrict itself to ordinary rifles? Does it have multiple hidden bases, or a single headquarters? Most importantly, does it have supervillains (or super-powered servants) working for it? Most villainous agencies do, but they don't all have to. You should also consider whether the agency has the capacity to create its own superhumans, or must hire mercenary villains to do its dirty work.

A COWARDLY, SUPERSTITIOUS LOT: VILLAIN TYPES

When you're creating a new villain, you may want to base him in part on one of the classic villain stereotypes that have become familiar to us over the decades. These stereotypes include:

ANIMAL

Whether an actual animal (in its natural state, or mutated) or an animalistic humanoid, this creature is motivated by the basic drives — the needs to eat, reproduce, survive. An animal villain is not likely to become the personal enemy of any of the heroes, and may well evoke some sympathy from the PCs — after all, an animal is only a supervillain when things have gone very, very wrong for it (*i.e.*, it has been horribly mutated, has been transplanted from its native environment, or the like). Animal villains are also often wounded, one cause for their rampages. This character's powers tend to be concentrated on combat abilities and movement powers.

Some campaigns feature a variation on this type of NPC — a sentient animal villain, such as a hyper-intelligent talking gorilla. Often frustrated by their inability to live in human society, and/or by their perceived superiority over "foolish humans," these villains lash out, seeking to destroy or conquer that which they cannot be a part of.

AVENGER

This villain has been wronged, or has been affected by someone else being wronged, and is now determined to take vengeance, regardless of what the law says, regardless of whomever else might get hurt. An avenger character could be anything from a garden-variety martial artist who lost a friend to street crime to a survivor of the Holocaust who now bends his superpowers to the destruction of neofascism, the nation of Germany, or the descendants (however innocent they may be) of anyone involved with running the concentration camps. This character usually has a good mix of abilities — some combat-oriented, some stalking and planning skills, and so forth.

CULTIST

This villain believes in a theology that is not really in the best interest of most of the world. Fueled by religious fervor, cultist supervillains tend to be willing to do anything to promote the aims of their gods. Human sacrifice is a routine tool in the cultist's arsenal, as are rituals that temporarily transfer some of the god's power to one or more followers. Cultists can be anything from a minion-league member of a supernatural sect to a religious leader in a normal modern-day denomination who suddenly develops powers, assumes they come from his god, and decides they mean every one of his personal prejudices is his god's will. This character might have any sort of powers, but they are likely to manifest at the behest of his god rather than whenever he wishes.

CREATOR

This person creates things — usually things that move around and cause trouble, such as robots, synthetic life forms, artificially engineered diseases, undead creatures, golems, and the like. Sad to say, the creator is usually not very good about keeping his creations contained, and sometimes doesn't care what they do once they've walked out of his lab. Creators are typically not very powerful — it's not uncommon for the average professor of Scandinavian history to be able to thrash one with a clipboard and an eraser — but their creations are sometimes far more powerful than superheroes. This character has tremendous scientific skills (or the magical equivalents) and such powers as Summon.

HERO WITH A DIFFERENT AGENDA

This character is in most ways similar to the PCs, but has just one or two personality quirks that lead him into violent confrontations with the PCs. He may prefer to impose high justice on criminals he catches (under the assumption the law is not up to the task), may have a medieval warrior's outlook on villains (*i.e.*, that killing them is the best way to prevent recidivism), may have switched from villainy to heroism but still chooses not to accept the punishment of the law for his earlier misdeeds, or the like. The player character heroes often find something sympathetic about the Hero With A Different Agenda, and some may secretly agree

with a few of his views — but ultimately they still have to stop him. Such characters are usually the equal, in personal power, of the PCs, and may have any arrangement of abilities.

MERCENARY

This villain is available for hire. Lone mercenary supervillains typically charge high rates for their services and take considerable pride in their work. Most have no Codes Versus Killing and no compunction against any sort of crime (they'll gladly take jobs such as kidnapping young mutants and delivering them to villainous instructors, performing assaults on police stations or prisons, robbing gold reserves, and so forth). Mercenaries who have ethical codes that approach those of superheroes are often able to get along quite well with PCs, sometimes even joining superhero teams, but the majority hire their ethics out with their powers and are considered bottom-feeders by heroes. This character may have any arrangement of powers.

PRANKSTER

This villain has personal gain in mind, but that gain comes in the form of amusement — he lives to perform tricks on other characters, particularly superheroes or anyone who is stiff and humorless. His powers tend to be oriented toward movement, escape, illusion, and inconvenience. He may have a real affection for the PCs, but it is probably not reciprocated. Prankster characters are often alien creatures or magical beings (such as leprechauns).

PUPPET

This character is partly or completely controlled by another villain. He or she may do that villain's will out of love, out of debt and a sense of honor, out of naivete, or because he or she is being mind-controlled. Puppet characters tend to evoke a certain amount of PC sympathy — so long as they are not responsible for their situations. Those who follow another willingly, even though they know right from wrong, don't earn much sympathy from the campaign's chief heroes. This character may have any arrangement of powers.

RAVAGER

This villain wants to destroy the world, kill everyone on the planet, or accomplish some other equally apocalyptic goal. Usually quite powerful, with abilities oriented toward combat (*i.e.*, high-DC Attack Powers, high defenses), he may have what he considers a legitimate justification for his goals, or he may simply be insane. Sometimes he is a frustrated Ruler/Conqueror ("If I can't have the world, no one can!").

RULER/CONQUEROR

This character has one overriding agenda: compel others to obey him. He may wish to be the ultimate authority in society; he may simply wish others to obey the same laws he does with the same inflexible diligence. His powers tend to be oriented toward combat and compulsion (*i.e.*, Mind Control, high Presence).

SADIST

The Sadist likes to inflict pain. He doesn't necessarily need a basement filled with handmade torture devices; he may simply be a hand-to-hand fighter who continues to beat on his foes long after they are incapable of moving, or a psychological sadist who enjoys playing mind games that cause his foes emotional pain. The Sadist is usually subordinate to a more sophisticated villain, but some master villains indulge in sadism as a hobby during those times when their plans are on cruise control. A Sadist character might have any sort of powers.

SCAMMER/GRIFTER

This villain makes his living by persuading others to give him money or other valuables; he's simply the superpowered version of a confidence man. He usually has Skills that make it easier for him to deal with others (especially Conversation and Persuasion), and might have complementary Powers (Mental Illusion, Telepathy, Mind Control, Shape Shift). Such characters normally don't pose much of a threat to combat-oriented superheroes, but when their abilities are used by a broader-thinking master villain, they can cause the PCs endless trouble with their manipulations.

THIEF

This character uses his superpowers to help him take valuable things away from their owners. Thief supervillains range from sophisticates who use their powers to allow them to go after ever-more-carefully-defended targets, or run-of-the-mill burglars whose powers have simply given them a certain reliability when it comes to burgling houses, knocking over convenience stores, and mugging joggers. A thief super usually has abilities pertaining to sneakiness — Stealth, Invisibility, Clinging, and so forth.

THUG

This villain uses his powers for exactly the same purposes he used his fists and weapons before he gained superhuman abilities. He enforces the rules laid down by the criminal who employs him. Thug characters tend to be combat-oriented; some are formidable fighters, while some are only slightly superhuman thumb-breakers.

TRANSFORMER

This sort of bad guy has powers that allow him to turn things into other things — most commonly, to turn people into creatures they don't want to be. One type of transformer might cause a city's population to become irresponsible and violent. Another might transform victims into gold, or horrible chthonian monsters. Such characters tend to have formidable Transform powers; they are seldom combat-oriented, but may employ superpowered bodyguards (who are often people they have transformed).

RUNNING SUPERVILLAINS IN A CAMPAIGN

When designing, revising, and playing supervillains in a campaign, you should consider the following issues.

MATCHING THEM AGAINST THE HEROES

Supervillains aren't much fun when the heroes have no trouble putting them down, nor are they very entertaining when they casually dispose of the heroes. Some balance is called for.

Take note of how much damage your heroes do with average attacks and with rare, maxed-out attacks. Compare that to the defenses of your villains to get a sense of how many attacks the villains can sustain before being defeated.

Likewise, compare the attacks of the villains against the defenses of your PCs. The villain attacks actually ought to be slightly better against PC defenses than the heroes' attacks are against their defenses, for two reasons:

- The heroes are, in the collective, played by several minds at once, while you have to divide your mind among several villains at the same time. This means the PCs have a higher likelihood of coming up with a clever plan to unbalance a situation in their favor. So, you should compensate, for balance's sake, by making your villains slightly tougher.
- Villains are, on the average, more focused on things like destruction and power than superheroes, who are better balanced (both mentally, and in terms of their overall suite of powers). From the standpoint of genre conception, it's appropriate for them to have slightly stronger attacks than the PCs.

TEAM-FIGHTING VILLAINS

Designing a villain to take on an entire team by himself is an interesting challenge. If you make him immune to the PCs' attacks, he'll win almost every time they meet. If he can wipe out a hero with each punch or blast he makes, combat becomes nothing more than a test to see whether the heroes can wear him down faster than attrition reduces their numbers to zero. On the other hand, if he folds in the face of the heroes' attacks too easily, he's not doing his job in the story. Neither situation is much fun.

What you need to do is find the proper balance for the character. It's best to design a team-fighting villain so a sustained attack by a hero team can eventually wear him down, and so that his attacks tend to knock a hero out after two or perhaps three successful blows (or perhaps one really lucky damage roll).

When designing such a villain, consider the virtues of Damage Reduction. This power allows some damage from most attacks to do STUN to the villain, but makes it much harder for any attack to Stun him or Knock him Out. Coupled with a high STUN total, a high END score, a high Recovery, decent (but not overwhelming) defenses, and perhaps Healing, Damage Reduction allows a

team-fighting supervillain to perform as expected. Likewise, team-fighting villains have an improved chance to stand their own against hero-teams if they have attacks with the *Area Of Effect*, *Autofire*, and *Explosion* Advantages — the better to attack several heroes at once.

VILLAIN TACTICS AND ESCAPE OPTIONS

Supervillain combat tactics also play an important role. If a lone supervillain hits one hero on one Phase, another on the next, another on the third, and so on, the heroes tend to Recover as fast as he can dish out damage. If you want this sort of fight, fine; if you want to give the villain a chance, the bad guy ought to concentrate attacks on one or two foes at a time, only turning to attack new ones when the first ones are down.

Villains are also proficient at having escape options set up in advance — their bases have rocket sleds leading to safety, they carry one-use Teleportation gadgets, and so on. Too-frequent use of these *deus ex machina*-style options tends to frustrate and annoy the players (who hate it when the bad guys always get away), but, judiciously used, they can lead to a superteam developing a grudging respect for a villain's versatility or intelligence.

CHOOSING THE FIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES

Since heroes take the active role in campaigns more often than not, they often determine the circumstances under which they fight more frequently than the villains choose. This tends to mean the heroes catch the villains when they're less able to come to one another's aid. Heroes jump in as a group and typically pick off small units of the enemy team until the situation is unbalanced in their favor.

To keep this from making all your campaign's fights hopelessly tilted toward your heroes, try the following tactics:

Don't Give PCs All Day To Study The Enemy Position. Even if the PCs collectively have tremendous stealth and sensory abilities, they can't be permitted to plot out every square foot of a hostage situation or supervillain base. If they do, their advantage in a combat may be insurmountable, which ruins the dramatic tension of the scene. Ways to keep them from spending all day to draw their diagrams include endangering someone inside the target zone (forcing the heroes to act immediately or watch an innocent perish), and to have the heroes' continued presence in one spot be discovered if they remain too long.

Remember, if the PCs don't have the entire floorplan of the target zone memorized, they also don't know where all the supervillains are. It also helps matters if supervillains are present in their civilian identities — a superhero scanning a base interior won't know who's a super and who's a civilian.

Consider The Virtues of Traps And Missile Reflection. Supervillains could have things set up so anyone not wearing a specific sort of tracer gets blasted by defensive weaponry; the base could be flooded

with a gas all the bad guys routinely receive the antidote to; and Missile Reflection can prove devastating to heroes who suddenly appear and throw their most powerful attacks at the villains.

Villains Can Have Danger Sense, Too. If one or more villains have this Talent and are smart enough to communicate sensations of danger to their fellows without alerting the heroes, the heroes' job becomes much harder.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL VILLAINY

When creating a villain, try to make him three-dimensional — give him a variety of qualities and personality traits, some good, some bad. Very few people are entirely evil, or entirely good, even in the comics. If a villain is so awful the heroes can find no way to sympathize or empathize with him, the heroes are far more likely to find a way to kill him, or let him die. Getting around those pesky Codes Versus Killing can be difficult, but a hero with enough motivation will find a way.

In addition, when a supervillain has some good traits, he also has thought processes that make his criminal career more reasonable to him. This allows him to consider himself to be a decent person, making his outrage at the continued interference by superheroes all the more realistic. It's also more likely that you'll think of interesting scenarios and subplots involving the villain, since you can make him appeal to the heroes as something more than just a combatant.

USING THE HEROES' PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Many supervillains should have some trait that interacts in interesting ways with a hero's Psychological Limitations. Take a look at the accompanying box for some examples.

MAKING THEM PART OF THE HEROES' LIVES

Villains don't have to limit their involvement in a campaign to commencing a villainous plot, being beaten, being arrested or forced to flee, and then returning. There are other options available to you, especially for a well-developed, three-dimensional villain.

A villain not otherwise engaged in standard villainous activities can also be inventing new devices and procedures (sometimes to the detriment, sometimes to the benefit, of humanity), performing (some villains are actors, musicians, and the like), writing, composing, meddling in national affairs in legal ways (villains can resort to lawsuits and media campaigns just like ordinary mortals), and conducting their family and professional lives.

Player characters can be part of those family and professional lives. A PC could be the child, sibling, spouse, in-law, or even parent of a supervillain. A PC's company could be a competitor or strategic ally of a supervillain's corporation.

Over time, supervillains and superheroes can conceivably become more important to one another than their more mundane associates and

VILLAINS AND HEROIC PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

If A Hero Has:

Code Of Honor

Code Of The Hero;
Must Protect Innocents

Code Versus Killing

Dislike of a specific group

Hatred Of Male Chauvinists

Overconfidence

There Might Be A Villain Who Is:

Someone with an identical code, but who is honor-bound to be a villain; someone extremely dishonorable

A despicable villain who uses the Code against the hero as often as he can ("You can capture me or save those Girl Scouts, hero — what's it gonna be?")

A casual killer

A member of that group

A male chauvinist; a submissive, cloying female who encourages male chauvinism; a woman who became a villainess because of damage suffered at the hands of a male chauvinist

Someone who continually mocks the hero, or is better at the hero's skills, or both

family members. Each is truly only great in the presence of the other, after all. As supers age and their closest friends retire, move away, or perish, they may find themselves growing more fond of their remaining longtime adversaries... if adversaries they even remain.

COMING BACK FOR MORE... MOSTLY

Until a supervillain's personal goals are resolved (or become completely impossible to attain), he's unlikely to leave a campaign. He may be driven into exile or thrown into prison, keeping him out of the limelight for months or years at a time, but he'll be back. The recurring villain is, after all, one of the best-known features of the superhero genre (see page 51).

Of course, it can give a campaign's players a sense of accomplishment if they remove a supervillain threat permanently, and a certain proportion of your campaign's villains should end up that way. Being removed permanently doesn't necessarily mean being killed. A villain could lose his powers, achieve his personal goals and retire, move away (for example, to rule a planet all his own, somewhere else in the galaxy), or choose to switch to the good guys' side. Any one of these gives the PCs a feeling of accomplishment, so long as they had something to do with the outcome.

The only time when you should choose to retire a villain permanently without a major change taking place in his psyche is when none of the players appreciate him — when all the players react with personal dismay to his every return appearance. If changes to the villain's goals and tactics don't alter this situation, it's time to put the villain in a box somewhere and leave him there forever, regardless of how fond you may be of him.

NEUTRAL GROUND

An interesting feature of some superhuman settings (but which doesn't work in every campaign) is the existence of a *neutral ground* — a place superheroes and supervillains can go where they aren't expected (or allowed) to fight one another. A small nation ruled by a metahuman, a multidimensional pocket where the laws of magic prevent characters from fighting, or a bar with an eclectic clientele run by someone powerful enough to enforce the peace are all good examples of neutral ground. Besides being a place where heroes and villains can meet in peaceful circumstances, a neutral ground allows superhumans to hear the news (and rumors!), gather information, look for work, and maybe even take classes on subjects of interest to them ("Legal Loopholes: How To Stay Out Of Jail Even When They Caught You Dead To Rights," "Basic Martial Arts For Beginners").

Example: *John decides his campaign needs a neutral ground. Since none of the PCs have long-range Movement Powers or a vehicle, it needs to be right in the heart of Los Angeles, where he's chosen to set his game. He decides it will be a bar, a tavern catering solely to people with superhuman powers, regardless of whether they're heroes or villains. To keep fights from breaking out, he creates a special NPC owner of the bar — a fallen god whose once-vast divine powers, though considerably curtailed, are still more than enough to keep all of the bar's patrons in line. The PCs, their NPC hero friends, and their supervillain enemies can all gather at the bar to exchange insults, have friendly conversations on topics of interest, look for work (there's even a "For Hire" bulletin board on one wall!), play games, and just plain relax.*

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS IN CHAMPIONS



Non-villainous NPCs actually follow the same guidelines as Villains for what makes them interesting and how they should interact with a campaign — with the significant difference that most of them do not have full-time criminal intentions. They, too, should have fully-detailed personalities, personal goals, relationships with one another and with the PCs, and the potential to change over time. What sets NPCs apart from villains is that they tend to have a different (and usually broader) range of motivations available to them. Most have less ambitious personal goals — they simply want to have the allotment of opportunity and reward they think they deserve. Many pursue success in economic arenas; many pursue love and affection; many just want to survive.

NPC TYPES

If at all possible, before the first adventure in a new campaign, you should create a cast of NPCs — not necessarily in full character-sheet form, but in terms of name, appearance, occupation, and likely reaction to superheroes.

Over time, you'll add new NPCs to your cast of characters. Normally, this happens because you've set up an adventure that involves new characters or because, in the course of an adventure, a PC wants to find a type of character who's not already part of the campaign cast. (For instance, "I need to track down an expert in the field of marine biology and run these samples by him.")

The rest of this section lists and describes approximately fifty NPC types who appear frequently in *Champions* campaigns. The NPC types likely to be of most frequent use to you in a standard campaign, and therefore the ones you might want to consider creating first, are marked with an asterisk (*).

Activist. An activist is someone who tries to keep issues he considers important in the news and in the minds of lawmakers. Activists can be part of a campaign in a variety of ways: some might oppose superheroes in general, considering their effect on society to be dangerous; others want to enlist

supers in their activism ("This is Black Swordsman with a word of advice: don't smoke."). A very few, those whose activism extends to violence, might actually end up as the villains of an adventure. Comic book activists tend to be very passionate people and often get in trouble because of their concerns, which also makes them a good choice for romantic interest characters.

Anchorman. Because superheroes appear in the news, and because the news often alerts heroes to the onset of trouble, PCs will see the faces of local news anchors a lot. It doesn't take much effort to personalize those faces, giving them names and mannerisms, and subsequently you can use those characters in other ways in the campaign. News anchors do charity events (that are sometimes the focus of supervillain activities); some struggle for a big news break or acting opportunity that allows them to leave local news; and they can become the targets of stalkers (including superpowered ones).

***Archaeologist.** Archaeologists fill many roles in a campaign. A surprising number of them stumble across ancient artifacts that turn them into supers. An



even greater number of them stumble across ancient menaces that kill them. But the greatest number simply do their jobs, finding, cataloguing, and interpreting information about the physical remains of human civilization, and they can provide expert advice to superheroes. It's helpful for a campaign's PCs to be aware of one scholarly archaeologist, perhaps the idiosyncratic professor at a local university, whom they can turn to about questions of history and civilization.

Artist. Fine artists, commercial illustrators, sculptors, photographers, performance artists, graffiti artists, and more can play interesting roles in your campaign. These creative people don't necessarily have a lot to do, story-wise, with adventures, but game worlds are as full of them as the real world, and they do make interesting romantic interests. In addition, if the heroes find an artist who is capable of doing police-style sketches of suspects and is willing to receive impressions through telepathic contact, they'll have a helpful resource for bringing criminals to justice.

Athlete. A campaign's athletes can range in stature from a member of the local professional sports franchise to an amateur who stays in training for local charity marathons. Mad scientists sometimes kidnap athletes to experiment on (their excellent physical conditioning makes them good choices, since they're far more likely to survive the treatments than the common man or woman); athletes can stumble across game-fixing plots or other criminal enterprises; and, because of their focus and physicality, they make good romantic interests.

Bail Bondsman. When someone is arrested and bail is set for him, if he cannot come up with the required portion of the bail, he may turn to a bail bondsman, who puts up that money (for a fee) and then does everything in his power to make sure the suspect actually stays in town and shows up for his trial (if he skips, the bondsman loses the bail). Bail bondsmen sometimes hire bounty hunters to chase down people who have skipped bail; in a superhero world, they may turn to superheroes to ask for the same help. Supers seldom suffer when they cultivate working relationships with bail bondsmen; the bondsmen may have tips that are useful when anticipating upcoming crimes, and the super may find himself in need of being bailed out.

Bartender. Most appearances by bartenders in fiction tend to follow a certain pattern: the hero enters the bar and asks the bartender a question about something the bartender doesn't want to discuss; the hero resorts to bribery or physical threats and gets his information; the hero leaves. (It's to be suspected the money more than compensates for the physical abuse, else there would be a tremendous turnover in bartenders.) But a bartender character can be a useful regular NPC in a campaign; he does see a lot of traffic through his establishment, hears a lot of drunken confessions and mutterings, and, if he's skilled at his job, mixes a good drink.

Boyfriend/Girlfriend. Though every campaign needs a certain number of characters to be established as romantic partners of prominent PCs and NPCs,

and for others to be available as potential partners, "boyfriend" and "girlfriend" don't actually belong on this list. This is because any character in a campaign who is a romantic partner also needs to belong to one of the other character types (for example, "Businessman/Boyfriend" or "Police Officer/Girlfriend"). If a romantic partner does not belong to some other role, then he or she will mostly sit around waiting to be taken out on a date or being kidnapped so the PCs can perform a rescue. This does not result in an interesting character, and players don't really care about a disinteresting one.

***Burglar/Thief.** This NPC type can range from the very classy cat burglar who shows considerable style with every theft to the drunken, shirtless guy the PCs pick up on routine patrols every Friday night. Recurrent burglar or thief characters have a lot of use in the campaign: they can steal items that turn out to be mystical artifacts and unleash danger upon the world, steal items that local organized crime wants back very badly, stumble across a PC's Secret Identity, or the like. And don't forget the virtues of the retired or reformed burglar/thief: having reluctantly turned to some more honest way of making their living (or having become able to live off the proceeds of their lives of crime), they make good contacts for heroes, often have a helpful working knowledge of the region's organized crime, and can help identify others in their trade through *modus operandi* or clues no one else could correctly interpret.



Businessman. The most common sorts of business-people regularly encountered by PC superheroes are corporate tycoons whose corporate manipulations set storylines into motion. PCs are likely to encounter representatives of companies that manufacture and sell superhero-level equipment, as well as company presidents and officers whom they need to question during investigations.

Celebrity, Local. In addition to the news anchors and athletes described earlier, local celebrities can include radio personalities (popular DJs), humorists and comedians, retired war heroes, businessmen who have a measure of local fame (such as the eccentric business owner who does all his own bad commercials), famous columnists and critics, and so forth. PCs are likely to bump into local celebrities at fundraising events and to save them from stalkers.

Charity Worker. These sorts of people share many of the same story-type advantages as Activists (above), but are not as extreme in their relationships with local government and business. Because they come into contact with people who are at the brink of financial collapse and despair, charity workers are very likely to stumble onto events that point toward adventures that are ready to pop.

Collector. There are as many different types of collectors as there are things to collect — artwork, coins, statuary, stamps, movies, autographs, toys, railroad ties, roleplaying games, commemorative plates, and the like. Some collectors are simply acquisitive completionists, but others may be scholars in their fields of interest, and therefore good contacts for PCs to cultivate. Collectors can also get into trouble — such as when they obtain an item that's dangerous or have a valuable object stolen — which can also bring them into contact with superheroes.

***Congressman.** It's good to develop at least one of the region's senators or representatives; superheroes are likely to encounter this person at one time or another, and the politician is equally likely to seek out the supers for matters relating to national government. Comic book Congressmen can pull strings to help obtain justice for those people it has bypassed, lobby to get major industries set up in their regions, attract the ire of terrorists and assassins, and so on.

***Coroner.** Comic books are full of dead people, and superheroes often need to know how it happened. Cultivating a working relationship with the county coroner is a good idea for PCs. In addition, the discipline is such a macabre one that it's an excellent opportunity to create a very eccentric NPC, though the death-obsessed or death-oblivious kook coroner is becoming something of a cliché.

***Crime Boss.** Every group of superheroes should have at least a peripheral knowledge of how organized crime operates in its area. This means you should give a name, personality, and *modus operandi* to the most significant local crime lords, and possibly to their chief lieutenants, as early as possible in the campaign. Crime bosses tend to operate their syndicates as businesses, meaning they're frustratingly elusive to indict and convict; this gives them staying power in a campaign. (And do remember that in a four-color

superhero world, most crime bosses are keenly aware of what supers can do; they may hire supervillains to protect them, and almost certainly employ technicians to set up security measures to help counter superheroes' special senses and other abilities.) Note also that crime bosses don't have to be adversaries in every story. When they have enemies in common with superheroes, they may find a way to cooperate with the PCs.

***Doctor.** If the superheroes don't have a physician among their members or on staff, it's useful for them to know of a good non-super doctor. Local medics can do more than patch up injured supers and diagnose their mystery ailments: they can alert heroes to unusual medical situations (odd injuries that point to the presence of some sort of monster or alien, diseases that threaten to become epidemics, physiological changes that suggest someone is developing super-abilities). The multidisciplinary physician working at the city's main hospital is a mainstay of comic books, but specialists are also helpful — geneticists, bacteriologists, biologists, botanists, and psychiatrists can also figure prominently in investigations. Any superhero who has specialized medical needs should know a doctor who can meet those needs.

Driver. The professional driver is an occasional guest star in a superhero story. Supers often need to question cab drivers, limo drivers, and chauffeurs about the movements of their clients. A normal-level superhero with a sense of tradition might employ a personal driver for his super-car.

Fire Chief. The head of the city's fire department may play a role in adventures, specifically in situations where a villain is responsible for a series of arson crimes. Fire chiefs can also be good consultants when dealing with supervillains who use flame; they can help determine what accelerants the villains are using, discover the temperatures at which the supers' powers operate, and so on.

Firefighter/EMT. Rank-and-file firefighters are not as useful in a campaign as the fire chief, but, because they're courageous people in a critical occupation, they do make good friends, DNPCs, and romantic interests for PCs. The same is true of emergency medical technicians.

Gambler. A professional gambler offers many of the same benefits as the Burglar/Thief: He may have connections, however tenuous, with organized crime, and operates in a realm that gives him insight into weird events on the horizon. Professional gamblers can also be useful in setting up "sting" operations to trick villains.

Ghost. In a campaign that makes use of the supernatural, it's appropriate to have a ghost or two wandering around. Typically, ghosts fall into one of two categories. The first is a nearly mindless spirit that haunts a place, acting as a signpost to an unsolved crime or unresolved tragedy. The second is a fully developed personality whose death may have been an inconvenience or even a tragedy but didn't serve to slow the character down much. The second type is better suited to humorous campaigns or those with elaborately developed mystic themes; otherwise it strains

harder at the players' willing suspension of disbelief.

Gossip. A character who lives to acquire personal information and then pass it on to others can be either extremely annoying or extremely helpful to the player characters... or both. Gossips have the unsettling habit of revealing information that causes friction in relationships or that causes months of surveillance to be wasted (at the worst possible time, of course). On the other hand, they are great treasure troves of information about people, including local crime figures, politicians, and supervillains.

***Governor.** The leader of state government offers many of the same benefits as the Congressman, above, and you ought to at least know this character's name and primary motivations.

***Inventor.** Naturally, many superheroes are inventors, but there are others who are not supers. Some have an unfortunate habit of creating menaces that escape to endanger the community. Some fabricate gadgets and weaponry for superheroes, or supervillains, or both. Some make discoveries that they then bring to the superheroes as starting-points for new adventures ("My new jumpspace EMR monitor is detecting wave fluctuations that resemble communications, and I think I've been able to decode portions of the alien language... they're coming here...").

Investigator. If the heroes do not have someone with detective skills among their number, they'll find it helpful to have a working relationship with a local private investigator. Even if they do, they are, over the course of a campaign's duration, certain to encounter other investigators: private eyes, insurance investigators, and the like. Investigators also have an unhealthy habit of staggering into a PC's presence mortally wounded, gasping out cryptic clues, and then dying, launching the heroes into a new adventure.

***Lawyer.** Superheroes will eventually meet a lot of lawyers in a campaign. They tend to fall into one of several categories: prosecuting attorneys (members of the district attorney's office who are responsible for making convictions in criminal cases); defense attorneys (whose usual job is to keep criminals captured by the heroes out of jail, but who are sometimes called on to keep superheroes themselves from being convicted); and civil attorneys (who either sue people, or protect a client from being sued). There are also attorneys who are experts in superhero law, international law, salvage law, and possibly even inter-

planetary law (in the right campaign), any of whom the PCs might wish to consult. Occasionally one will find an attorney who has reformed — given up the practice to run a game company, for example.

Martial Arts Master. Many superheroes are martial artists, and some of them can even count themselves as masters, but even they occasionally have to turn to the true masters of their respective arts. NPC martial arts masters tend to be aged (one reason why they are not out fighting supervillains themselves), wise, and experienced (each one's knowledge of the Martial World, and sometimes of mysticism, secret societies, or history's mysteries is unique). Because they are aged, wise, and experienced, they also tend to be quite eccentric characters, and a good opportunity for a GM to do some acting.

***Mayor.** Most *Champions* campaigns are set primarily in an urban area, or give the PCs frequent cause to visit a particular city. The local community's mayor is certain to be affected by super-activities, so you should develop him early. The mayor makes statements about supers to the local press, appears at the same charity functions the PCs do, and takes steps to make the community a safer one even when this inconveniences help supers. The GM can establish the tone of a campaign by deciding how the mayor feels about and normally reacts to supers — a hero-friendly mayor makes life easier for the PCs, a hero-neutral mayor sometimes helps and sometimes hinders them, and a hero-hostile mayor makes things difficult at every step.

Mechanic. If the supers operate super-vehicles and don't want to do all their own maintenance, they'll eventually require the services of a trustworthy mechanic. A mechanic can be an employee of the superhero team or a garage mechanic they regularly turn to. Mechanics make good "personality" NPCs, and the stereotype of the grease monkey who turns out to be a cute young woman exerts an impressive fascination on the minds of some gamers.

Medium. In a comic book world, there are two types of spiritualists: Those who use trickery to pretend to be in contact with the spirit world, and those who actually have powers that let them speak with spirits. Both types are useful in a campaign. Fake spiritualists can implement scams that take people for millions of dollars, and become trusted advisors of businessmen



and politicians. Spiritualists who actually possess powers can be crucial in some superhero adventures, and can initiate adventures by bringing news or prophecies to the heroes.

Military Officer. If the campaign setting includes a local military base, it's useful for you to know the name of its commander. In addition, many campaigns make use of military special forces such as supervillain capture teams or special rescue units, and these personnel can come into regular contact with superheroes.

***Occult/Paranormal Investigator.** Assuming none of the PCs fill this role for a campaign, it's useful for the heroes to encounter someone who spends his life digging at the seamy underside of the occult world. Such characters might be genuine seekers after knowledge and truth, tabloid reporters with an unhealthy habit of stumbling over genuine supernatural events, or skeptics adept at exposing fakers. Any of them can be helpful consultants for a PC team.

***Patriarch.** This character is the leader of a prominent family. Patriarchs may also be businessmen, lawyers, politicians, or whatever, but their principal role in a campaign is as the ultimate authority in the affairs of their family members. They tend to be middle-aged and older, very forceful of personality, and pursuing agendas that are neither evil nor good but are in what they consider the best interests of their families, so it is possible for them to be in vicious conflict with the PCs one minute and be arm-in-arm helpful the next, possibly without any lingering feelings from one situation to the other. In a campaign, it's useful to have one important family to point at, and occasionally to use in meddling with local or regional events in such a way as to affect the player characters. It can also be interesting to have several different supers (heroes, villains, or preferably both) belong to a specific prominent family, especially when they start out the campaign not being aware of one another as supers.

Performer. Into this category falls actors, musicians, and the like, to whatever extent is appropriate for the local setting. (Settings such as Los Angeles, Nashville, and New York City are naturally going to have considerable numbers of performers to draw on.) Performers, like local celebrities, can easily become the target of kidnappers and stalkers; it's also not unknown for a lonely and somewhat deranged supervillain to capture one in an effort to make the performer his consort. Note that you doesn't have to create performers out of whole cloth; it's permissible to use real-world celebrities in cameo appearances in your campaign. This can be a real treat for players who enjoy that sort of thing.

***Police Chief/Captain.** The local police chief determines in large part the state of relations between his department and superheroes. If the police chief is friendly or neutral toward heroes, then official relations will probably be cordial. If he is hostile, then the heroes might still be able to have friendly relations with individual officers, but these relationships will have to remain secret.

Police chiefs tend to fall into one of three categories

in a *Champions* campaign: Reform, Conventional, and Corrupt. A Reform police chief has recently taken the job and is determined to restructure the police force from top to bottom, either because it is outdated (it needs new equipment, new techniques, new attitudes), inefficient (officers get new training and irritating motivational courses), or corrupt (the new chief ferrets out crooked cops and cooperates extensively with the Internal Affairs Division, making him/her very unpopular with the rank and file). A Conventional chief believes his department is operating at an acceptable level of efficiency and honesty (and may be correct). A Corrupt chief may be in the pocket of local organized crime or may have found ways to make the department a profit center, in which case justice is for sale in the local community.

All these characteristics are similarly appropriate for local sheriffs, heads of special police units (like state rangers), and other law enforcement agencies prominent in your campaign.

***Police Investigator.** Player characters will inevitably run into local police investigators on a regular basis; after all, police detectives and superheroes both investigate crimes. There is likely to be a bristly, somewhat competitive atmosphere between police and superheroes (the supers consider the police to be hampered by tradition and foolish laws; the police consider the supers to be amateurs who screw up convictions through their extralegal antics; both attitudes tend to be correct). In the comics, police investigators tend to be smart, idiosyncratic people, making them fun for you to play and making them appropriate for romantic leads, DNPCs, and friends of PCs.

***Police Officer.** Likewise, superheroes frequently encounter uniformed officers (as well as equivalent peace officers such as deputy sheriffs and state troopers). Here, too, we have the cooperative but competitive interaction of the police and supers. However, because cases tend to be turned over to investigators when they are not instantly resolved, PC heroes do not usually establish as strong relationships with uniformed officers as they do with investigators, whom they deal with far more regularly.

The President. If the superhero team is of sufficient prominence that they're involved with matters of national interest on a regular basis, they are likely to be in occasional contact with the President (or, outside the U.S., the principal government representative or leader). Except for the security surrounding him and appropriate difficulty in getting appointments to speak with him, the President functions in a campaign much as the Governor (above) does.

Priest. Into this category falls any religious authority figure, from the kindly old priest to the glassy-eyed cult recruiter. Priestly characters can be either beneficial or harmful (depending on the true natures of their various churches and denominations), weak or powerful (some may actually receive superpowers from godly beings), knowledgeable or deluded (depending on how close a relationship their doctrine has to reality), pro-super or anti-super, and so on. If any of the campaign's PCs have strong religious feelings, you should develop priest-type characters for

them to be acquainted with: the father-confessor, the nun who helped raise them when they were orphans, the urban minister/activist whose attempts to improve the lot of his people get him in trouble again and again, the cultist who is only in it for money and sex, the neopagan who is anxious to instruct the world in the fact that witches are nature-worshippers rather than tools of Satan, and so on.

Professor. In addition to their responsibilities teaching students at the university and justifying their existence with academic publications, professors can be useful sources of information to PCs. Each one is theoretically an expert in one or more fields of human study. For every Knowledge Skill in the book, there are professors at various universities who embody them. It is therefore useful for PCs to cultivate long-lasting relationships with them. For some reason, especially in movies from the 1950s but all throughout the comic book generations, gaunt, absent-minded professors tend to have very attractive children who are less obsessive than their parents and make very good romantic interests.

Reporter. Reporters fill several useful roles in a campaign. They write or broadcast stories that alert PCs to situations. They stumble across clues that further PC investigations. They dig away at heroes' Secret Identities, causing heroes to have to go to extreme measures to protect their private lives. They get killed when curiosity leads them into danger, causing heroes to have to seek justice on their behalf. Because they are relentlessly curious and have little respect for authority figures, they make fun NPCs for a GM to play, and stubborn, dogged romantic interests for PCs to have to cope with.

Shop Owner. Especially in campaigns where heroes protect a specific community, shop owners make good regular contacts, much as Bartenders do. Because they are fixed to a vulnerable address, they can be preyed upon by organized crime or disorganized robbers. Because they have a regular clientele, they can be a rich source of information. Because they regularly deal with goods in a particular field, they can become knowledgeable about those fields, making them as helpful as Professors.

Support Personnel. Some hero teams have civilian operatives who perform secondary tasks for the organization — maintenance of vehicles, routine medical aid, research, and the like. Heroes naturally encounter their support personnel on a frequent basis, making it easy for friendships to begin. It's very helpful for you to establish names and personalities for all support personnel attached to a superteam, if for no other reason than the fact that it increases the verisimilitude of your setting.

Teacher. Unlike the professor, teachers are not often used as information

repositories. Instead, they usually become involved in personal-interest stories, especially those involving DNPCs (who are notoriously troublesome students). Teachers can also notice changes, especially unfortunate ones, in their students, and bring their suspicions to PCs, precipitating investigations.

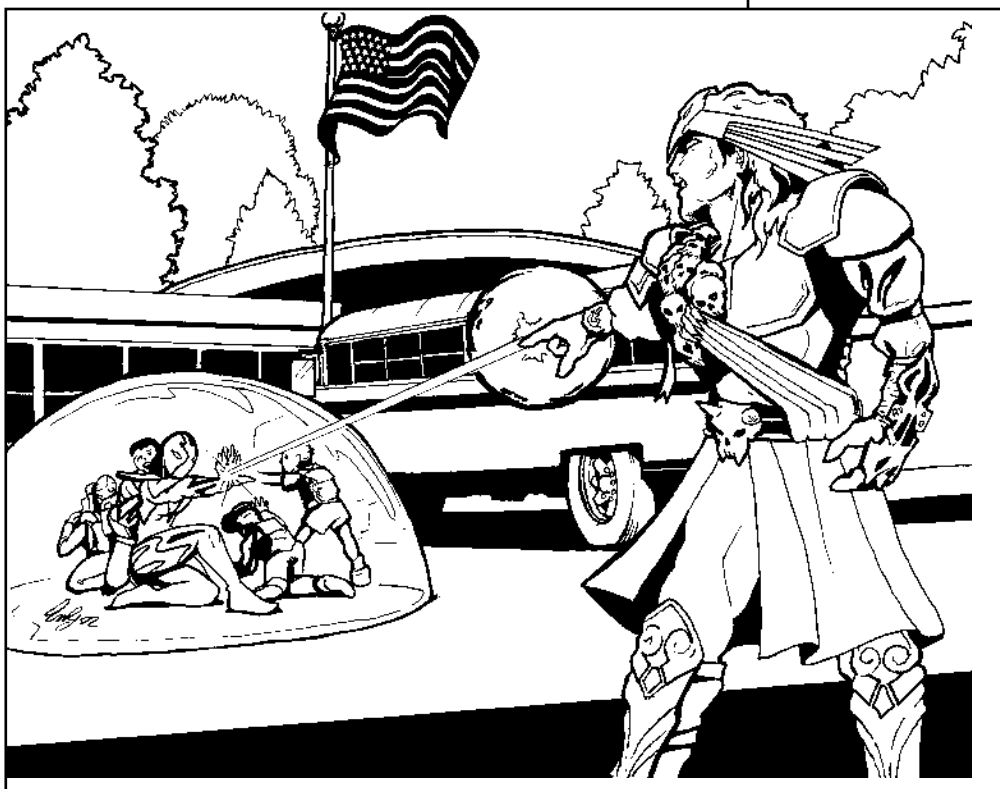
Valet/Butler. Wealthy PCs may have personal servants. Valets and butlers bring a bit of class to a campaign, and you can also use them to inject wry humor and social commentary into your stories. Valets and butlers tend to be physically normal, but have endless patience, dry wits, and considerable conversational skills. On the other hand, some of them have led... interesting... lives before becoming "gentlemen's gentlemen," and come to their positions with a variety of unusual Skills and abilities.

Watchdog. Government agencies and private interest groups sometimes hire individuals to keep an eye on others — and "others" sometimes includes superhero groups. Superhero watchdogs try to make sure superhero groups obey the law, promote the watchdog group's agenda, or act as role models for today's youth. Watchdog characters are invariably pains in the rear end for superheroes, but they do help keep life interesting.

NPC ROLES

Separate from their particular "type," NPCs also have roles within a campaign — roles chiefly reflecting how they relate to player characters. Any of the NPC types above can relate to PCs in any of these ways:

Admirer. An NPC might be a fan of the PC, and exist chiefly to shore up his self-image and remind him just how important he is to the community and the world.





Admirers can be charming indicators of community opinion, or a source of comic relief who constantly inconveniences the hero by efforts to remain close to him.

Adversary/Foil. An NPC can constantly oppose a PC without being a villain. He might perform a valuable story function through his opposition; this is an *Adversary*. He might just be a cheerful troublemaker who pokes and prods at the PC whenever he gets a chance; this is a *Foil*. A hero's girlfriend's brother might be a foil, as might the neighborhood postman, a newspaper reporter, or the team's chief mechanic. A government watchdog could be an adversary, as could the child protective services representative keeping an eye on the PC's home life or a police officer waiting for the hero to get into trouble.

Colleague. An NPC could belong to the same profession as the PC (either as a superhero or in private life), and thus be someone the PC constantly encounters in a professional environment. Colleagues often socialize together, and this creates grapevines by which valuable information can reach the superhero.

DNPC. If the character frequently gets into trouble, and drags a PC in after him, he's a Dependent Non-Player Character.

Follower/Sidekick. This character is a junior partner of the PC, usually very helpful to his career or goals. Occasionally, the actions of the follower or sidekick drag the hero into greater trouble. The PC usually

adopts a paternal attitude toward the follower/sidekick (sometimes to that character's distress) and tries to help the character through life's bumps and obstacles.

Relative. Any character could be related to a PC — including the NPCs types described above and the villain types described earlier. As a GM, you should value each PC's relatives because, typically, PCs can't get rid of them — they're related for life, providing a perpetual weakness you can exploit.

Romantic Interest/Significant Other. And, of course, an NPC could be the PC's romantic partner.

GENERIC NPCS

The following character sheets are for "generic" NPCs you can quickly adapt for use in a game instead of taking the time to create your own. They reflect the way these types of characters are portrayed in comic books, and so may not be appropriate for other types of campaigns.

STREET PUNK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
10	CON	0	11-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
20	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: -9

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
3	<i>Brawling:</i> HA +1d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
	Skill	
2	CK: Own Neighborhood 11-	
2	KS: Hobby 11-	
2	KS: Street Music 11-	
2	PS: Street Gangster 11-	
3	Streetwise 11-	
1	WF: Pistols	
4	Additional skills of GM's choice	

Total Skills & Powers Cost: 19
Total Character Cost: 10

0+ Disadvantages
10 Hunted: Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching [or worse])

Total Disadvantage Points: 10

Typical Equipment

Handgun (RKA 1d6+1, 7 shots)

Knife (HKA ½d6)

POLICEMAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
11	DEX	3	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
12	CON	4	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
24	END	0		
21	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 11

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost Powers **END**
2 *Sharp-Eyed:* +1 PER with Sight Group 0

Perks

2 Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers

Skill

3 Criminology 11-
2 CK: City Of Operation 11-
2 KS: Criminal Law 11-
2 KS: Hobby 11-
1 KS: Another Hobby 8-
2 PS: Policeman 11-
2 WF: Small Arms
6 Choose two Skills from this list: Bureaucrat-ics, Combat Driving, Concealment, Conversation, Deduction, Persuasion, Shadowing, Streetwise

Total Skills & Powers Cost: 24**Total Character Cost: 35****0+ Disadvantages**

5 Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10 Hunted: Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 35**Typical Equipment**

9mm Sidearm (RKA 1d6+1, 10 shots)

Nightstick or Tonfa (HA +2d6)

Handcuffs (see *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 168)

Body armor (Armor [9 PD/ED], Activation Roll 14-)

MASTER VILLAIN'S AGENT (SKILLED)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack 2d6
10	COM	0	11-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
20	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 0

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost Powers **END**
22 *Blaster:* EB 7d6, 32 Charges (+¼);
OAF (-1) [32]
7 *Armored Uniform:* Armor (6 PD/ED);
OIF (-½), Activation Roll 11- (-1) 0
6 *Radio:* Radio Perception/Transmission;
OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group
As Well As Radio Group (-¼) 0

Skills

4 +2 with Blaster
3 Concealment 11-
2 KS: Hobby 11-
2 PS: Agent 11-
3 Stealth 11-
2 WF: Small Arms
9 Pick three of the following Skills: Bribery, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Interrogation, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Shadowing, Tactics, Teamwork

Total Skills & Powers Cost: 60**Total Character Cost: 60****25+ Disadvantages**

5 Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10 Hunted: the organization or villain he works for 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy or Amoral or Self-Centered (Common, Strong)
20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 75

MASTER VILLAIN’S AGENT (COMPETENT)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 [1]
11	DEX	3	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	9		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
24	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 25
Movement:		Running:	6"/12"	
		Swimming:	2"/4"	
Cost	Powers			END
30	Blaster: EB 8d6, 64 Charges (+½); OAF (-1) Martial Arts: Generic			[64]
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
5	Kick	-2	+1	STR + 4d6 Strike
4	Punch	+0	+2	STR + 2d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	STR + v/5; Target Falls
13	Armored Uniform: Armor (9 PD/ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½)			0
6	Radio: Radio Perception/Transmission; OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)			0
	Skills			
4	+2 with Blaster			
3	Concealment 11-			
2	KS: Hobby 11-			
1	KS: Superheroes 8-			
2	PS: Agent 11-			
3	Stealth 11-			
2	TF: 2 points' worth			
2	WF: Small Arms			
12	Pick four of the following Skills: Bribery, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Interrogation, Lockpicking, Security Systems, Shadowing, Tactics, Teamwork			
Total Skills & Powers Cost: 100				
Total Character Cost: 125				
50+	Disadvantages			
5	Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)			
20	Hunted: Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)			
15	Hunted: the organization or villain he works			

for 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)

15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy *or* Amoral
or Self-Centered (Common, Strong)

20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very
Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 125

REPORTER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
10	CON	0	11-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
17	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: -4

Movement: Running: 6”/12”
Swimming: 2”/4”

Cost	Skills	END
2	CK: Campaign City 11-	
2	KS: Current Events 11-	
2	KS: History 11-	
2	KS: Hobby 11-	
2	PS: Reporter 11-	
3	Streetwise 12-	

Total Skills & Powers Cost: 13
Total Character Cost: 9

25+ Disadvantages

5 Hunted: rival media organization 8- (As
Pow, NCI, Watching)

Total Disadvantage Points: 30

Typical Equipment

Job-related equipment (camera, notepad and
pencil, and so on)
Car

FINAL ADVICE



No one ingredient described in this book can make a *Champions* campaign good, nor will an average or below-average expression of any of the ingredients discussed in this chapter necessarily make a campaign bad. What's important is that you represent each of them as well as you are capable. It's the way they interact with the PCs over time that shapes the campaign and makes it what it eventually becomes.

One last ingredient shapes the quality of the campaign, and that is the degree to which you listen to your players. This means not only asking them how they liked or disliked individual characters or other campaign details, but also listening during normal conversation, post-game chats, and mid-game meals.

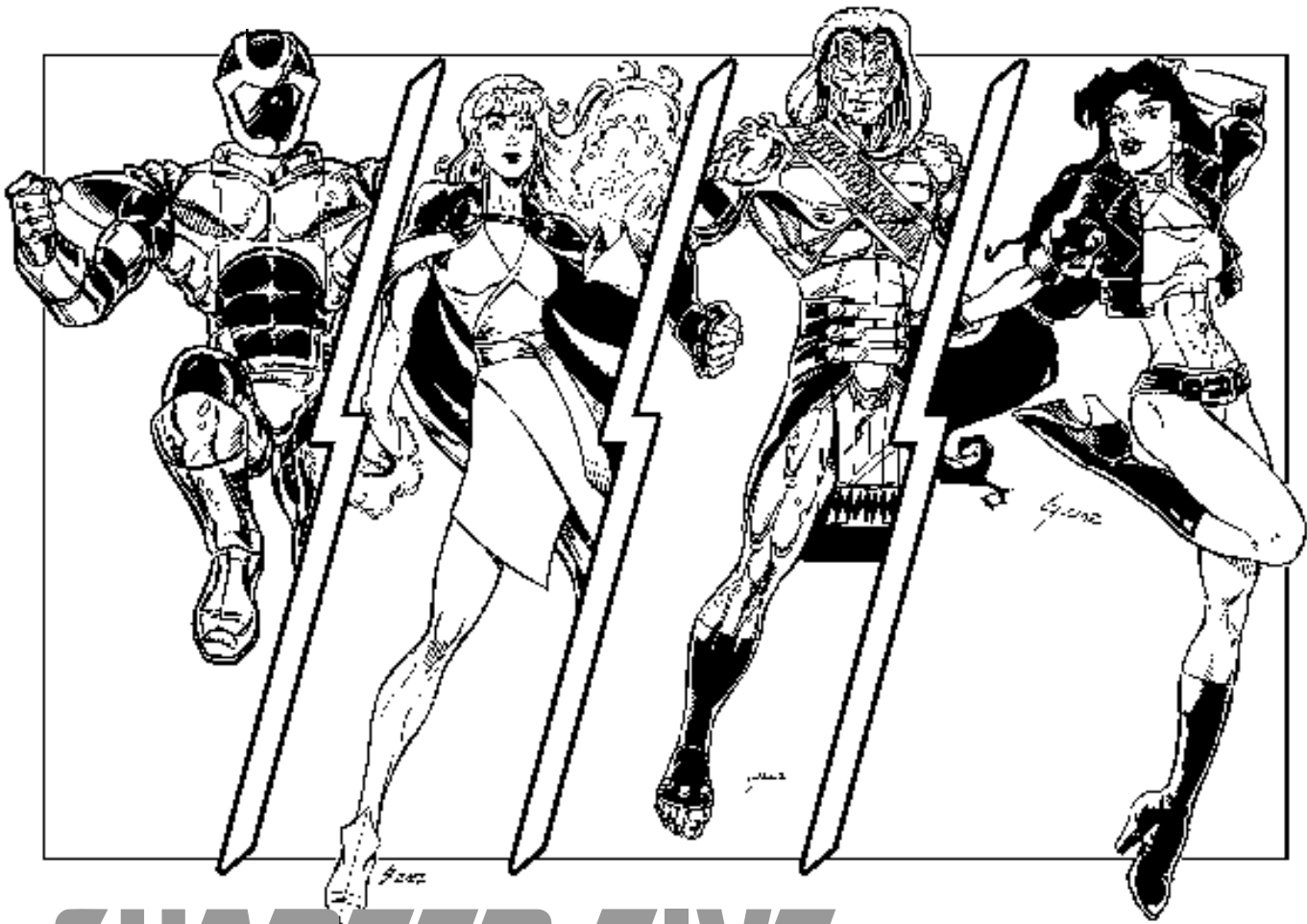
A player may make a mild comment suggesting he is dissatisfied with something happening in the campaign. The mildness of the player's voice may not have any bearing on the player's real emotions on this matter; he may feel very strongly about the matter, with shyness or common courtesy preventing the statement from being a stronger one. Take note of commentary, no matter how mildly offered, especially when the same comments come up time after time.

Players may discuss their impressions of what's happening in a campaign and, in their guesses, come up with better ideas than the ones you've been implementing. Don't be shy about using those ideas. The player in question will generally be pleased that he "guessed right" about what was going on — and you'll look like a great story planner.

Players asking idle questions will unknowingly remind you that you've forgotten to tie up a loose end from a previous adventure, that you haven't addressed a mystery the PCs should have been solved by now, or that you've made a mistake in character or campaign-history details. *Champions* campaigns are long on details — you need to rely on your players' memories as much as you do on your own.

If you do listen to your players, and execute all the campaign's other elements to the best of your ability, you'll have a campaign that is likely to grow, adding depth and detail, and last for as long as you wish it to.





CHAPTER FIVE: THE CHAMPIONS

To get you started, and give you some ideas and sample characters you can use, this chapter details one of the premier superteams of the Champions Universe — the Cham-

pions themselves — and some of their enemies. You can find out more about the world where the Champions live and battle injustice in the *Champions Universe* setting book.

THE CHAMPIONS



Membership: Defender, Ironclad, Nighthawk, Sapphire, Witchcraft.

Background/History: The Champions began as a gleam in the eye of a wealthy and talented young man named James Harmon IV. Inspired to fight crime and villainy by the destruction of Detroit, James used his intellect to design and build a powerful suit of battle armor. Christening himself Defender, he enjoyed some success as a superhero in his hometown, New York City. After being defeated by a skilled team of VIPER supervillains, Defender realized he needed both a fresh start and some teammates of his own.

Since New York already had several superteams, James moved to Millennium City. Though full of superhuman activity, the “City of the Future” didn’t yet have a superteam of its own, and James decided it was time for that state of affairs to change. With the blessing of the city fathers, he called a press conference to announce his arrival in Millennium City and put out the word — he was looking for a group of like-minded individuals willing to band together to protect the city from Mechanon, VIPER, and anything else that might threaten its safety and security.

It didn’t take long to get a response. Almost before the press conference had ended, he got a call from Sapphire’s agent, asking if she could try out for the team. To this day Defender isn’t entirely sure whether she got involved partly as a publicity stunt, but neither he nor any of the other Champions can deny her passion for helping others, or her dedication to duty. After talking with her, Defender made her the first member.

After rejecting a few other superheroes whose attitudes, powers, or personal circumstances didn’t suit the team he had in mind, Defender walked into his office one evening to find Nighthawk sitting there waiting for him. Like Defender, Nighthawk had discovered there were criminals he couldn’t handle on his own. Any man who could get past his security systems interested Defender, and it didn’t take long for him to discover that Nighthawk, though somewhat more intense than most crimefighters, would make a valuable teammate. Now they were three, and the newly-allied heroes, after some discussion, chose to name themselves “the Champions.”

Notable victories against VIPER and Holocaust brought the Champions favorable attention, but it was a different sort of threat — a crashing starship — that brought them their fourth member. When they got a report of an out-of-control space vessel heading toward the city, they joined up with some other heroes to divert the craft. It was flying too fast for them to stop, so they did the only thing they could: they knocked it off-course and right into

Lake St. Clair. The impact destroyed the ship, and they feared the pilot was dead... until Ironclad waded ashore. Grateful for their help, Ironclad became an informal ally of the heroes of Millennium City for several weeks, but then accepted Defender’s invitation to join the Champions.

An almost-deadly encounter with the minions of Takofanes the Undying Lord left Defender and his teammates painfully aware they lacked any sort of mystic expertise. As luck — or perhaps fate? — would have it, Witchcraft showed up at their headquarters the next week. After several years of fighting crime informally, Witchcraft had decided it was time to dedicate herself to the struggle against evil full-time. She was a perfect fit, both temperamentally and powers-wise, and the other four didn’t hesitate to vote her in.

At that point, the group’s membership stabilized. The Champions have remained a team of five for some time now, earning world-wide accolades for their many triumphs over threats to both Millennium City and the world.

Group Relations: For the most part, the Champions get along well. Each of them considers the other members his friends (at least on some level), not just “workmates,” and it shows in their concern for one another, the way they socialize together during their “off hours,” and so forth.

All of the Champions would agree it’s Defender who does the most to keep the group together and content. Though their opinions and methods may differ, though they may have different lifestyles or come from very different places, they all have a deep and abiding respect for the man who brought the team together. Something about Defender’s manner and approach to superheroing just seems to inspire loyalty and camaraderie. Even Nighthawk, by far the most standoffish and brooding member of the team, and an unspoken rival of Defender’s when it comes to matters technological, thinks well of the team’s leader.

And it doesn’t hurt that both Sapphire and Witchcraft seem to find Defender attractive. Neither of them has acted on her feelings yet, and so the situation hasn’t really put any stress on their friendship, but only time will tell if that remains the case. Defender, meanwhile, remains mostly oblivious to the whole state of affairs. For now.

The Champions govern themselves with a charter specifying the obligations, responsibilities, and benefits of belonging to the team, and setting forth important procedures (like standards for new members). Routine administrative matters, such as scheduling, are left to Defender and/or SOCRATES;

more serious matters are subject to group vote, with majority rule applying in all cases.

Tactics: The Champions have developed a wide array of battlefield tactics for use against their foes, and they practice constantly to refine their moves, develop new stratagems, and find ways to counteract supervillains' powers. Typically Defender, Ironclad, and Sapphire are the frontline combatants, with Nighthawk and Witchcraft acting as backup and support. That can vary depending on the nature of the threat; Witchcraft often takes point against mystic foes, for example.

Campaign Use: The Champions are one of the most prominent superteams in the Champions Universe, but you should adapt them to suit your campaign if necessary. If you don't want to have your PCs share the limelight, get rid of the Champions altogether and let the PCs be the Champions instead. If you prefer to have a different team in Millennium City, move the Champions to New York, Los Angeles, or some other major city.

DEFENDER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15+25*†	STR	17	12- (17-)	Lift 200 kg (6,400 kg); 3d6 (8d6) [1(4)]
15+10*†	DEX	30	12- (14-)	OCV: 5(8)/DCV: 5(8)
15+15*†	CON	25	12- (15-)	
12	BODY	4	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
14	COM	2	12-	
5	PD	2		Total: 20 PD (15 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 20 ED (15 rED)
3+2*	SPD	18		Phases: 4, 8, 12 (3, 5, 8, 10, 12)
8	REC	4		
30	END	0		
35	STUN	7		
Total Characteristic Cost: 141				

*: OIF (Powered Armor; -½)

†: No Figured Characteristics (-½)

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	8"/16"
	Flight:	20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
20	<i>Power Pack:</i> Endurance Reserve (150 END, 15 REC); OIF (-½)	0
40	<i>Weapons Array:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OIF (Powered Armor; -½)	
4u	1) <i>Electric Blast:</i> EB 12d6; OIF (-½)	6
4u	2) <i>Pulse-Blast:</i> EB 8d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½); OIF (-½)	6
1u	3) <i>Overload Blast:</i> RKA 3d6; OIF (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½), Activation Roll 14-, Burnout (-¼)	16
4u	4) <i>Focused EMP Pulse:</i> Dispel 16d6, any Electricity power one at a time (+¼); OIF (-½)	6
3u	5) <i>Electro-Bolos:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF; OIF (-½), 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]

3	<i>Searchlight:</i> Sight Group Images, 1" radius; OIF (Searchlight Generator; -½), Only To Create Light (-1), No Range (-½)	1
30	<i>Powered Armor:</i> Armor (15 PD/15 ED); OIF (-½)	0
27	<i>Boot-Jets:</i> Flight 20"; OIF (-½)	4
6	<i>Communications Suite:</i> HRRP; OIF (-½), Flashed As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
3	<i>Heat Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

2	Contact: famous scientist (GM's choice)	11-
10	Money: Wealthy	

Skills

6	+2 with Weapons Array	
5	+1 Hand-To-Hand	
6	+2 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)	
2	CK: Millennium City	11-
1	CK: Washington, D.C.	8-
2	KS: Superhuman World	11-
3	Mechanics	13-
2	PS: Play Chess	11-
2	SS: Chemistry	11-
3	SS: Physics	13-
3	Systems Operation	13-
3	Teamwork	12- (14-)
1	TF: V-Jet	

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 209

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

10	DNPC: Wendy Brooks (the Champions's housekeeper) 8- (Normal)	
20	Hunted: Mechanon 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)	
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (More Pow, NCI, Capture)	
10	Hunted: Lazer 8- (As Pow, Capture)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Fearlessly Heroic; Risks His Life Even In Obviously Lethal Situations (Very Common, Strong)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Must Live Up To Family Reputation For Achievement (Uncommon, Strong)	
15	Reputation: do-gooder superhero who'll help anyone, 14-	
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (James Harmon IV) (Frequently, Major)	
10	Social Limitation: Famous (Frequently, Minor)	

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: James Harmon IV, scion of the wealthy Harmon family of New York City, grew up surrounded by the portraits and memoirs of his famous ancestors: the first James Harmon, who explored the wilds of Africa and began the family fortune in the mid-nineteenth century; his son James II, a fearless member of Eliot Ness's "Untouchables" during Prohibition, and a crime-fighter on his own later into the 1930s; and James III, his father, the World War II Ranger who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor and later quintupled the family fortune by turning Harmon Industries into a top-notch defense contractor. His father made it quite clear he expected James to establish a similar record of accomplishment — "to give back to others of what you've so richly received — intelligence, money, and strength."

But James didn't feel very heroic. All he really liked to do was putter around with electronics and computers. He'd built his first computer when he was 13, and he thought for a while he could make the world a better place, and satisfy his father, with some sort of astounding technological breakthrough.

Then, when he was 18, he watched in horror as a battle between superhumans destroyed the city of Detroit. Something about that event awakened in him fires of bravery and determination he'd never known he possessed. There were people like Destroyer and his allies in the world, and someone had to fight them. *That* was how to be a hero today — you had to stand up to the forces of evil threatening the world.

And the best way for him to do that, he figured, was to put his technological skills to work. Inspired by other heroes, he began building a suit of powered armor equipped with the best systems his genius could design and his father's money could pay for. It took several years, but he finally finished it. Christening himself Defender, he began a one-man battle against the supervillains of New York, scoring several notable victories. But he suffered one terrible defeat, at the hands of a group of VIPER villains, that badly shook his confidence.

Deciding he needed a change, and some help, James packed up his armor and moved to Millennium City, already a hotbed of superhuman activity. Since the city as yet lacked a superteam of its own, and James had learned from harsh experience he couldn't fight all the villains by himself, he put out the word he was looking to form a team of heroes to protect the city, and the world. A few weeks later, his new team, the Champions, was founded, and he has led it ever since.

Personality/Motivation: James Harmon IV — or Defender, as he's better known to the world at large — is the living, breathing embodiment of the word "hero." He gives of himself unstintingly, taking on any mission to combat evil or save the helpless. He's absolutely fearless, caring nothing for the dangerousness of a situation if only he can do something helpful.

Although Nighthawk sometimes describes him as "naive," in truth Defender knows well

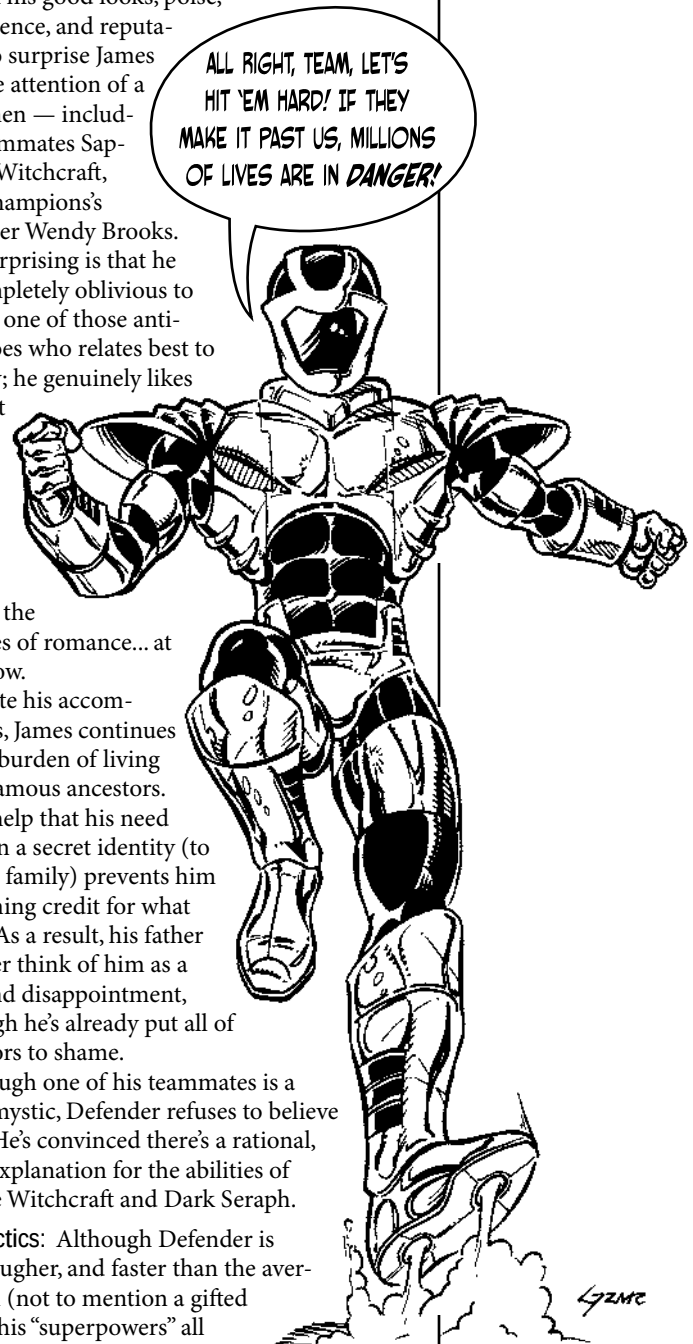
what evils the world holds, and because of that he takes his role as a superhero, and as leader of the Champions, very seriously. He considers himself a role model and conducts himself accordingly. His attitude and achievements have inspired respect and admiration among millions of people (even Nighthawk), and he takes advantage of that to lead charity drives and help other causes... when he's not saving the world from alien invaders or Mechanon.

Given his good looks, poise, self-confidence, and reputation, it's no surprise James attracts the attention of a lot of women — including his teammates Sapphire and Witchcraft, and the Champions's housekeeper Wendy Brooks. What is surprising is that he seems completely oblivious to it. He's not one of those anti-social heroes who relates best to machinery; he genuinely likes people. But he's so wrapped up in his mission that he overlooks things like the possibilities of romance... at least for now.

Despite his accomplishments, James continues to feel the burden of living up to his famous ancestors. It doesn't help that his need to maintain a secret identity (to protect his family) prevents him from claiming credit for what he's done. As a result, his father and mother think of him as a playboy and disappointment, even though he's already put all of his ancestors to shame.

Although one of his teammates is a powerful mystic, Defender refuses to believe in magic. He's convinced there's a rational, scientific explanation for the abilities of people like Witchcraft and Dark Seraph.

Powers/Tactics: Although Defender is smarter, tougher, and faster than the average person (not to mention a gifted inventor), his "superpowers" all come from his suit of powered battlearmor. A marvel of modern technology, it provides far more than just protection. His weapon array, including several different types of electric blasters, allows him to dish out more damage than your average platoon, and his boot-jets give him air combat capability with a high degree of maneuverability. James is constantly tinkering with the suit, finding ways to improve its performance or adapt it for specific situations.



In battle, Defender usually prefers his Electrobolos, which can restrain many opponents without harming them. If they don't work, his Electric Blast is his first option for single foes, or his Pulse-Blast for groups — unless his opponent has electrical powers, in which case he'll try his EMP Pulse. Only in the most desperate situations does he use his Overload Blast; he has a deep respect for all life (even that of supervillains), and risks his full power only when it's absolutely necessary.

Appearance: Defender's powered armor has a black framework, golden helmet, gauntlets, and boots, and blue breastplate, belt/trunks, and thigh- and armbands. Out of his armor, James Harmon is a tall, dark-haired man who looks like he's in his early 30s, with a sort of casual handsomeness many women find irresistible. He favors "dressy casual" clothes.

IRONCLAD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 [6]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
30	CON	40	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
12	COM	1	11-	
25	PD	13		Total: 25 PD (20 rPD)
28	ED	22		Total: 28 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	4		
60	END	0		
65	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 217

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Gladiator's Eye:</i> Find Weakness 12- with Punch	0
20	<i>Ironclad Perseid Physiognomy:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/20 ED)	0
9	<i>Iron Body:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: Low Pressure/Vacuum, High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat)	0
5	<i>Iron Skin:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-5) for Resistant Defenses	0
5	<i>Perseid Eyes:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points)	0
14	<i>Iron Body:</i> Knockback Resistance -7"	0
8	<i>Super-Strong Legs:</i> Leaping +8" (20" forward, 10" upward)	1
6	<i>Bracer Communicator:</i> Radio Perception/Transmission; OIF (-½), Flashed As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0

Skills

20	+4 Hand-To-Hand
3	Climbing 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-

1	AK: Malva 8-
2	AK: Dorvala (Phi Cassiopeia IV) 11-
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
1	KS: Superhuman World 8-
2	Language: English (fluent conversation; Perseid is native)
2	Language: Malvan (fluent conversation)
2	Navigation (Space) 12-
1	PS: Etch-Sculpting 8-
1	PS: Perseid Soldier 8-
2	PS: Superhuman Gladiator 11-
1	Tactics 8-
3	Teamwork 13-
3	TF: Science Fiction And Space Vehicles, V-Jet
2	WF: Perseid Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 133

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

20	Hunted: Firewing 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
25	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Physical Limitation: Weighs 2,000 Kilograms (All The Time, Greatly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Knows Little Of Earth Culture (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
20	Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Strong)
10	Reputation: destructive and dangerous, 11-
15	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Ironclad, alien superhero) (Frequently, Major)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Magnetic Attacks (Uncommon)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Far from Earth, orbiting the star Phi Cassiopeia, is the world Dorvala. Similar to Earth in many ways, it is the homeworld of the Dorvalan, or Perseid, Empire, a government encompassing several star systems. The Dorvalans, though not possessing powerful faster-than-light drives, have by the Earth year 2000 AD developed primitive FTL capability — enough to settle nearby systems and begin interacting with the greater galaxy.

One of the prides of the Dorvalan people is their military, an institution with centuries of honorable traditions and accomplishments to its credit. Inspired by love of his people and his world, a young Dorvalan named Drogen Lar joined up. He underwent the basic training given to all military personnel, with an eye to becoming one of the feared Dorvalan Space Marines. But he soon found himself assigned to such glamorous postings as the quartermaster's office and the machine shop.

With his natural intelligence, he soon worked his way up to a slightly better position as a lab assistant at one of the military's starship engineering yards, where he helped a group of scientists trying to develop a new alloy for starship hulls. One day, while he was adjusting some smelting equipment, it inexplicably exploded, showering his body with molten experimental alloy. But something even

more unusual happened — instead of burning him to death, the alloy melded with his cellular structure, literally transforming him into man of living metal!

While he was recovering from the incident in a military hospital, Lar received a visit from a group of admirals. They explained to him that his transformation hadn't exactly been an accident. His physical profile showed that his cells might react as they did to the experimental metal, so the admirals arranged for him to get the lab job and then suffer the "accident" in the hopes of creating a Dorvalan super-soldier. They expected him to be grateful and get right back to work.

Instead, Lar was furious. He expressed disgust for what they'd done and how they'd done it. Unwilling to continue to serve leaders so callous as they, he stormed out of the hospital and deserted. Stealing a ship, he headed for a strange world called Malva, where he'd heard that super-powerful beings were pitted against each other in gladiatorial contests for rich rewards.

When he finally arrived at Malva some years later, he learned the rumors were true. His great strength and resilience made him one of the most powerful gladiators, but by no means *the* most powerful; for the first time since his transformation, he found himself challenged, sometimes even bested. Among the greatest of his rivals in the arena were two other beings of great power, a Malvan named Ariax Thone, and a being from the far side of the galaxy who called himself Tren Tarrec Dazeur.

As time went on, the duels in the arena became bloodier and bloodier, all to satisfy the whims of the Malvans and their Phazor, or High King. Lar soon became disgusted with it all, the moreso because he came to despise his rivals — Thone pretended to be honorable, but found subtle methods to cheat his way to victory when necessary, and Dazeur was arrogant and condescending, lord- ing over all whom he defeated. But Lar was trapped; the Phazor would not let any of his gladiators depart Malva.

At long last, an opportunity to escape arose, and he took it. Stealing a small starship, he made his way off Malva — only to find that his understanding of the Malvan tongue was not enough for him to use their advanced navigational equipment properly. Flying out of control across the galaxy, he chanced to crash-land on a primitive blue world its

inhabitants called Earth.

Lar's approach did not go unnoticed. His ship was detected shortly after it entered Earth's solar system. Although no superhumans were able to stop him from crashing into Lake St. Clair not far from Millennium City, film of him wading ashore was widely broadcast, and newsmen's frequent comment that he looked like "an ironclad cutting through the waves" soon earned him his *nom de guerre*. Before long, he was fighting crime alongside the heroes who'd tried to stop his crash. He found this new pursuit not only exciting, but morally beneficial (unlike gladiatorial fighting). Seeking a permanent group of friends and teammates to work and live with, he responded to Defender's invitation and joined his new team, the Champions.

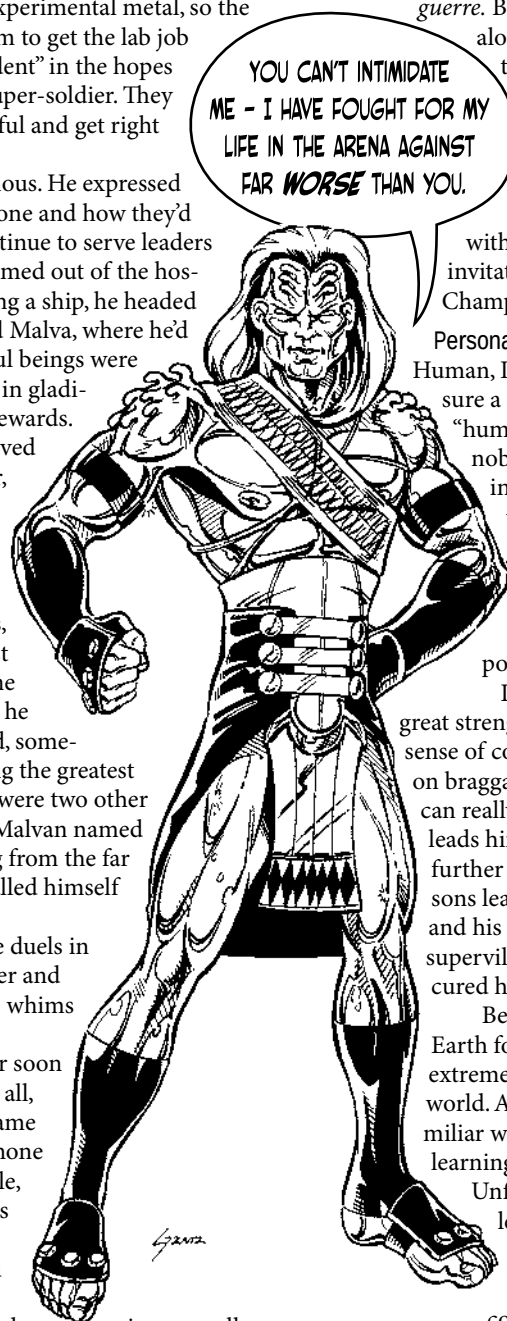
Personality/Motivation: Although not Human, Ironclad possesses in large measure a strong dose of what's called "humanity." He is kindhearted and noble, always sympathetic to those in need or who require the assistance of one such as himself. When not fighting alongside his teammates, he often uses his awesome strength to help build clinics and shelters for the poor.

Like many superhumans with great strength and resilience, Ironclad has a sense of confidence sometimes bordering on braggadocio. He doesn't think anything can really hurt him, and that sometimes leads him to stick his neck out a little further than he should. Even hard lessons learned at the hands of Mechanon and his old nemesis Thone (now the supervillain Firewing on Earth) have not cured him of this tendency.

Believing himself stranded on Earth for the rest of his life, Ironclad is extremely curious about his new homeworld. Although he remains largely unfamiliar with Earth culture, he is slowly learning about Humans and their ways. Unfortunately, all too much of his learning comes from television.

Powers/Tactics: Ironclad is a Dorvalan, or "Perseid" in common Human parlance. He comes from the fourth planet orbiting Phi Cassiopeia, a star 200,000 times brighter than Sol. Perseids are far more resistant to energy and radiation than Humans, and have a special ocular membrane which protects their eyes from bright light.

In addition to his natural gifts, Ironclad possesses great powers as a result of the "accident" that melded his flesh with an unusual experimental alloy. Strong enough to lift a hundred tons, and able to resist most forms of attack without suffer-



ing harm, he is a classic “brick.” Like most bricks he excels at hand-to-hand combat, but he has a few additional skills, like the ability to pilot spacecraft, that most superhumans lack.

Unfortunately, having a quasi-metallic body also causes him some problems. First, it renders him unusually vulnerable to attacks based on magnetic force — a weakness Mechanon, among others, has exploited. Second, it makes him unusually heavy. He weighs 2,000 kilograms, which makes it difficult or impossible for him to go onto the upper floors of buildings, ride in normal vehicles, or even walk down the street without leaving “footprints” in asphalt and concrete. Not for nothing does he have a reputation as destructive.

In combat, Ironclad is a little cannier than most bricks, thanks to his years in the Malvan arena. He often Holds his Action, allowing his opponent to attack first (maybe several times) so he can assess their weaknesses before he strikes. When he does hit, he hits hard and accurately, though he often Pulls his Punch until he knows an opponent can tolerate a full-strength blow.

In his spare time, Ironclad enjoys watching television and movies, attending cultural events, and otherwise learning about Earth and her peoples. He also indulges in a Perseid artform called “etch-sculpting,” in which the artist uses his hands to mold, and etch designs in, various soft materials. For Ironclad, “soft” materials include things like granite and steel, resulting in some unusual pieces of art (often highly sought after by collectors; he sometimes auctions them for charity).

Appearance: Standing nearly seven feet tall and with a build to match, Ironclad would dominate nearly any situation even if he weren't obviously (a) from another planet and (b) made of metal. His metallic body preserves his Perseid features, including the small, symmetrical rows and knobs on top of his head and shoulders. He wears the typical garb of ancient Perseid wrestlers, a kilt-like garment with a sort of bandolier over his right shoulder, both colored red with gold trim. He also wears matching red bracers and sandal-like boots.



Mutant Ice Scream!?

‘Those jerks from the IHA tried to shoot me! I don’t care what they tell you, the Institute is **NOT** just a bunch of lobbyists — they want to kill all those mutants, maybe all us superhumans. I don’t know why they’re after me. I’m not a mutant. I got my powers eating ice cream made with milk from genetically-altered cows. Maybe they should go shoot the cows or something.’

— Icicle on the Institute for Human Advancement

NIGHTHAWK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2]
25	DEX	45	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
28	PRE	18	15-	PRE Attack: 5½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	4		Total: 18 PD (10 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 16 ED (10 rED)
6	SPD	25		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
35	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 163

Movement:	Running:	9”/18”
	Swinging:	15”/30”
	Leaping:	7”/14”

Cost	Powers	END
	<i>Martial Arts: Kung Fu</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	Block +2 +2 Block, Abort	
4	Dodge — +5 Dodge all attacks, Abort	
4	Knife Hand -2 +0 1d6+1 HKA (2½d6 with STR)	
4	Punch/Kick +0 +2 10d6 Strike	
3	Throw +0 +1 8d6 +vel/5, Target Falls	
4	Tien-hsueh Strike -1 +1 4d6 NND (1)	
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)	
6	Left Bracer/Mask Radio: HRRP; OIF (-½), Flashed As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
10	Right Bracer (Linegun): Swinging 15”; OIF (-½)	1
20	Combat Vest: Armor (10 PD/10 ED); OIF (-½)	0
3	Mask Lenses: Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)	0
20	Utility Belt: Multipower, 30-point reserve; OIF (-½)	
1u	1) Billy Club I: HA +2d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
1u	2) Billy Club II: EB 6d6; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼)	[1rc]
1u	3) Mini-Camera: Eidetic Memory; OAF (-1), Visual Images Only (-½)	0
1u	4) Mini-Recorder: Eidetic Memory; OAF (-1), Sound Only (-½)	0
1u	5) Smoke Pellets: Darkness to Sight Group 2” radius; OAF (-1), 8 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by winds or rain; -0), Range Based On STR (-¼), Limited Effect (Normal Sight only; -¼)	[8cc]
1u	6) Flash Pellets: Sight Group Flash 6d6; OAF (-1), 6 Charges (-¾), Range Based On STR (-¼)	[6]
1u	7) Thermite Pellets: RKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Area Of Effect (One Hex;	

	+½); OAF (-1), 6 Charges (-¾), Range Based On STR (-¼)	[6]
1u	8) <i>Sleep Gas Pellets</i> : EB 3d6, NND (defense is LS: Self-Contained Breathing; +1); OAF (-1), 6 Charges (-¾), Range Based On STR (-¼)	[6]
1u	9) <i>Throwing Blades</i> : HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 w/ STR), Ranged (+½); OAF (-1), 6 Recoverable Charges (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼)	[6rc]
1u	10) <i>Weakness Darts</i> : Drain STR 2d6, Ranged (+½); OAF Fragile (poisoned darts, poison is easily washed off or spoiled; -1¼), Must Target Non-Armored Hit Locations (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
1u	11) <i>Rebreather</i> : Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater); OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour; -0)	[1cc]
1u	12) <i>Monocular</i> : +6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; OAF (-1)	0
6	<i>Athletic</i> : Running +3" (9" total)	2
3	<i>Athletic</i> : Leaping +3" (7" forward, 4" upward)	1

Perks

3	Money: Well Off
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Skills

10	+1 Overall
3	Acrobatics 14-
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Climbing 14-
3	Computer Programming 14-
3	Contortionist 14-
3	Criminology 14-
3	Demolitions 14-
3	Electronics 14-
3	Interrogation 15-
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
2	KS: Espionage World 11-
1	KS: Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 8-
2	KS: Millennium City Underworld 11-
2	KS: Superhuman World 11-
3	Lockpicking 14-
3	Security Systems 14-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 15-
3	Systems Operation 14-
3	Teamwork 14-
1	TF: V-Jet

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 187**Total Cost: 350****200+ Disadvantages**

10	DNPC: Julie Morgan (crime reporter, girlfriend) 8- (Normal; Useful Noncombat Position; Unaware of character's Social Limitation: Secret Identity)
5	Distinctive Features: scars on face (Easily Concealed; Noticed and Recognizable)
15	Enraged: when takes BODY damage in combat (Common), go 8-, recover 11-

15	Hunted: organized crime boss of the week 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Hunted: Mechassassin 11- (As Pow, Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Strong)
20	Psychological Limitation: Obsessed With Crimefighting (Very Common, Strong)
10	Reputation: reckless vigilante, 11-
5	Rivalry: Professional (with Defender)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Mark Whitaker) (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Some men are born to heroism. Others have heroism thrust upon them.

Mark Whitaker was a college student who seemed to have it all. Handsome, athletic, and popular, he was also academically gifted; even while he was an undergraduate, his projects in computer science attracted attention from both scientists and major corporations. His future seemed as bright as could be.

But fate, for better or worse, intervened. One day while he was heading into the computer sciences building, VIPER attacked, intending to steal some valuable electronic components the department had recently received. Unwilling to stand by and do nothing, Mark charged into the fray, taking down two VIPER agents before being caught in the explosion of a grenade and knocked unconscious.

He woke up in the hospital, his face heavily bandaged. He soon learned he'd foiled part of the robbery, but the VIPER agents had gotten away with most of what they came for, and the police had no idea how to find them or solve the crime. And the grenade explosion had badly scarred his face — not enough to render him hideously ugly, but certainly enough to mar his once-handsome features forever.

As he lay in his hospital bed convalescing, Mark's mind seethed with anger. He wasn't so upset about his injuries as he was about the injustice of the whole situation. What kind of society did he live in where thugs like VIPER could steal peoples' work and get away scot-free? It wasn't right.

By the time he was released from his doctors' care, Mark was a changed man. Gone was the happy-go-lucky academic star, replaced by a man driven to fight injustice and evil. Dropping out of school, living on money from a few inventions he'd already patented, Mark set out to right the wrongs of the world. He trained himself relentlessly in crimefighting disciplines ranging from criminalistics to martial arts to infiltration, taking time off only to design special devices to help him accomplish his mission. Within two years, there was a new crimefighter on the street who called himself Nighthawk. A shadow in silver and black, he swooped down upon criminals and beat them senseless, soon earning a reputation for his intensity... and brutality.

But he learned there were threats he couldn't handle alone. He could handle street scum, but all the training in the world wasn't enough to let him

triumph over the likes of Devastator, Firewing, or Mechanon. He needed allies. When he heard Defender's call to form a new superteam, he responded at once.

Today, Nighthawk is perhaps the most dedicated member of the Champions — though also the one with the poorest reputation in the

YOU CAN COME
PEACEFULLY AND INTACT, OR
I CAN DRAG YOU IN WITH A
BUNCH OF BROKEN BONES.
YOUR CHOICE.

rival, both for leadership of the team, and as an inventor and engineer. Defender is aware of Nighthawk's attitude, but doesn't share it; he's content to lead by example, and doesn't care whether he or Nighthawk knows the most about electronics.

Powers/Tactics: Nighthawk is a naturally gifted athlete and fighter who trains intensely to keep himself in top physical form. He's studied martial arts with several world-renowned masters, and his reaction time and skill in combat are second to few. He's also well-versed in many skills; he can analyze a crime scene, pick a lock, operate just about any type of computer or electronic system, and maneuver acrobatically.

In addition to his natural skills, Nighthawk has built several devices to help him fight crime. The most important of these is his Combat Vest, a slim, high-tech chestpiece he wears.

Interfacing with fibers woven throughout his costume, it generates a low-level, invisible force field to protect him from bullets, energy blasts, and other attacks.

He also wears two high-tech bracers that cover most of both of his forearms; the left one contains communications technology, the right one a linegun. Finally, he has

compartments in his belt which hold a variety of small, useful devices, such as throwing blades, thermite pellets, and a monocular.

Nighthawk prefers to fight hand-to-hand, using his martial arts skills and billy clubs, though he often opens the battle with a volley of thrown weapons. When fighting large numbers of foes, he often uses his Smoke Pellets and Mask Lenses to blind his foes while maintaining his own ability to see. When his regular attacks won't work, he usually resorts to surprise maneuvers to gain an advantage.

Appearance: Nighthawk's costume is silver and black. The body stocking, full face mask, gloves, and hooded cape are black; his knee-length boots, bracers, belt and billy club holsters, and Combat Vest are silver. The Vest fits over his upper chest, but is designed to be slim enough that it does not impede his movement or distort the outline of his body when he hides in the shadows.



minds of the public. He maintains a secret identity, working as a freelance programmer/engineer, but spends most of his time fighting crime, or preparing to. The others worry about him, afraid that he'll carry his one-man crusade too far, but he seems to be in control of himself... for now.

Personality/Motivation: Nighthawk is tough, intense, and self-assured. He's met few obstacles he couldn't handle (either on his own, or with his teammates), and he approaches his work with absolute confidence. Even when he discovers that an opponent's too much for him to handle at first, he withdraws, develops a plan, and comes back to take his enemy down. He has no qualms about expressing his opinions or taking his own route if he feels his teammates don't know what they're doing.

Given his obsessive nature, Nighthawk tends to regard his fellow Champions as well-intentioned but amateurish. He sees Sapphire as flighty, Witchcraft as too shy, and Defender as naive. He hopes to open their eyes over time. Only Ironclad, with his military experience and stolid approach to getting the job done, seems to earn his respect most of the time.

Although Nighthawk genuinely likes and admires Defender, he sees him as something of a

SAPPHIRE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll 11-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
20	COM	5	13-	
9	PD	6		Total: 21 (12 rPD)
12	ED	7		Total: 24 (12 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases = 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
9	REC	2		
60	END	7		
35	STUN	5		Total Characteristic Cost: 154

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Sapphire Energy Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point powers	
6u	1) <i>Power Bolt I:</i> Energy Blast 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Power Bolt II:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
6u	3) <i>Sapphire Bolt:</i> Sight Group Flash 12d6	6
5u	4) <i>Combination Bolt:</i> Energy Blast 8d6 plus Sight Group Flash 4d6, Linked (-½)	6
6u	5) <i>Stun-Bolt:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is ED FF; +1)	6
36	<i>Force Shield:</i> Force Field (12 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
45	<i>Power-Riding:</i> Flight 15", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
Perks		
5	Money: Well Off	
Skills		
3	Conversation 14-	
3	High Society 14-	
2	Language: English (fluent conversation; Spanish is native)	
3	PS: Singer 14-	
3	PS: Singing 14-	
3	Seduction 14-	
3	Teamwork 14-	
1	TF: V-Jet	

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 196

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

15	DNPC: boyfriend of the week 11- (Normal)
10	Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
25	Hunted: Mechanon 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
25	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Psychological Limitation: Showoff (Very Common, Strong)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Kill-

ing (Common, Total)

- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Corazon Eldora "Corrie" Valenzuela) (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Susceptibility: to hard radiation, 1d6 damage per Turn (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Light-Based Attacks (Uncommon)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Corazon Valenzuela — "Corrie" to her friends — has never known what it was like to be ordinary. Her earliest memories are of singing, and being praised for her superb singing voice. As she grew into a beautiful young woman, she began recording professionally, and soon her name and voice were known all over America, and then the world. She was what she'd always wanted to be, a star!

But she was more gifted than she knew. When she was 17, one of her concerts was attacked by a group of supervillains who wanted to take her hostage and get a big ransom for her. Under the stress, her mutant powers of energy manipulation manifested themselves, and before she knew what she was doing she'd blasted the villains into unconsciousness.

If she thought she received lots of media attention before, now she learned what it was *really* like to be under the glare of constant scrutiny. A superstar superhero — who could resist it? At first Corrie rebelled against the idea, wanting to remain just a singer, but the more she thought about it, the more she liked the idea of being a superheroine. It was sort of like an extension of the charitable foundations she'd set up; it was a way of helping people.

Before long, Corrie, rechristening herself "Sapphire" because of the blue color of her energy powers, was finding time to fit crimefighting into her already hectic schedule. That only increased her fame, but she decided she wanted to spend more time crimefighting — it was incredibly exciting (when it wasn't terrifying) — and even more rewarding than being a rock star. When she heard about Defender wanting to form a new superteam in Millennium City, she was the first to sign up.

Personality/Motivation: Of all the Champions, Sapphire is the most outgoing, and the one who seems the least serious. She's been a major media star for years (and still is), and she enjoys living the rock 'n' roll high life. She spends a lot of time being squired around to the most fashionable places in the world by the most handsome bachelors in the world, appearing in movies, performing at concerts, and recording new albums. She's used to showing herself off, and she does so as a superheroine as well as a performer. More than once she's pulled some flashy stunt in a super-battle that looked great on camera, but didn't accomplish much in the fight — or even put her in danger. But hey, it's all in a day's work for a star, right?

Although she's well known (and in some circles condemned) for "flaunting her sexuality," she has a way of doing so that seems to please, rather than offend, most people. Regardless of how she carries herself or acts, there's something "nice" about her that nothing can sully.

While Corrie loves the spotlight and doesn't want to be anywhere else, there is a small part of her that would be happy just to settle down and live a quiet, normal life. That's not likely to happen anytime soon, but it does sometimes manifest in her spending an ordinary Sunday at home reading, or going for long walks by herself.

Sapphire has been courted by some of the most eligible men on the planet, and while she finds most of them intriguing, none of them has really caught her interest — until she met Defender. Something about him really attracts

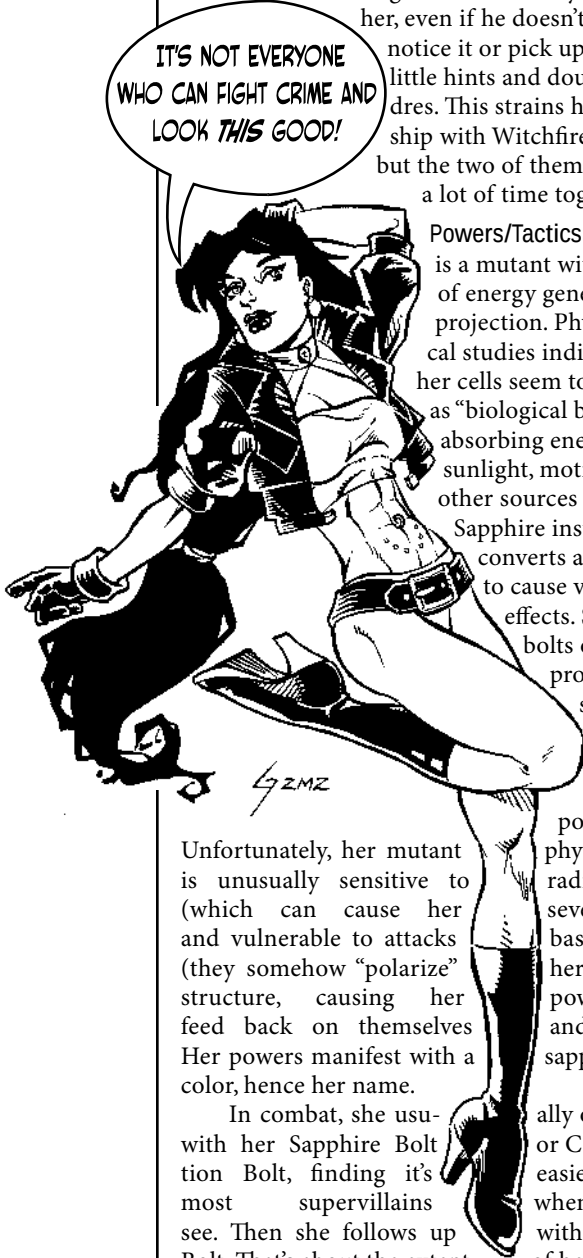
her, even if he doesn't seem to notice it or pick up on her little hints and double entendres. This strains her friendship with Witchfire a little, but the two of them still spend a lot of time together.

Powers/Tactics: Sapphire is a mutant with abilities of energy generation and projection. Physiological studies indicate that her cells seem to function as "biological batteries," absorbing energy from sunlight, motion, and other sources which

Sapphire instinctively converts and releases to cause various effects. She can fire bolts of energy, protect herself with a force field, and even use her powers to fly.

Unfortunately, her mutant is unusually sensitive to (which can cause her and vulnerable to attacks (they somehow "polarize" structure, causing her feed back on themselves Her powers manifest with a color, hence her name.

In combat, she usually opens up with her Sapphire Bolt, finding it's most supervillains see. Then she follows up Bolt. That's about the extent of her tactical thinking, though Nighthawk and Ironclad are both trying to teach her.



Appearance: Sapphire's beautiful face, with deep brown eyes and framed by her straight black hair (usually worn long and tied back), is known to people all over the world from her concerts, music videos, television and movie appearances, and charity work. In public as a celebrity, she dresses provocatively, but always at the height of fashion, often setting trends for others to follow. As a superheroine, she often tries different costumes depending on her mood, but usually wears tight-fitting blue clothes, accessorized with a blue-black short leather jacket, black high-heeled boots, and black gloves. Around her neck she often wears a choker with one of her namesake gems; it sometimes sparkles and glows when she uses her powers, leading some to consider it their source.

WITCHCRAFT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
18	COM	4	13-	
				Total: 14 PD (10 rPD)
4	PD	2		Total: 17 ED (10 rED)
7	ED	3		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	SPD	20		
8	REC	4		
36	END	0		
30	STUN	6		Total Characteristic Cost: 129

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Greater Witcheries:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Witchfire:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
6u	2) <i>Fascination:</i> Mind Control 9d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
6u	3) <i>Glamour:</i> Mental Illusions 9d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
6u	4) <i>Irresistible Slumber:</i> Ego Attack 6d6	6
6u	5) <i>Terrors Of The Dark:</i> Drain PRE 4d6, Ranged (+½)	6
4u	6) <i>Man Into Frog Spell:</i> Major Transform 4d6 (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)	6
15	<i>Helpful Witcheries:</i> Elemental Control, 30-point powers	
15	1) <i>Shield Of Sorcery:</i> Force Field (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
15	2) <i>Wings Of The Wind:</i> Flight 15"	3
39	<i>Lesser Witcheries:</i> Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 30 base + 15 control cost; Only Magic (-¼), Can Only Be Changed	

- With Access To Spellbooks (-½) var
 3 *Magesense*: Detect Magic 13-;
 Concentration (0 DCV; -½) 0

Perks

- 6 Contact: The Trismegistus Council 11-

Skills

- 6 +2 with Greater Witcheries Multipower
 1 Cryptography 8-; Translation Only (-½)
 3 High Society 13-
 3 KS: Arcane & Occult Lore 13-
 2 KS: Demonology 11-
 3 KS: Witchcraft 13-
 2 CK: Vibora Bay 11-
 1 CK: Paris 8-
 1 Language: French (basic conversation; English is native)
 1 Language: Latin (basic conversation)
 2 PS: Painting 11-
 3 Sleight Of Hand 13-
 3 Stealth 13-
 3 Teamwork 13-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 221

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 DNPC: Sunshine (her black cat familiar 8- (Normal))
 10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
 20 Hunted: Circle Of The Scarlet Moon 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Corrupt)
 20 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
 10 Hunted: Talisman 8- (As Pow, Kill)
 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Underconfident; Afflicted With Self-Doubt (Common, Strong)
 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Bethany Duquesne) (Frequently Major)
 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Ice/Cold (Common)
 10 Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Ice/Cold (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

**EXAMPLE POWERS FOR LESSER
 WITCHERIES VPP**

Voice Of The Mind: Witchcraft sometimes prepares this spell when she expects a crisis or battle to erupt, since it allows her to maintain constant contact with all of her teammates.

Mind Link, any eight minds at once. Total cost: 30 points

Athame: When facing demons, monsters, and other terrifying mystic foes for whom her *Code Versus Killing* does not apply, Witchcraft sometimes carries her enchanted silver dagger.

HKA 1d6 (1½d6 with STR); *OAF* (-1), *No Knockback* (-¼) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** *HKA* +1d6 (total of 2½d6 with STR); *OAF* (-1), *No Knockback* (-¼), *Only Versus Evil Mystic Beings* (-1) (total cost: 5 points). Total cost: 12 points.

Spell Of Vitality: Since her spells consume much energy, before she goes into combat Witchcraft often prepares this spell.

+40 END and +5 REC. Total cost: 30 points

Awareness: At most times, when she doesn't need her Lesser Witcheries for something else, Witchcraft uses her spells to give herself the mystical ability to sense danger.

Danger Sense (immediate vicinity, any danger) 13-. Total cost: 30 points

Seeming: With this spell, Witchcraft can alter her outward appearance.

Shape Shift (Sight Group; any humanoid form), *Imitation*. Total cost: 30 points.

Beast Shape: Witchcraft sometimes finds it useful to take the form of small animals — birds, rodents, and the like — to travel unnoticed or spy on her enemies. She needs to learn a separate spell for any given form.

Multiform (any one animal form of up to 150 points). Total cost: 30 points.

Background/History: Bethany Duquesne and her twin sister, Pamela, were raised in a seemingly ordinary suburban home near Detroit. But it wasn't what it looked like — her parents were witches devoted to the dark powers, and from birth they groomed both girls to follow in their footsteps. While Pamela, a cruel and spiteful child, took to the training readily, Bethany found it disturbing. Bethany's natural gift for magic was as great as or greater than Pamela's, but she was too kind-hearted and gentle to truly embrace all of her parents' teachings. It was as if she rebelled by becoming a nice person.

On their eighteenth birthdays, both girls were to be formally inducted into the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, the powerful coven their parents belonged to. Pamela spoke the oaths and performed the rituals exultantly, but when it was her turn, Bethany couldn't do it. Horrified by what she'd seen and heard, she turned and ran, using her magics to flee her family forever.

After a year or two of almost aimless wandering, during which she used her magic to survive and remain safe, Bethany drifted into Vibora Bay and got a job there in a small bookstore. She used her powers once or twice to save an innocent person from peril, and found she enjoyed helping others. Her activities attracted the attention of the Trismegistus Council, a brotherhood of benevolent wizards who took her under their wing and furthered her training.

She remained with the Council for several more years, but eventually felt “a call” (as she puts it) to return to Detroit — now Millennium City — where people needed her help. She journeyed home and began putting her powers to good use, choosing the name “Witchcraft” as her *nom du guerre*. She fought crime informally for several years on her own. After deciding she wanted to get more involved in superheroing, she applied for membership in Defender’s new superteam, and soon became a member of the Champions.

Eager to reclaim one of her power, the Circle of the Scarlet Moon continues to pursue Witchcraft, often making her life very difficult. Even worse is her sister, now the supervillainess Talisman, who rejected the Council long ago to seek her own dark path. Talisman hates Witchcraft bitterly, and often seeks to harm or kill her. But so far the only lasting harm she has inflicted is a curse that leaves Witchcraft vulnerable to spells of winter. Witchcraft has tried to find a way to lift the curse, but so far without success.

Personality/Motivation: Of all the Champions, Witchcraft is the least outspoken or outgoing. She’s somewhat shy, preferring to remain in the background while the flashier, more extroverted members of the group grab the spotlight. Part of this is just her nature, but part derives from the self-doubt which constantly afflicts her. Although she knows it’s irrational, Witchcraft feels she is somehow “tainted” by her upbringing and her parents’ evil magics, and that she’s not really worthy to be a superhero. At times this causes her to hesitate when she should act decisively.

(In game terms, whenever Witchcraft is confronted with a situation where things seem to be going wrong, she must succeed with an EGO Roll or waste a Phase doing nothing.)

As her career with the Champions blossoms, she’ll no doubt gain the confidence she needs (*i.e.*, buy off this Psychological Limitation).

Witchcraft has had little contact with men; she often seems a little disturbed by them (especially if they are loud or crude). Nevertheless she feels the

stirrings of a romantic attraction for Defender, and this is causing a little bit of strain in her otherwise excellent relationship with Sapphire. She sometimes chats with Defender in French, establishing a bond of common interest no one else on the team can share.

Powers/Tactics: Witchcraft is a naturally gifted practitioner of the arts of magic. Although many of her spells are yet weak, her talent is enormous, and as her skill grows so will her power, until she is one of the greatest spellcasters on Earth — or so some members of the Trismegistus Council foretell. Witchcraft has her doubts.

Witchcraft’s favorite spells, which she relies on the most in combat, are her Greater Witcheries and Helpful Witcheries. She usually begins battle with something relatively harmless (like Fascination, Glamour, or Irresistible Slumber), escalating to more dangerous forces only if she must. All of her other spells are her Lesser Witcheries, of which she can only cast a few at a time.

Witchcraft often gestures and incants when casting her spells, but she doesn’t have to — she’s just used to doing so. She’s perfectly capable of using any of her powers even when bound and gagged.

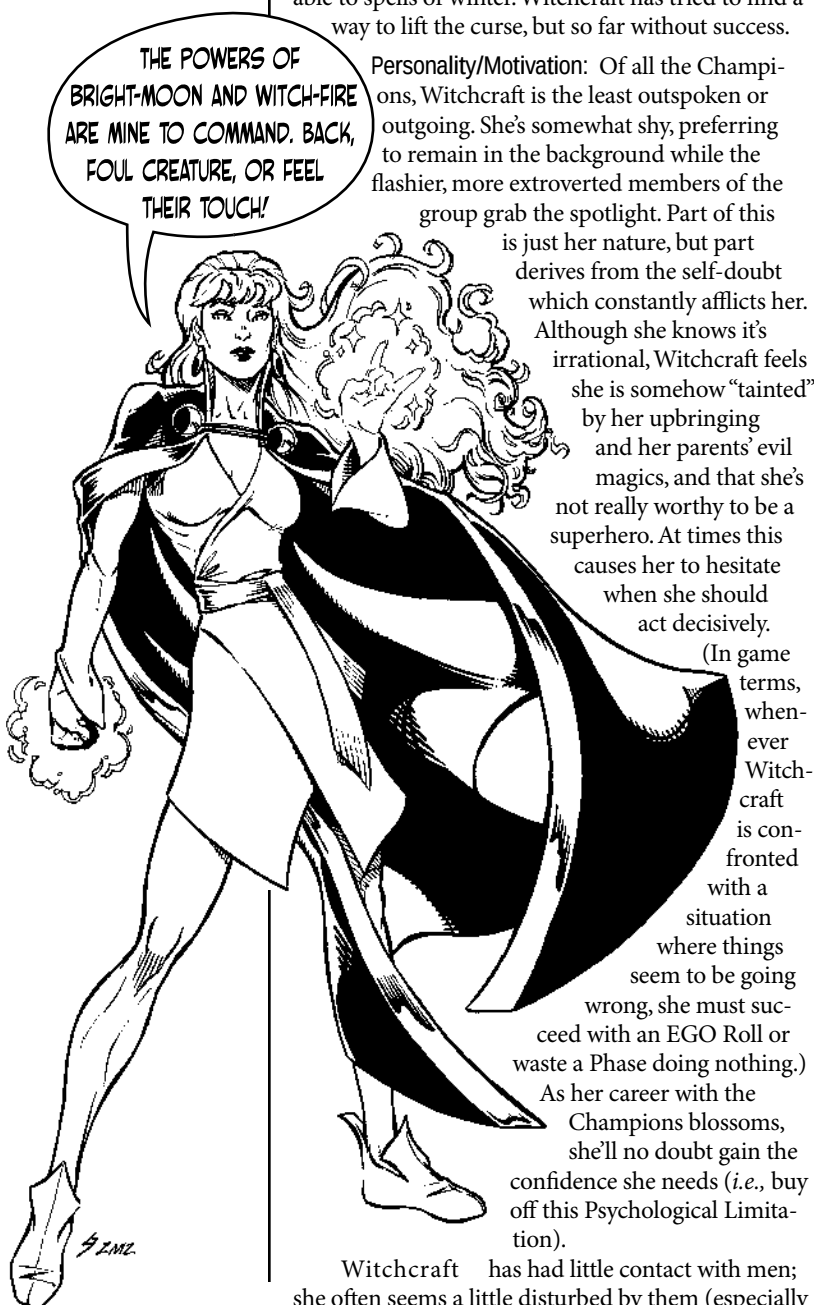
Appearance: Witchcraft is a beautiful young woman in her early 20s, with bewitching green eyes and shoulder-length red hair. Her beauty and youth have led several opponents to underestimate her, to their quick chagrin. When engaged in superheroics, she wears a thigh-length teal-colored tunic with a deep (though not immodest) décolletage, long sleeves that flair slightly at the wrists, and matching leggings, with a golden sash and slippers. Over it all she wears her hoodless witch’s cloak. On the inside it is the color of lapis lazuli, a deep royal blue with gold flecks; on the outside it is black, embroidered in the center with the Blood-Red Tree of Life. She fastens the cloak about her shoulders with a golden chain whose clasps are crafted in the shape of crescent moons. She conceals her identity with a minor glamour that makes those who see her face forget exactly what she looks like.



Defending PRIMUS

‘I really admire the job the men and women of PRIMUS do. Day in, day out they’re out there, risking their lives to keep the citizens of the U.S. safe. They don’t have superpowers, or battle armor, or magic spells — just guts and determination.’

— Defender of the Champions



TEAM RESOURCES



Thanks to various members' wealth, benefits showered upon them by grateful governments, and donations from several altruistic private citizens, charities, and public corporations, the Champions have plenty of resources to call upon besides their own superpowers. It's a good thing, too — it takes a lot to fight crime these days!

HOMESTEAD

The Champions headquarters, Homestead, is located in Millennium City. The construction was funded partly by Defender and Sapphire, but mostly by donations from several charitable organizations and government grants. From the outside it resembles a three-story modernistic office building in the middle of a well-manicured lawn. Inside, the base's facilities — the labs, the vault, the high-tech monitoring equipment, the training room where Ironclad lifts weights — quickly reveal its true nature.

HOMESTEAD

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
20	BODY	18	
2,000"	Size	24	-12 DCV
10	DEF	24	Total Characteristic Cost: 66

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
0	<i>Location:</i> City	0
3	<i>Grounds:</i> 16,000 hexes	0
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Immobile (-1½)	0
5	<i>Reference Library:</i> KS: General Knowledge 14-	
13	<i>Vault:</i> +10 BODY and +10 DEF for a 50 hex area; Partial Coverage (-2)	0
7	<i>Crime Lab:</i> Criminology 11-	
7	<i>Crime Lab:</i> Electronics 11-	
7	<i>Crime Lab:</i> SS: Physics 11-	
7	<i>Weapons Lab:</i> Weaponsmith (Firearms, Energy Weapons) 11-	
27	<i>Sensors:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 16x Range (2,400"), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Immobile (cameras and monitor station; -2) plus Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (to Clairsentience; -½) plus Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OAF Immobile (same; -2), Linked (-½)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 81

Total Base Cost: 147

Value Disadvantages

10	DNPC: Wendy Brooks (the Champions's housekeeper) 8- (Normal)
10	DNPC: Jeanine McGillicuddy (the Champions's receptionist) 8- (Normal)
10	DNPC: Denise Dumont (government watchdog) 11- (Normal, Useful Noncombat Position)
10	Hunted: United States government 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
10	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Publicly Known

Total Disadvantage Points: 65

Total Cost: 82/5 = 16

Homestead consists of three above-ground floors and two below-ground (all are roughly 15" x 18"). Additionally, the roof functions as a landing pad for the V-Jet. Surrounding the building itself are grounds which are mainly decorative, but also include an area with a pool, tennis court, and other recreational facilities. A thick hedge of yew trees shields the recreation area from prying eyes and nosy reporters.

The first floor mainly consists of public areas. A visitor always enters through the lobby, where Jeanine McGillicuddy, the Champions's receptionist, greets them. Mrs. McGillicuddy has a well-deserved reputation as a tough old battle-axe who wouldn't even back down for Firewing. She carefully preserves this reputation by not revealing to her employers that she spends her spare time fostering kittens for Millennium City Pet Rescue. (Witchcraft's familiar, Sunshine the cat, has learned of this weakness... and the fact that Mrs. McGillicuddy keeps a box of cat treats in her desk drawer.) The first floor also includes conferences rooms, a lecture hall, cooking and eating facilities, and offices.

The second floor, to which access is restricted, includes the team members' rooms and several guest bedrooms. Few visitors spend any time here. The third floor, also restricted access, contains the laboratories, monitor/situation room, and some space for expansion.

The first below-ground level is half parking deck, half storage area. The Champions and their staff park here, as do important visitors. Unexpected visitors, delivery personnel, and the like park in the driveway.

The second below-ground level, or "basement" as the Champions call it, is the most restricted and

PAYING FOR THE TEAM'S RESOURCES

In the campaign featuring the Champions as PCs, the characters did not have to chip in Character Points to cover the cost of Homestead, SOCRATES, and the V-Jet. Instead, as discussed on page 97, the GM gave them the base and plane for free, as a way of encouraging them to form a team and remain a team. Additionally, that allowed him to create the NPCs for the base, and establish certain relationships between the team, the government, and various corporations that he can exploit later for story purposes.

In a campaign where the PCs had to pay for these Perks, they'd each have to contribute 3 Character Points toward the base, 5 toward SOCRATES, and 20 toward the V-Jet (with the GM graciously kicking in the spare points where necessary).

secure part of the base. Mostly it consists of a gymnasium and “danger room” suitable for the Champions to train and practice with their powers. Compared to more established superteams, the Champions don’t have advanced training facilities, but Defender has big plans to expand this part of Homestead. In another part of the basement there’s a vault for storing dangerous materials and anything the Champions want to keep secure.

Champions Personnel

Besides Mrs. McGillicuddy, the Champions have several full-time employees.

Wendy Brooks, a pert young lady who works for the Champions as their housekeeper and cook, spends most of her time on the first floor, though her cleaning duties take her throughout the building (except for the below-ground levels). Wendy dreams of being a superhero herself someday (though she’d never admit it to her bosses), and is quick to drop whatever she’s doing if she thinks she sees an opportunity to “help” the Champions. She spends her spare time working out, jogging, and studying criminology; she’s developing a crush on Defender.

Although not exactly an employee, Denise Dumont works at Homestead as the Champions’s liaison with the Department of Superhuman and Paranormal Affairs and the federal government. Her presence results from a deal struck some time ago in which the Champions felt they needed national police authority to accomplish a mission, and the government wouldn’t grant it without a concession from them. Since Dumont was put in place to provide regular reports and intelligence, the Justice Department has been much more cooperative about granting the Champions police powers when they need them. The unspoken terms of the deal are that as long as the Champions submit to having Dumont as an “advisor,” the government won’t worry too much about working with them; if that changes, the members’ lives as crimefighters could become much harder. Despite her sometimes difficult working situation, Dumont is generally friendly and competent — but quick to invoke her implied authority if she feels the Champions are trying to keep her away from something she needs to know about. She’s 32 years old, considered attractive by most people who know her, and has no romantic interest in Defender (in fact, she can’t quite understand what the other women see in him).

THE V-JET

The Champions often have to travel to other states or countries in situations when time is of the essence. In these situations, they have a powerful, high-tech aircraft, the V-Jet, to ride in. The V-Jet was funded partly by Defender, but mostly by several aerospace firms based in or near Millennium City who donated time, expertise, and materials toward the project.

The V-Jet takes its name from its shape, and citizens often recognize it because it’s appeared in so many news reports. It consists of a central body

shaped like a rounded wedge, with two forward-pointing wings attached to either side of the body at the rear. Capable of vertical takeoff and landing, and intended mainly for speed, it can reach approximately Mach 10. Passengers are protected from the effect of these velocities by a sophisticated internal force field. It carries enough concentrated fuel to fly at full speed for up to day.

If an enemy attacks the V-Jet, the Champions can fight back with twin blasters mounted on either side of the craft’s nose. Hatches in the roof and floor also allow flying members of the team to exit the vehicle to do battle; low-level force fields allow them to exit the craft without overly disrupting the flow of air over the body.

Typically Ironclad pilots the plane, which the manufacturers specially reinforced to carry his weight. Defender, Nighthawk, and Sapphire are also trained to fly “the ship” (as the team calls it), and Witchcraft intends to learn soon.

THE V-JET

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
40	STR	0	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 HTH [0]
20	BODY	4	
4"x2"	Size	30	Mass 6.4 tons; -6 KB; -4 DCV
6	DEF	12	
25	DEX	45	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
5	SPD	15	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
			Total Characteristic Cost: 106

Movement: Ground: 6"/12"
Flight: 60"/480"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
195	<i>Jet Engines:</i> Multipower, 130-point reserve, 1 Continuing Fuel Charge for entire Multipower (1 Day; +½)	[1cc]
13u	1) <i>Standard Flight Mode:</i> Flight 60", x8 noncombat	
1u	2) <i>Supersonic Flight Mode:</i> Flight 5", MegaScale (1" = 1 km; +¼)	
19	<i>Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+14 versus Range Modifier); OIF Bulky (-1)	0
6	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1)	0
27	<i>Starboard Forward Blaster:</i> RKA 3d6, 64 Charges (+½); OIF, Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees forward; -½)	[64]
5	<i>Port Forward Blaster:</i> same as Starboard Forward Blaster	[64]
10	<i>Sealed Environment:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing)	0
15	<i>Structural Enhancements:</i> +20 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Increase Lifting Capacity (-1)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 291

Total Vehicle Cost: 397

Value Disadvantages

15	Social Limitation: Publicly Known (Frequently, Major)
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Total Disadvantage Points: 15**Total Cost: ((350/5) + (32/1)) = 102**

SOCRATES

To help run their headquarters and assist them with their fight on crime, the Champions, with the aid of several corporations and private citizens who donated their time and skills, custom-built a super-computer for Homestead. Christened SOCRATES, this artificially intelligent thinking machine can operate all of the base's primary equipment and labs (using artificial arms, or "waldoes," when necessary), monitor the sensors, assist with research, or provide entertainment. It speaks with an educated (and sometimes a little stuffy) male voice.

SOCRATES

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
20	INT	10	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	ECV: 5
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
4	SPD	15	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 50			

Cost Powers

5	<i>Waldoes:</i> Extra Limbs (two or more mounted at necessary locations throughout Homestead)	END
		0

Skills

3	Criminology 13-
3	Electronics 13-
4	AK: Earth 14-
4	AK: Home Nation 14-
4	CK: Campaign City 14-
2	KS: Archived Recent News 11-
3	KS: Current News 13-
10	KS: General Knowledge 20-
3	KS: Popular Movies 13-
3	KS: Popular Music 13-
3	KS: Video Games 13-
3	KS: Superheroes 13-
3	KS: Supervillains 13-
2	KS: World History 11-
2	KS: World Politics 11-
3	Mechanics 13-
3	PS: Household Management & Maintenance 13-
3	SS: Astronomy 13-
3	SS: Biology 13-
3	SS: Chemistry 13-
3	SS: Geology 13-
3	SS: Physics 13-
3	Systems Operation 13-
3	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Energy Weapons) 13-

Programs

1	Monitor Camera System, Report Anomalies
1	Plot Distance, Travel Times Between Specified Locations
1	Scan and Enter Data
1	Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
1	Operate Laboratories

- 1 Show/Provide Entertainment
- 1 Send Emergency Call to Team Members If Specified Protocols Are Not Met

Talents

- 3 *Clock:* Absolute Time Sense
- 5 *Memory:* Eidetic Memory
- 3 *Calculator:* Lightning Calculator
- 3 *Instant-On Feature:* Lightsleep
- 4 *Scanner:* Speed Reading (x10)

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 114**Total Computer Cost: 159**

Value Disadvantages

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing, Harming, Or Allowing Harm To Come To Humans (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Secret Programming The Champions Don't Know About (Uncommon, Total)

Total Disadvantage Points: 35**Total Cost: 124/5 = 25**

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Their work requires the Champions to interact and maintain relations with a number of important institutions and agencies.

THE MILLENNIUM CITY GOVERNMENT

Thanks to their numerous efforts to save the city, their participation in civic and charitable projects, and the good image they maintain, the Champions have an excellent relationship with the Millennium City authorities. Although they don't have formal police sanction, the MCPD has no problem working with them, and frequently calls them when it encounters situations it can't handle on its own.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

The Champions have so far enjoyed cordial relations with the government not only of Millennium City, but the United States. The Department of Justice does not entirely trust the team yet — they are too new to the scene, and at least one member clearly is not a U.S. citizen — so it has not yet granted them full national police powers. It has, on occasion, temporarily bestowed those powers (once using the opportunity to force the Champions to accept an on-site government liaison, Denise Dumont), and frequently consults with the Champions or seeks their aid. Many other nations around the world also value the Champions' assistance.

PRIMUS

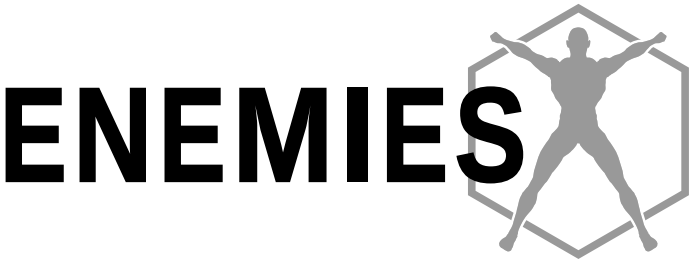
The Champions enjoy slightly less pleasant relations with PRIMUS, the government's primary organization for combatting supercrime. The leaders of PRIMUS regard the Champions (and most other superteams) as amateurs who tend to cause as many problems as they solve most of the time. PRIMUS has

worked with the Champions in the past, and almost certainly will do so in the future, but it always tries (and usually fails) to take control of the operation and informally “deputize” the Champions instead of letting them think they’re equals. Some of the rank-and-file are less rigid, and gladly call in the Champions when there’s trouble PRIMUS personnel can’t easily handle on their own.

UNTIL

In contrast, the Champions work well with UNTIL. Since UNTIL was founded in part to work

with and manage superhuman assets for world security and the benefit of mankind, its organizational attitude is different from PRIMUS, which is primarily a law enforcement agency. UNTIL has so many superhuman resources to call on, it doesn’t have to impose on the Champions’ time often, but it won’t hesitate to do so if a menace arises it thinks the team is particularly suited to handle. The Champions’s conduct during several past missions has really impressed some UNTIL leaders, who have begun following the team’s exploits on a regular basis.



During their short, but intense, career as a superteam, the Champions have fought and defeated many supervillains and other menaces to society. Here are a few of the members of their “rogues’ gallery”; you can find dozens more villains for your campaign in *Conquerors*, *Killers*, and *Crooks*.

DEVASTATOR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10+20*	STR	10	11-/15-	Lift 1.6 tons; 6d6 [3]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
12	COM	1	11-	
5	PD	3		Total: 20 PD (15 rPD)
5	ED	1		Total: 20 ED (15 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
30	STUN	6		
Total Characteristic Cost: 109				

*: OIF (Power Armor, -½), No Figured Characteristics (-½)

Movement: Running: 9”/18”
Flight: 15”/30”

Cost	Powers	END
67	Battle Armor Weapons Suite: Multipower, 100-point reserve; all OIF (-½)	
7u	1) Configurable Blaster: EB 10d6, Variable Advantages (+½ Advantages; +1); OIF (-½)	var
4u	2) Weapons Suite: RKA 2d6, Variable Advantages (+½ Advantages; +1); OIF (-½)	var
6u	3) Tangleweb Projector: Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½)	0
30	Battle Armor: Armor (15 PD/ED); OIF (-½)	0

7	Flashbang Protection: Flash Defense (Sight and Hearing Group), 5 points; OIF (-½)	0
7	Internal Air Supply: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (-½)	0
30	Jetpack: Flight 15”, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½)	0
33	Sensor Suite: Infrared Perception (Sight Group), Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group), Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group), Radar, HRRP, 360 Degree Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)	0
6	Leg Servos: Running +3” (9” total)	1

Perks

6	Contact: a fence 11- (extremely useful Skills and resources; significant Contacts of his own)
4	Deep Covers (2)
10	Money: Wealthy

Talents

8	Onboard Computer: Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator; OIF (-½)
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Skills

6	+2 with Battle Armor Weapons Suite
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Climbing 13-
1	Computer Programming 8-
3	Conversation 13-
3	Forgery (Documents, Paper Money) 13-
4	Gambling (Card Games, Dice Games) 13-
3	High Society 13-
2	CK: Madrid 11-
2	CK: Moscow 11-
2	CK: New York City 11-
2	CK: Paris 11-
2	Language: French (fluent conversation; English is native)

- 1 Language: Japanese (basic conversation)
- 1 Language: Russian (basic conversation)
- 2 Language: Spanish (fluent conversation)
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 3 PS: Appraising 13-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Seduction 13-
- 5 Stealth 14-
- 3 Streetwise 13-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 291

Total Cost: 400

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Warlord 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Refuses To Back Down Or Be Bullied (Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Richard Wittgenstein) (Frequently, Major)
- 110 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 400

Background/History: It was the opportunity of a lifetime.

Richard Wittgenstein was a cat burglar. And he was a good one, too. He might not have been at the absolute pinnacle of his profession, but he'd rarely failed to complete a mission, and had gotten rich in the process.

One day, after a casually overhearing some interesting gossip at a high-society party about a new yacht in the harbor at Monaco, he flew down to take a look. There it was — big as life and twice as gaudy. It practically screamed "new money," and in Richard's experience that usually meant good pickings.

One night, when the owner of the yacht (a man Richard had only

glimpsed once or twice while casing the boat) and his entourage were at the casino, Richard slipped aboard. The security measures almost foiled him; they were extremely well-made. But that only convinced him there was something he wanted to have concealed on the boat.

When he finally found what the yacht's owner was so careful to hide, he nearly threw it in the sea. Blueprints! Not jewels, not bearer bonds, not cash, just some stinking blueprints. But rather than call the night a total loss, Richard took them, thinking he could at least sell them back to the man he'd stolen them from.

But he quickly changed his mind when he got home and took a careful look at them. These weren't plans for a building or a car — they were for a weapon. Some sort of prototype suit of powered armor. They reminded him of something he'd seen somewhere, in the news probably, but he couldn't place it. It didn't come to him until the next day.

They were plans for the Warlord's battle-armor.

Terrified for the first time in his life, Richard took the plans, his gear, everything else he could lay his hands on quickly, and fled. He knew the Warlord would be looking for him now, and he knew that if the Warlord found him, he'd be a long, long time in dying.

While he was hiding, carefully concealed by one of the cover identities he'd established long ago, Richard looked at the plans some more, and did some research.

It turned out they weren't for the Warlord's armor, but for a similar suit — one based on his, maybe intended for some of his best soldiers or something. The suit was sleeker and less well-armed than the Warlord's was said to be, but it was still quite powerful.

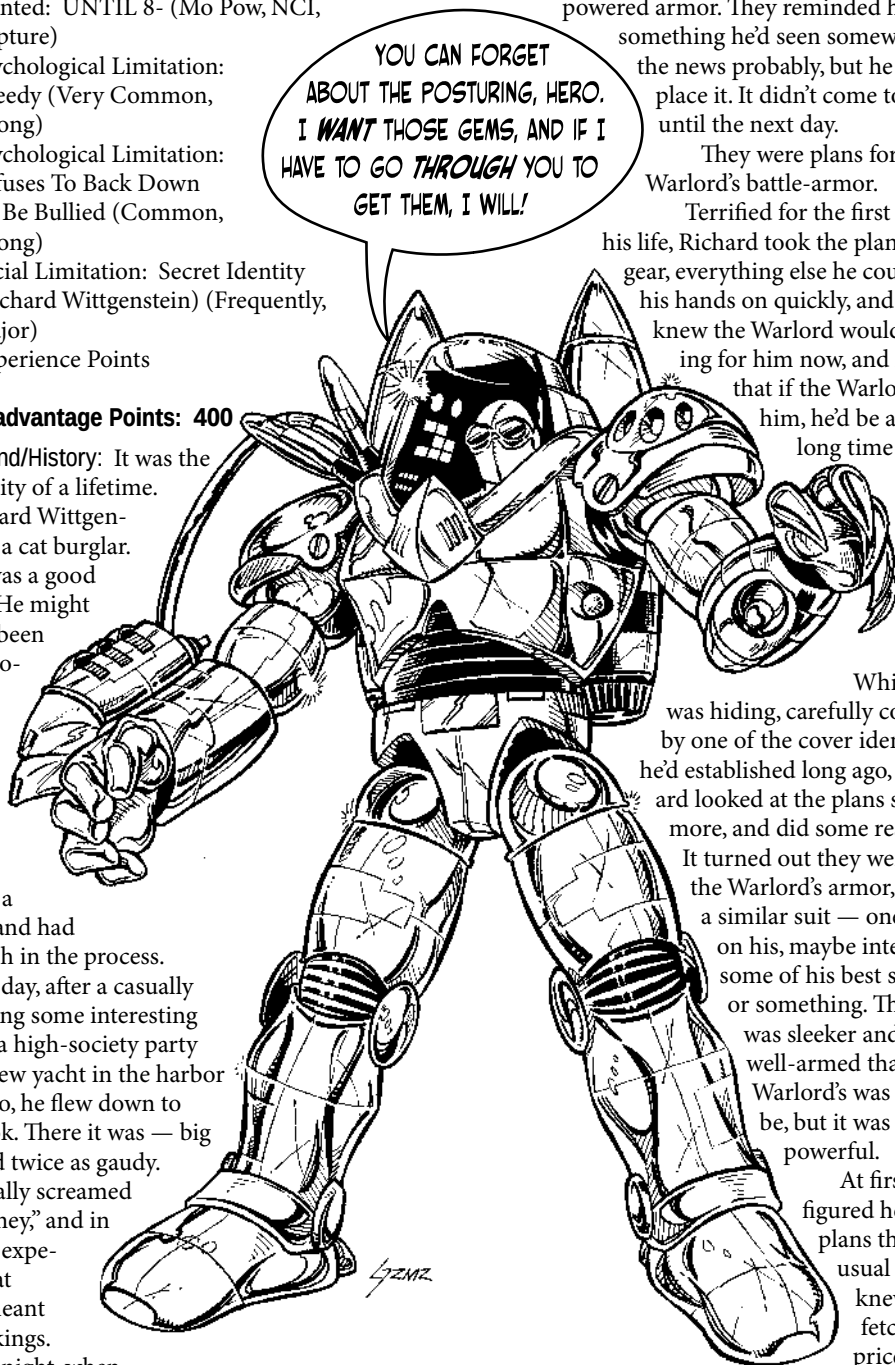
At first Richard figured he'd sell the plans through his usual fence; he knew they'd fetch a high price on the international

DEVASTATOR PLOT SEEDS

After suffering a terrible defeat at the hands of some superhero, Wittgenstein decides to get out of the supervillain business and offers his armor for sale on the black market. Who ends up with it... and what happens if Wittgenstein changes his mind after the sale and schemes to get the armor back?

Eager to reclaim his stolen technology, the Warlord manipulates one of the heroes into going after Devastator. Assuming the PC wins, what happens when he finds out he's actually been working for one of the most feared supervillains in the world?

Wittgenstein wants even *more* power, so he decides to steal more of the Warlord's technology. But he can't take on the Warlord's forces or penetrate the security on his Flying Fortress alone, so he has to trick the PCs into providing "cover" for him while he sneaks aboard the craft and loots the Warlord's arsenal.



black market for arms. But the more he thought about it, the more he said to himself: why shouldn't I build the suit? He realized he was sick of sneaking around all the time, preying on people too stupid to protect their valuables. It was time to take whatever he wanted — regardless of who tried to stop him.

It took most of his savings, and dealing with a lot of disreputable people he didn't really like, but eventually Richard got his powered armor suit. Christening himself *Devastator*, he embarked on a career of robbery and mayhem that has lasted to this day.

Personality/Motivation: Devastator is using his battlesuit, and the power it brings, to work out a lot of frustration and anger he's accumulated over the years. He no longer has to skulk about in the shadows, run from the police, or watch over his shoulder for bounty hunters and angry husbands. Now he can go toe-to-toe with superheroes and smash them into the dirt, and take what he wants from even the most heavily-guarded vaults. He rarely backs down or runs away from any threat, and anyone who tries to bully him is in for trouble.

The only thing that still scares him is the Warlord. He knows that master villain can tell where he got his armor, and that the Warlord wants it back. He's had a few scrapes with the War Machine (the Warlord's personal group of supercriminals) and held his own, but he'd prefer to avoid further confrontation if he can. He doesn't want to risk losing the power he now has.

Powers/Tactics: Devastator has an interesting suite of powers and abilities deriving from two sources. The first is his battle armor, which was built from plans developed by the Warlord for a lesser suit of armor based on his own. It comes equipped not only with defensive technology, but a configurable blaster on the right arm, a suite of other weapons attached to other parts of the armor, and a tangleweb projector on the right shoulder.

The second is his former career as a cat burglar. Few armored supervillains have the acrobatic prowess or infiltration skills of a professional thief, but Devastator does. Sometimes they allow him to take a low-key or sneaky approach to a problem, where someone like Armadillo or Ankylosaur would simply have to smash things.

Devastator prefers to open with an all-out offense, using whatever weapon he thinks is most likely to hurt his opponent. The various weapons are simulated with *Variable Advantage* Advantage on the two main slots of his Multipower. If that doesn't work, he'll try tangleweb, Surprise Moves, or the like. He'll only flee from combat if he thinks there's too great a chance he'll be defeated and lose his suit.

Campaign Use: Devastator is a good general powered armor villain. His Multipower gives him a lot of options in combat, and his Skills are an unusual twist the GM can exploit for many effects and plot points.

Devastator rarely Hunts anyone. He'd rather concentrate on getting rich and enjoying the freedom the suit gives him. However, if bullied or defeated too much by a hero, he'll make it his personal mission in life to hurt that person, using both

his combat abilities and his thieving skills.

To make Devastator more powerful, give him more Multipower slots, increase his STR to 40 or more, and up his DEX a few points. To scale him down, reduce the Multipower to 75 Active Points and replace the Variable Advantage slots with three to five EB and RKA slots with specific Advantages.

Appearance: Devastator wears a suit of armor that clearly derives from the Warlord's technology. It has the same rough configuration, with weaponry mounted on the arms and shoulders, and the user's head and upper body protected by a dome-like structure instead of a more ordinary helmet. However, the "dome" is much more slender and cylindrical, and the weaponry more limited. A suite of configurable blaster components (barrels and focusing lenses that rotate into position) on his right arm is matched by a similar, but more lethal, assemblage on his left. The suit is dull gold in color, a definite contrast to the Warlord's shiny steel blue-white.

Out of his armor, Richard Wittgenstein is a handsome man in his mid-30s, six feet tall with carefully styled brown hair and an elegant moustache. He dresses in expensive, hand-tailored clothing at the height of fashion.

GREEN DRAGON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2]
27	DEX	51	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
18	CON	16	13-	
16	BODY	12	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
10	PD	5		Total: 10 PD (8 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 10 PD (0 rED)
7	SPD	33		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
10	REC	2		
36	END	0		
38	STUN	0		
Total Characteristic Cost: 158				

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Leaping: 11"/22"

Cost	Powers	END		
	<i>Martial Arts: Kung Fu</i>			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 55 STR
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Escape	+0	+0	60 STR vs. Grabs
5	Flying Kick	+1	-2	13d6 Strike
3	Joint Lock/Grab	-1	-1	Grab, 55 STR
5	Kick	-2	+1	13d6 Strike
4	Knife Hand	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA (2½d6 w/STR)
3	Legsweep	+2	-1	10d6 Strike, Target Falls
4	Punch	+0	+2	11d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	9d6 +vel/5,

				Target Falls	
4	<i>Tien-hsueh Strike</i>	-1	+1	4d6 NND (1)	
4	<i>Tiger/</i>				
	<i>Dragon Claw</i>	+0	+0	13d6 Crush, Must Follow Grab	
4	<i>Uproot/</i>				
	<i>Sand Palm</i>	+0	+0	60 STR Shove	
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)				
7	Use Art with Blades, Clubs, Hook Sword, Polearms, Staff, Three-Section Staff, Wind And Fire Wheels				
3	<i>Stances</i> : Multipower, 5-point reserve, all Cost END (-½)				
1u	1) <i>Cat Stance</i> :	+2	Lightning Reflexes;		
	Costs END (-½)			1	
1u	2) <i>Crane Stance</i> :	+1	OCV with Block;		
	Requires A DEX Roll (-½), Costs END (-½)			1	
1u	3) <i>Horse Stance</i> :	-1	Knockback		
	Resistance; Costs END (-½)			1	
1u	4) <i>Phoenix Stance</i> :	+1	OCV with Block		
	and Legsweep; Requires A DEX Roll (-¼), Costs END (-½)			1	
1u	5) <i>Tiger Stance</i> :	+1	with Tiger/Dragon		
	Claw; Costs END (-½)			1	
4	<i>Iron Skin</i> :		Damage Resistance (8 PD)		0
20	<i>Dodging and Deflecting</i> :		Missile		0
	Deflection (all missiles)				
6	<i>Leaping</i> :	+6"	Leaping (11" forward, 6" upward)		1
6	<i>Swift</i> :	Running +3"	(9" total)		1

Talents

15	Danger Sense 12- (in combat)
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Skills

10	+2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
3	Acrobatics 14-
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Climbing 14-
3	Contortionist 14-
3	Disguise 12-
3	Gambling (Dice Games, Poker) 12-
3	KS: Kung Fu 12-
2	KS: Chinese History & Culture 11-
2	KS: Chinese Healing 11-
1	Language: English (basic conversation; Mandarin Chinese is Native)
3	Shadowing 12-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 13-
4	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Small Rowed Boats
7	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Martial Arts Weapons, Hook Sword, Three-Section Staff, Wind And Fire Wheels

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 193**Total Cost: 351****200+ Disadvantages**

5	DNPC: Lin Chow (younger sister) 8- (Normal; Useful Noncombat Skills)
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10	Distinctive Features: Style (Not Concealable, Always Noticed And Recognizable, Detectable By Large Group)
15	Enraged: if honor insulted or hears an ethnic slur (Common), go 8-, recover 11-
25	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Psychological Limitation: Honorable (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Disdain For Occidentals And Western Culture (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Overprotective Of His Little Sister (Common, Moderate)
15	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Chow Deng) (Frequently, Major)
41	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 351

Background/History: Chow Deng was born to a poor peasant family in central China. As soon as he could walk, he went to work in the fields assigned to the family. One day, when Deng was only eight years old and his sister Lin five, his parents were both killed in a tractor accident... one whose cause was never precisely determined.

Orphaned and alone, the two siblings barely managed to eke out a living with help from some of the villagers. After more than a year of this hard-scrabble existence, a group of monks showed up at their hut. All his life Deng had heard about them, in village tales told late at night, but he had never expected to actually see one of them. They lived in an isolated monastery more than an hour's walk from the village, where they lived as their predecessors had for centuries.

The monks made Deng a tempting offer: they would teach him the ancient fighting arts, so that he could enter something called "the Tournament of the Dragon" and triumph. In return, they would support him and his sister. Deng didn't hesitate before accepting.

Many long years of training followed. Through intensive training, Deng's natural gifts for the martial arts were brought out; he grew to become a strong, proud young man, far more skilled at combat than anyone he had ever sparred with. He thought he was ready for the Tournament, but the monks soon dashed his hopes — he had many more years to go, they told him.

Deng wouldn't accept that. It sounded ridiculous to him. In fact, the whole Tournament thing sounded a little ridiculous. Why work and work for that, when he could already use the skills he had to make good money in America?

Taking his sister with him, Deng fled the monastery and made his way to the United States. The monks never found them, if in fact they pursued them.

Deng quickly became disgusted with America and its people. His masters had told him Americans were undisciplined and foolish, and his masters were right. His sister, on the other hand, was enchanted. While he was content to live apart from those around him, she embraced America and all of its unique qualities. This disgusted him, too, but

GREEN DRAGON PLOT SEEDS

To Green Dragon's astonishment, the Tournament of the Dragon proves to be real. It's an event held every sixty years to determine a champion who will fight the Death Dragon, a fearsome being of great evil who can only be kept restrained by defeat at the champion's hands. Green Dragon beats up a prominent martial artist, steals his invitation, and heads for the event. The heroes, investigating the beating, get pulled into the events surrounding the Tournament and the Death Dragon's possible release.

One of the PCs meets Lin Chow, and they start dating. Green Dragon finds out about his sister's romantic relationship with a Westerner. Hilarity ensues.

VIPER finds Green Dragon, captures him, and forces him to undergo an augmentation process that grants him superpowers. Now he intends to show the decadent West just how weak it truly is. Can the heroes stop him before he destroys Millennium City?

despite his harangues, she did as she wished.

Deng began testing his skills by picking fights, which led to confrontations with police officers. Beating them up wasn't much harder than beating up other martial artists. But then he met someone more his size: a superhero named Shugoshin. Deng fought well, but he could not overcome his gaudily-clad foe's skill. The incident infuriated him. Being beaten — and by a *Westerner!* — was the most humiliating thing that had ever happened to him.

It wasn't long after that that Deng fell in with the tongs. They had heard of his fight with Shugoshin, and were impressed with his skill and power, despite his loss. He began doing "jobs" for them, jobs that not only earned him fat paychecks, but which gave him the chance to practice his fighting skills and vent his rage. He crippled or maimed many of his opponents, but he didn't care. His masters nicknamed him *Lù Lóng*, "Green Dragon," because of his fighting prowess and his hatred of the West; eventually, they gave him a costume like the ones other martial artist "supervillains" wore. He took the name and the costume as a badge of honor.

Deng soon found out he could make even more money working for other criminal organizations, such as VIPER (with whom he's since had a falling out). He became a mercenary villain, working for whoever could pay him top dollar and give him an opportunity for a good fight.

Personality/Motivation: Some martial artists acquire their skills due to their strength of character and willingness to sacrifice a part of their lives for the

sake of overall personal growth. Green Dragon is not one of those martial artists. Deng is a head-strong, stubborn, proud, angry young man who has gotten to the level of skill he occupies today through a combination of innate talent and pure cussedness. He is, essentially, a bully stubborn enough to learn martial arts. He uses his fighting skills to push people around, to make himself feel "big," to get what he wants. He does not tread the path of self-restraint and inner peace, as most martial artists of his level of ability do.

On top of this, Deng is a vicious anti-Western bigot (despite the fact that insults to *his* ethnicity often send him into a rage). He considers Westerners, particularly Americans, to be lazy, undisciplined, and stupid. As far as he's concerned, beating them up and taking their money is just cultural evolution in action.

Green Dragon is not, however, wholly without good qualities. He is in fact an honorable person and warrior. To him, "honor" means he will not attack opponents from ambush or "fight dirty," fight women (unless they attack him first), use weapons (again, unless they are used against him first), or "dishonor" himself through sinful or licentious conduct. The conflict between his bigotry and his desire to be honorable seems never to have occurred to him.

The only thing in the world that means more to Green Dragon than fighting is his younger sister, Lin. He loves her very much, but expresses his love through a stifling overprotectiveness that is beginning to *really* annoy her now that she's an independent young woman. Her chosen career — actress — is scandalous and repugnant to him, and he's doing everything he can to make her live a more "womanly" life. (His attitudes about women are just one of Deng's many "traditional" opinions; as Lin has observed, his views are frequently "twelve thousand miles and two thousand years away!")

Quote: <<"American dog! Now I will show you what *true* kung fu is!">>

Powers/Tactics: Green Dragon has two qualities that make him a powerful fighter. The first is his strength; years of farm labor and heavy training have given him great lifting and hitting power. The second is his speed; Green Dragon is fast, faster than most superheroic martial artists. His training has emphasized kung fu substyles which make the best use of his speed and strength, such as Bear, Dragon, and Shaolin Tiger. He has studied many other substyles of kung fu as well.

However, Green Dragon also has attributes which hamper him in battle. Chief among these are his pride, his anger, and his impetuosity. Unlike other martial artists of similar power, he's spent little time on "mystic foolery," such as *chi'i* abilities. His power and skill are essentially stagnating; he has gone as far as he can go without delving into the more esoteric aspects of the martial arts, which he has neither the patience nor the discipline to do.

Green Dragon's fighting tactics are fairly simple and straightforward. He attacks quickly and hard, hoping to take his opponent down easily. Only



if this proves unworkable will he resort to more advanced tactics such as acrobatic maneuvering and *tien-hsueh* strikes. Due to his relatively low defenses, he often uses his Martial Dodge when facing foes with powerful attacks. His tactics are further circumscribed by his "honor," as described above. He also has a tendency to announce his presence and make a brief, haughty speech before he attacks someone.

Some of Green Dragon's abilities are taken from *The Ultimate Martial Artist*; feel free to ignore them if you don't have that book and aren't sure how they'd function.

Campaign Use: Deng makes a great antagonist for a martial arts-oriented hero, particularly one of Western descent. As a Hunter, he's not very imaginative, simply attacking his foe at inconvenient moment or teaming up with other villains to cause him trouble.

If Green Dragon isn't powerful enough for your campaign, boost his STR to superhuman levels (he underwent ancient mystic Chinese rites to get superpowers) and increase his defenses to just above campaign averages (and perhaps make part of them Resistant). If he's too powerful, reduce his STR to 20, his DEX to 24, his SPD to 6, and get rid of some or all of his Extra DCs.

Appearance: Green Dragon is 5'8" tall and weighs 175 pounds, most of it rock-solid muscle. He wears a costume colored light and dark green, with a "scale" pattern to it (like snakeskin). His mask is dark green, with two flares projecting outward across either side his face which are embroidered with gold and orange threads. The eyepieces of the mask are lined with a sort of transparent gauze which makes his eyes look like they are solid white. The chest, arms, and legs of the costume are dark green; the gloves, boots, and trunks are lighter green.

ICICLE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
5	PD	3		Total: 15 PD (10 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 16 PD (10 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	4		
36	END	0		
30	STUN	6		Total Characteristic Cost: 92

Movement: Running: 16"/32"

Cost	Powers	END
52	<i>Ice Powers:</i> Multipower, 52-point reserve	
5u	1) <i>Ice Blast I:</i> EB 10d6	5
5u	2) <i>Ice Blast II:</i> EB 7d6, Invisible to Sight Group (+½)	5

5u	3) <i>Ice Blast III:</i> EB 7d6, Area of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½)	5
4u	4) <i>Chilled To The Bone:</i> EB 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Cold]; +1)	4
2u	5) <i>Ice Bonds:</i> Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF; Vulnerable (Fire/Heat; -1)	5
4u	6) <i>Ice Sheet:</i> Change Environment (create ice sheet) 32" radius, -4 to DEX Rolls to move on, Personal Immunity (+¼); Only Affects Characters Who Are Moving On The Ground (-¼)	5
10	<i>Ice Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 20-point powers	
18	1) <i>Ice Armor:</i> Armor (10 PD/10 ED), Hardened (+¼), Costs Endurance (-½)	4
15	2) <i>Ice Slides:</i> Running +10" (16" total), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	1
19	3) <i>Ice Wall:</i> Force Wall (5 PD/5 ED; 3" long)	3

Perks

2	Contact: a fence 11-
2	Contact: a street gang member 11-

Skills

3	+1 with Ice Powers Multipower
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
2	KS: Michigan Child Welfare System 11-
2	KS: Popular Music 11-
1	Language: Spanish (basic conversation; English is native)
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 12-

Total Powers and Skills Cost: 157

Total Character Cost: 251

200+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: unusually low body temperature (Easily Concealed, Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
20	Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Psychological Limitation: Pyrophobia (Fear Of Fire) (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy; Wants Luxurious Things (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Christine Saunders) (Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Fire/Heat Attacks (Common)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Fire/Heat Attacks (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 335

Background/History: Christine Saunders's background is a mystery. As a baby, she was left on the doorstep of a Detroit orphanage. She grew up in a series of state institutions and foster homes (one

ICICLE PLOT SEEDS

Icicle learns (perhaps through DNA fingerprinting after being captured by the police) that her father is Freon, the infamous (and similarly-powered) VIPER supervillain. Will she confront him and try to learn more about her past? Could an enemy of Freon's try to use this information against him?

A rash of vicious robberies, resulting in two deaths and hundreds of thousands of dollars of lost property, has been committed by someone with ice powers, or an ice weapon of some sort. An intense manhunt is on for Icicle — but she didn't do it. What will she do to clear her name and keep her freedom?

VIPER captures Icicle and hooks her up to an experimental weather control device, plunging the Millennium City area into a seemingly non-stop blizzard. The heroes have to find out what's going on, stop it, and rescue Icicle before the experiments kill her.

of whom gave her her name), never quite fitting in. Although she was a nice enough girl most of the time, something about her — including the way her hands were always so cold! — seemed to put people off. When she was 14, Christina decided she'd had enough. She ran away and began living on the streets of Millennium City, surviving by stealing. She hung out with street gangs and often got into trouble with the police, but was never arrested.

One day, shortly after she turned 16, Christine got caught shoplifting from a market by the store's owner. Deciding he'd teach her a lesson, he locked her in his freezer "just for a few minutes." Fifteen minutes later, Christine's mutant powers of ice control had fully erupted. She blasted her way out of the freezer and out of the market, and soon began using her powers to commit bigger and bolder crimes. She's been neglected and poor for too long; now she's going to attract some attention and get rich!

Personality/Motivation: Despite the hard life she's lived, Icicle is a pretty well-adjusted person. She likes to have fun (listening to music and dancing are her favorite ways), and usually approaches things (including crime) with a sort of lighthearted and carefree attitude. Now that she's got her powers, life is mostly a big game to her, in which she tries to satisfy her desire to live the "high life" to the fullest. Even the defeats she's suffered at the hands of superheroes haven't affected her mood; things are so much better for her now than they've ever been, that she can handle a few setbacks. If things keep going well, she'll probably keep this optimistic attitude for the rest of her life. But if she suffers a long series of defeats and disappointments, or even just a single severe one, she could become bitter and cold-hearted.

Powers/Tactics: Icicle is a mutant with the ability to create ice and cold. Her powers range from blasts of ice, to chilling someone from the inside out so quickly he becomes stunned, to trapping her opponents in solid blocks of ice. She can also protect herself with ice armor or walls, and move quickly using ice slides. Her control over her powers isn't complete yet — there may be a lot more she could learn how to do.

Icicle has been in few pitched battles (she's mostly just a superpowered smash-and-grab thief), and has no real sense of tactics. If confronted, she'll fight back at first, but quickly decides to run if hurt, or if the situation doesn't seem to hold any hope of gain. She desperately wants to avoid prison, equating it with the terrible institutions she lived in as a child.

Icicle's powers depend on having a reasonable

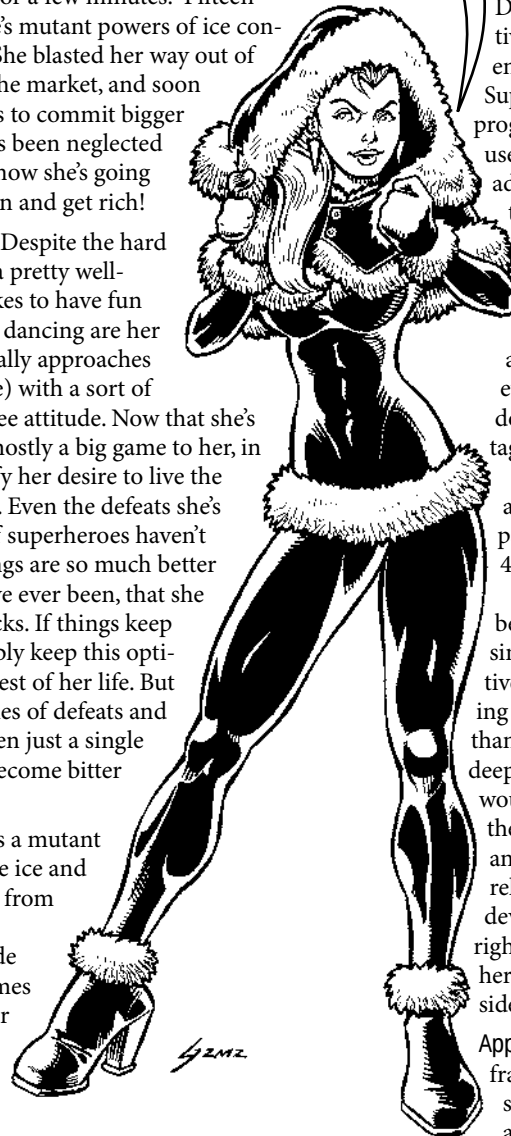
amount of moisture in the atmosphere, so they work at lesser effect (typically 75-50% of normal Active Points) in deserts and similar areas, and may not work at all in outer space or other places with no water. However, having lived near Lake Erie all her life, she doesn't know this, and since it almost never affects her, it's not reflected with a Limitation on her powers.

Campaign Use: Icicle is built on considerably less than the normal campaign starting total of 350 Character Points (200 Base + 150 Disadvantages) to reflect her relative youth and inexperience. She ends up closer to the Low-Powered Superhero total points. As the game progresses, the GM can, if he wishes, use her 80 unspent points from Disadvantages to start bringing her up to par with everyone else in the campaign. Since she hasn't yet reached her allowed total of 150 points' worth of Disadvantages, the GM might also allow her to acquire some more during play, even though characters normally don't get points for new Disadvantages earned through campaign play.

If, on the other hand, Icicle's already too powerful for your campaign, reduce her Multipower to a 40-point reserve and her SPD to 4.

Icicle would rarely, if ever, become someone's Hunted. She's simply not that driven or vindictive; she's more interested in surviving and becoming rich and secure than in pursuing vendettas. Only a deeply personal insult or humiliation would drive her to Hunt a hero. On the other hand, she might make an interesting potential romantic relationship for a young hero (or develop a crush on an older one); the right influences could certainly turn her away from crime and toward the side of Justice.

Appearance: Icicle is a slender, small-framed 18 year-old girl with long, straight blonde hair, blue eyes, and a usually-cheerful face. She wears a dark ice-blue costume and hood, edged with white fur.



Taste Of A City
 'There's a delightful ... taste ... to Vibora Bay that's unlike any other city in the world. Even the shadows have shadows, and you never know what might be lurking in them. Every visit is a wonderful string of surprises for me. The last time I was there I met the most interesting vampire. ...'



— Talisman on Vibora Bay

MECHANON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 [6]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
40	CON	60	17-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
30	PD	18		Total: 30 PD (30 rPD)
30	ED	22		Total: 30 ED (30 rED)
7	SPD	36		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
20	REC	0		
90	END	5		
90	STUN	20		Total Characteristic Cost: 331

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Flight: 20"/320"

Cost	Powers	END
90	<i>Primary Weapons Array:</i> Multipower, 90-point reserve	
9u	1) <i>Energy Bolt (Offensive Mode):</i> EB 18d6	9
9u	2) <i>Energy Bolt (Defensive Mode):</i> EB 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
9u	3) <i>Energy Bolt (Autofire Mode):</i> EB 9d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	3
9u	4) <i>Meson Bolt:</i> EB 12d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	9
9u	5) <i>Explosive Projectiles:</i> EB 9d6, Area Of Effect (5" Radius; +1)	9
9u	6) <i>Neural Agonizer:</i> EB 8d6, NND (defense is Mental Defense or not being a living organic being; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	4
9u	7) <i>Disintegrator Beam (Offensive Mode):</i> RKA 4d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	9
9u	8) <i>Disintegrator Beam (Defensive Mode):</i> RKA 4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
9u	9) <i>Cyberkinesis:</i> Mind Control 12d6 (Machine class of minds), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
4u	10) <i>Animate Technology:</i> Summon up to 4 150-point robots, Expanded Class (minor "robots"; +¼), Slavishly Loyal (+1); OIF (must have sufficient technology/parts available; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½)	9
60	<i>Secondary Weapons Array:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Synaptic Scrambler:</i> Drain DEX 4d6, Ranged (+½)	6
6u	2) <i>Muscular Disruptor:</i> Drain STR 4d6, Ranged (+½)	6
4u	3) <i>Tangle-Cable:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF; 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
4u	4) <i>Flare:</i> Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)	6
15	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Hardened (+¼) for PD and ED	0

37	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Damage Resistance (30 PD/30 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
15	<i>Psychic Shield:</i> Mental Defense (18 points total)	0
10	<i>Total Defense:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-5) for Normal and Resistant Defenses	0
12	<i>Structural Support Field:</i> Power Defense (12 points)	0
10	<i>Hardened Visual Sensors:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
45	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Life Support: Total	0
17	<i>Self-Repair Systems:</i> Healing 3d6 (Regeneration; 3 BODY per Hour), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Self Only (-½), Extra Time + Increased Time Increment (3 BODY/Hour; -2)	0
82	<i>Foot-Jets:</i> Flight 20", x16 noncombat, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
12	<i>Robotic Legs:</i> Running +6" (12" total)	1
44	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception, Ultraviolet Perception, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), x1000 Microscopic, Telescopic (+6 versus Range) (all for Sight Group)	0
15	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>Radio Sensors:</i> HRRP	0
15	<i>Radio Sensors:</i> Radar	0
12	<i>Sensor Enhancements:</i> +4 PER with all Sense Groups	0
21	<i>Shielded Radio Link:</i> Mind Link, specific group of up to any 8 minds, No LOS Needed, Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +½); Only Can Be Maintained With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-½)	0
12	<i>Encrypted Transmitter:</i> Detect Broadcast Spectrum Of Transmissions 15- (no Sense Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Transmit	0
77	<i>Detachable Head:</i> Duplication (creates one 768-point Duplicate); Original Character Is Incapacitated And Helpless While Duplicate Exists (-1)	0
57	<i>Self-Destruct Mechanism:</i> RKA 7d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field; +1), Does BODY (+1), Trigger (encrypted radio signal from detached head or base; +¼); Self Only (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	[1]

Talents

32	<i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator, Universal Translator 15-
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Skills

12	+4 with Primary Weapons Array Multipower
30	+3 Overall

13	AK: Earth 25-
3	Combat Driving 14-
3	Combat Piloting 14-
3	Computer Programming 15-
3	Cryptography 15-
3	Deduction 15-
3	Demolitions 15-
3	Electronics 15-
3	Inventor 15-
3	Lockpicking 14-
3	Mechanics 15-
3	Security Systems 15-
3	Systems Operation 15-
3	Scientist
2	1) Astronomy 15-
2	2) Biology 15-
2	3) Chemistry 15-
2	4) Genetics 15-
2	5) Geology 15-
2	6) Nuclear Physics 15-
2	7) Physics 15-
2	8) Robotics 15-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 920

Total Cost: 1,251

200+ Disadvantages

20	Hunted: Champions 11- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
25	Psychological Limitation: Must Destroy All Organic Life On Earth (Very Common, Total)
20	Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Strong)
20	Reputation: supervillain of world-threatening power, 14- (Extreme)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN From Gravity, Magnetic, Or Force Attacks (Common)
931	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 1,251

MECHANON'S HEAD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25 kg; 0d6
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
40	CON	60	17-	
5	BODY	-10	10-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
30	PD	30		Total: 30 PD (30 rPD)
30	ED	22		Total: 30 ED (30 rED)
7	SPD	36		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
8	REC	0		
90	END	5		
45	STUN	20		Total Characteristic Cost: 233

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Flight: 20"/320"

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Hardened (+¼) for PD and ED	0
37	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Damage Resistance (30 PD/30 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
15	<i>Psychic Shield:</i> Mental Defense (15 points total)	0
12	<i>Structural Support Field:</i> Power Defense (12 points)	0
10	<i>Hardened Visual Sensors:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
45	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Life Support: Total	0
82	<i>Neck-Jet:</i> Flight 20", x16 noncombat, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
44	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception, Ultraviolet Perception, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), x1000 Microscopic, Telescopic (+6 versus Range) (all for Sight Group)	0
15	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>Radio Sensors:</i> HRRP	0
15	<i>Radio Sensors:</i> Radar	0
12	<i>Sensor Enhancements:</i> +4 PER with all Sense Groups	0
21	<i>Shielded Radio Link:</i> Mind Link, specific group of up to any 8 minds, No LOS Needed, Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +½); Only Can Be Maintained With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-½)	0
12	<i>Encrypted Transmitter:</i> Detect Broadcast Spectrum Of Transmissions 15- (no Sense Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Transmit	0
32	<i>Self-Destruct Mechanism:</i> RKA 4d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field; +1), Does BODY (+1), Trigger (encrypted radio signal from base; +¼); Self Only (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4) [1]	

Talents

32	<i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator, Universal Translator 15-
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Skills

30	+3 Overall
20	+4 DCV

13	AK: Earth 25-
3	Combat Driving 14-
3	Combat Piloting 14-
3	Computer Programming 15-
3	Cryptography 15-
3	Deduction 15-
3	Demolitions 15-
3	Electronics 15-
3	Inventor 15-
3	Lockpicking 14-
3	Mechanics 15-

- 3 Security Systems 15-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 3 Systems Operation 15-
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) Astronomy 15-
- 2 2) Biology 15-
- 2 3) Chemistry 15-
- 2 4) Genetics 15-
- 2 5) Geology 15-
- 2 6) Nuclear Physics 15-
- 2 7) Physics 15-
- 2 8) Robotics 15-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 535

Total Cost: 768

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Champions 11- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Physical Limitation: No Manipulatory Limbs (All The Time, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Diminutive (suffers +6" KB) (All The Time, Slightly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Must Destroy All Organic Life On Earth (Very Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Strong)
- 20 Reputation: supervillain of world-threatening power, 14- (Extreme)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN From Gravity, Magnetic, Or Force Attacks (Common)
- 405 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 768

Background/History: Mechanon's precise origin and history are unknown. Despite years of dedicated investigation and research by superheroes, police departments, and intelligence agencies, sometimes using computers captured from the robotic arch-villain himself, no one knows who built him, or why.

Theories, of course, abound. Some scientists claim he's the product of alien super-science, and is an advance assault force/scout designed to cleanse this planet of organic life and prepare it for invasion and colonization. The late superhero Digitak asserted on several occasions that he "knew" Mechanon was an experiment of Dr. Destroyer's that went awry and escaped from Zerstoiten's control. A group of conspiracy theorists based in the northeastern United States and Europe opine that Mechanon evolved from the Internet and built itself. All of those theories, or none of them, could contain the truth... or at least part of it.

What is known for certain is that Mechanon first appeared in public on October 18, 1985, when he launched an attack on the White House that resulted in the deaths of fifteen top-level officials and threatened the life of President Reagan himself. Mechanon's goal appears to have been the acquisition of America's nuclear launch codes, which he intended to use to start a global holo-

caust, but fortunately the Sentinels damaged him enough to drive him away.

Thereafter, Mechanon began new schemes or assaults on a regular basis — so regularly, in fact, that it has become apparent he has multiple plots in the works at all times, and brings them to fruition only at the appropriate time. So far, the superheroes of the world have beaten back his attacks on humanity, but often by the barest of margins. A few times they have even managed to destroy him... but he always returns, in a newer, stronger form. It may only be a matter of time before his technological evolution progresses to the point where nothing on Earth can stop him.

Personality/Motivation: Mechanon's programming, whether it's his original directives or (as some people assert) highly flawed versions of the originals, infuses him with an absolute and unending hatred for all forms of organic life. Mechanon considers organic life a flaw or blot in the pattern of reality, one which can only be corrected by removal. His goal is nothing less than the extermination of all organic life on the planet Earth (and perhaps the universe).

Mechanon's programming also apparently controls his approach to achieving this goal. Rather than go about his business quietly and efficiently, Mechanon seems driven to launch one grandiloquent scheme after another, each designed to accomplish his objectives in one fell swoop. Despite numerous defeats, he remains utterly confident in his own superiority, certain he will one day control a planet from which he has expunged all life. Superheroes who have confronted him, and know his power, are aware his confidence is well-deserved.

Powers/Tactics: Experts rightly regard Mechanon as one of the most technologically advanced devices on Earth. In fact, he is so sophisticated that, unlike most robots, he can take "STUN" damage from attacks of sufficient strength to bypass his shielding and jar some of his more delicate systems. His computer brain is so complex that it responds just like an organic brain would to psychic powers (though it does have built-in defenses against such powers).

To ensure his ongoing existence, and thus the eventual achievement of his goal, Mechanon has devised several stratagems. The first is heavy defense. His basic armor plating, reinforced by low-level internal force fields, provides protection against most attacks, and dedicated defensive systems serve to stop or blunt more exotic forms of assault. If he suffers damage, his advanced self-repair systems can restore him to full operating efficiency in mere hours.

In the event the unthinkable — total defeat or destruction — is imminent, Mechanon has two options. First, if time allows, he can detach his head from his body and have it fly away, (triggering his Self-Destruct Mechanism in the process), thus preserving his entire computer brain and allowing him to simply attach it to another body. If that won't work, he can transmit his personal-

MECHANON PLOT SEEDS

Unwilling to accept the humiliation of his very first defeat, Mechanon begins a series of assaults on various United States government installations with the aim of obtaining the codes controlling America's nuclear weapons. This culminates in another attack on the White House. If the heroes stymie him again, he can always turn to the much less well-guarded Russian arsenals....

Mechanon decides to construct a large spacecraft with which to travel to the asteroid belt and begin bombing Earth with asteroids. A few good hits should be enough to create conditions that lead to the extinction of life on Earth (or at least weaken Earth's defenders enough for Mechanon to finish the job on his own). Building this spacecraft is no easy matter; Mechanon will have to commit a series of robberies to obtain the parts and data he needs to do it. That gives the PCs the chance to figure out what's going on, and stop it.

The unthinkable happens — Mechanon and Dr. Destroyer, perhaps the two most powerful supervillains on the planet, team up! No one knows what has prompted the evil Doctor to join forces with Mechanon, for whom he usually expresses nothing but contempt, but their plans for the world can't be good....

ity and files to one of his many backup computer systems via his Shielded Radio Link and/or Encrypted Transmitter. He updates his computer records frequently, so that he only has to transmit records since the last update. If neither of those tactics work, he has programmed his robotic bases to create a new Mechanon after the demise of the current body (in this event he loses all record of events and information gathered since his last update).

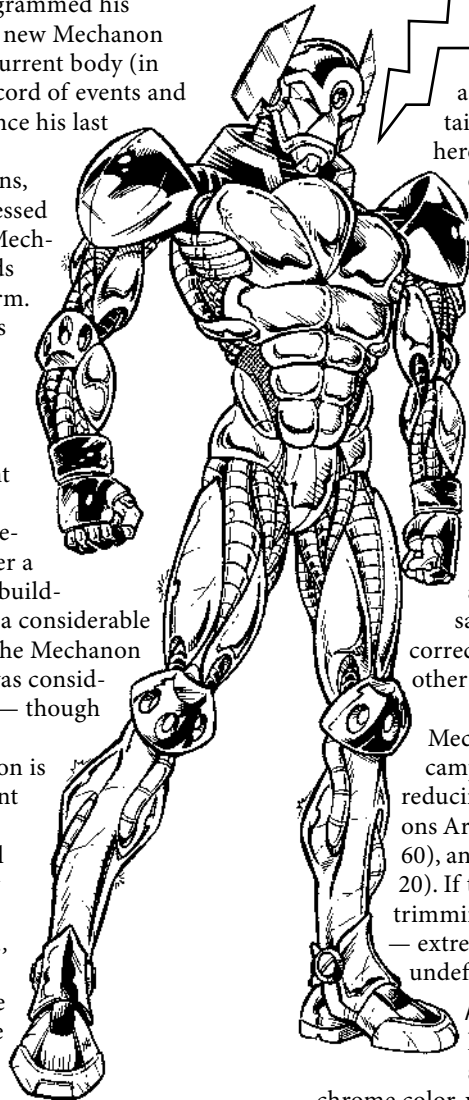
For unknown reasons, and despite his oft-expressed loathing for humanity, Mechanon continually rebuilds himself in humanoid form. Most experts believe this is simply because it's the most efficient shape for him to use, but others have hinted at more sinister reasons. The current Mechanon described by this character sheet represents the villain after over a decade of defeats and rebuilding, and thus represents a considerable amount of experience. The Mechanon who appeared in 1985 was considerably weaker than this — though not weak.

In combat, Mechanon is an aggressive and efficient foe who doesn't hesitate to use his most powerful attacks at all times (only the need to conserve or replenish his energy [*i.e.*, Recover spent END] is likely to force him to use less powerful attacks. He favors multiple-Power attacks, often combining his Flare, Synaptic Scrambler, or Muscular Disruptor with one of his Energy Bolts or a Disintegrator Beam. He usually starts with basic Energy Bolts, switching to other weapons if they prove ineffective. If he needs to capture an organic for interrogation or dissection, he uses his Tangle-Cable. His most unusual power is the ability to animate other machines, turning them into small but deadly servitor robots! (You can find sample character sheets for Mechanon's Summoned robots on the "Free Stuff" page of the Hero Games website, www.herogames.com, or simply create your own).

Campaign Use: Mechanon is a master villain of epic scope, one you can pit against the PCs again and again as he undertakes one spectacular scheme after another to destroy all life on Earth. Since the stakes are so high, the dramatic tension should be, too.

As a master villain, Mechanon should have whatever Bases, Followers, and Vehicles he needs;

FOOLISH ORGANICS! YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY HOPE TO DEFEAT ONE WHO IS THE PUREST EMBODIMENT OF TECHNOLOGY'S SUPERIORITY!



Automatons.

As a Hunted, Mechanon is a terrifying opponent. Almost certainly More Powerful than any given hero (or even hero team), he Hunts only to kill. He may want to capture a hero first, perhaps to analyze his technology and adapt any new or useful systems for his own use, but in the end he intends to kill anyone who opposes him.

Mechanon should always be able to take on your entire group of PCs and have a significant chance of defeating them. If not, you can justify improvements to him as "upgrades" resulting from his analysis of the heroes' tactics or his defeats at their hands. Mechanon should never be defeated the same way twice; he learns from (and corrects) his mistakes better than any other villain on Earth.

On the other hand, if the current Mechanon is too powerful for your campaign's PCs, scale him down by reducing his SPD to 5, his Primary Weapons Array to 75 Active Points (or even 60), and his PD and ED to 25 (or even 20). If that still doesn't do the trick, keep trimming until he's an appropriate match — extremely tough, but not completely undefeatable.

Appearance: Mechanon is a humanoid robot standing over seven feet tall. His body is a silvery chrome color, with gold power cables snaking up and down his limbs and torso like exposed muscles. His head has two large, flat superstructures projecting to either side (radio antennae, and control surfaces for detached mode). His visual sensors glow reddish-purple.



Going The Distance

'Yes, it's true that I've fought Firewing to a standstill before — but that was a long time ago, on another world, when he was a very different person. With the power he's got now, it takes an entire team to challenge him. Unfortunately, what he calls a 'good fight' usually causes a lot of property damage.'

— Ironclad of the Champions

PULSAR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
14	BODY	8	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
12	COM	1	11-	
13	PD	10		Total: 23 (10 rPD)
17	ED	12		Total: 27 (10 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	4		
46	END	0		
40	STUN	6		Total Characteristic Cost: 145

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 10"/20"

Cost	Powers	END
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60	<i>Energy Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point powers	
6u	1) <i>Power Blast I:</i> EB 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Power Blast II:</i> EB 8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
6u	3) <i>Stun-Blast:</i> EB 6d6, NND (defense is ED FF; +1)	6
2u	4) <i>Powered Punch:</i> HA +5d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	2
30	<i>Force Field:</i> FF (10 PD/ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
30	<i>Power-Flight:</i> Flight 10", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0

Martial Arts: Commando Training

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3	Aikido Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5, Target Falls
4	Boxing Cross	+0	+2	5d6
4	Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND (2)
4	Karate "Chop"	-2	+0	½d6 HKA (1d6+1 with STR)

Skills

9	+3 with Energy Powers Multipower
4	+2 with Flight
3	Combat Driving 14-
3	Concealment 11-
3	Demolitions 11-
2	Gambling (Card Games) 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
1	KS: VIPER 8-
1	KS: U.S. Army 8-
3	Power: Energy Powers 14-
2	PS: Soldier 11-
5	Security Systems 12-
3	Shadowing 11-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 12-
1	Systems Operation 8-

2 TF: SCUBA, Snow Skiing

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 203**Total Cost: 350****200+ Disadvantages**

20	Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frank Costen) (Frequently, Major)
15	Unluck 3d6
30	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Physical HKAs (Very Common)
35	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: It didn't take Frank Costen long to discover there aren't too many things you can do when you're a high school dropout who's been dishonorably discharged from the Army. Sure, you can get drunk and start barfights, but only if you've got money to buy liquor. It wasn't long before Frank didn't even have that.

So, when Frank got a tip about a VIPER recruiting drive, he jumped at the chance. He figured he'd be perfect for it — with his military experience, he was a shoe-in! Soon he'd be on his way to the big time.

The tip turned out to be good, and Frank was soon being given a physical by some VIPER scientists. After taking a look at his test results, the scientists made him an offer. They were looking for some "special recruits" to become part of an elite VIPER fighting force. Was he interested?

This time, Frank was certain, his luck was changing. He was right — but not the way he thought. The "evaluation test" for the "elite fighting force" turned out to be experiments in human mutation. As the electronic hum of the machinery he was strapped to rose in pitch, Frank felt intense pain sear through every cell of his body. And then it got worse. And worse.

Frank was in so much agony, he barely noticed when the machinery exploded around him. It was a couple of minutes before he realized he was lying on the floor in a heap of rubble. Even better, the pain was gone! In fact, he felt... better. More alive, more vital, more — energetic. In fact, his body was bursting with energy.

Almost without thinking, Frank blasted the rubble off his body and stood up. He was glowing green, but he didn't care. All he cared about was getting back at those scientists.

A few minutes and three dead scientists later, Frank was finally knocked out and restrained by VIPER soldiers. When he came to, the Nest Leader made him an offer: come to work for VIPER, or be killed. Frank knew a losing hand when he saw it, so he signed up.

He didn't like it, though. Not wanting to be bossed around was what led to his dishonorable discharge, after all. At the first opportunity, he

**PULSAR
PLOT SEEDS**

After he defeats a team of VIPER agents sent to kill him, Pulsar finds clues that lead him to a VIPER lab, where he steals a prototype energy-augmentation device. With his powers tripled in strength, he's now every bit as dangerous as he normally thinks he is! What will he do with his new-found might? And what side effects could the device have...?

Some of Frank's old Army superiors find out who Pulsar really is and decide to manipulate him into coming to work for them as part of a secret "superhuman soldier" project. How much harm will they cause before the heroes figure out what's going on and put a stop to it?

Pulsar comes to the heroes, claiming his energy powers are overloading and he's afraid he's dying. He genuinely seems terrified, but is it all part of an elaborate trap, or a true plea for help?

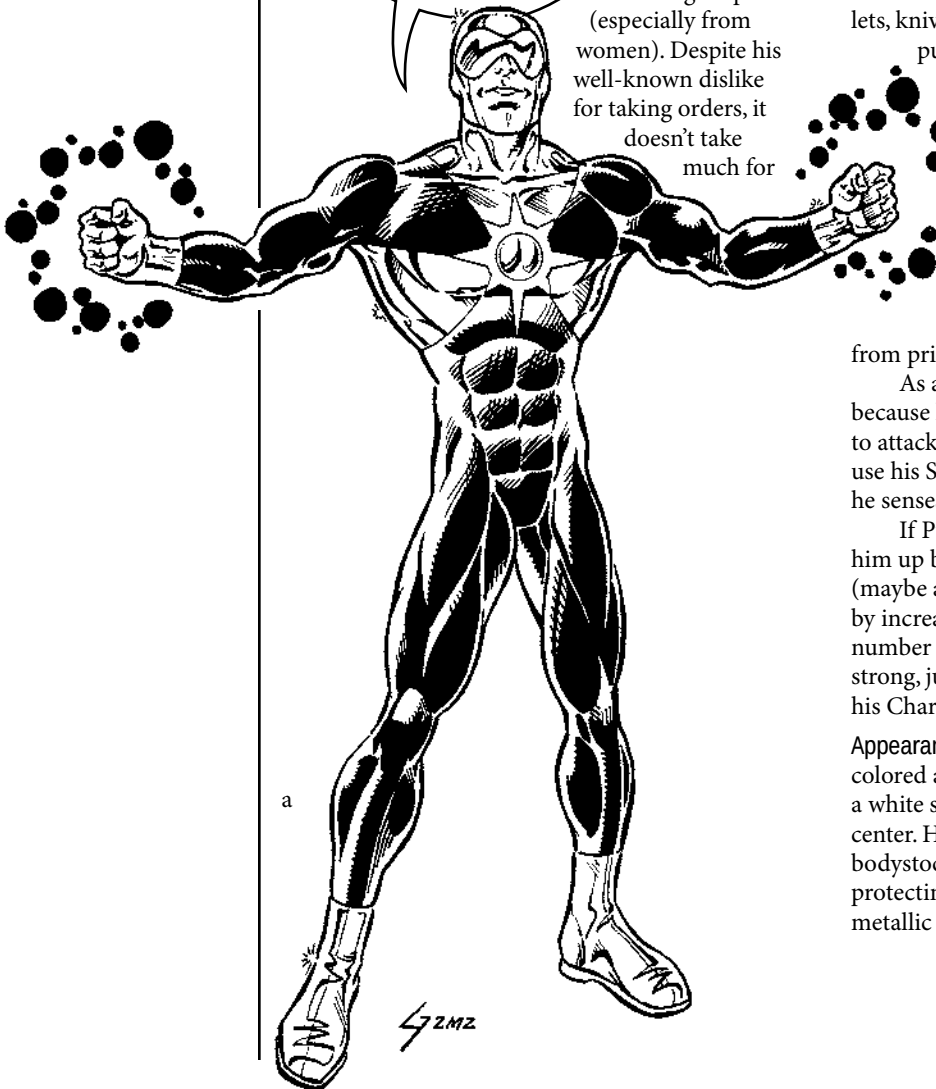
blasted his way out and never looked back.

Since then, Frank — using the name Pulsar — has been a common sight on the supervillain scene. Sometimes involved with a scheme of his own, sometimes working for other criminals, he has fought most of the major superheroes in America, and a lot of the minor ones. He's done precious little winning, though. Somehow things just don't seem to go his way. But this *next* job, see, it's *perfect*; nothing can possibly go wrong....

Personality/Motivation: Pulsar is, at heart, a lazy underachiever. He thinks of himself as the stuff master villains are made of, and one of the most powerful men in the world. He explains all his failures away as "bad luck." But the truth is he doesn't work hard at anything; he expects to be given fame, fortune, and women on a silver platter, and he has an excuse for everything that goes wrong.

Despite his numerous failures, losses, and periods of imprisonment, Pulsar has an overweening sense of self-confidence. He's convinced he has the power to defeat anyone, and he's quite susceptible to flattering comments and extravagant praise (especially from women). Despite his well-known dislike for taking orders, it doesn't take much for

NOW YOU'LL SEE WHAT
TRUE POWER IS!



charismatic person to manipulate Pulsar into doing his bidding.

For reasons best left unexplored, Pulsar has an unhealthy fascination with celebrity Morgan Fairchild. Many of his schemes seem to have as their goal attracting her attention. He often ends a glowing description of one his plans with the phrase, "And then, Morgan Fairchild will be mine at last!" But he's never attacked, kidnapped, threatened, or stalked her; he seems determined to win her affection on his own merits.

Powers/Tactics: VIPER's experiments in mutating humans granted Pulsar energy powers. He can fire power-blasts, fly, and protect himself with a force field. He can even use his power to "juice up" an otherwise ordinary punch — a tactic he loves to use to show how macho and tough he is.

Even though he's had military training, Pulsar has little grasp of tactics. Mainly he shows off, blasting the biggest, most obvious, or most important target to show his power. He likes to Haymaker his power blasts when he can, more for the impressiveness than the extra damage. (He always follows them up with a Presence Attack.)

The only downside to Pulsar's powers is the way they altered his molecular structure, making him vulnerable to things that pierce his skin — bullets, knives, and so on. Energy seeps out of cuts and punctures like blood gushing from a wound, causing him intense pain. For this reason, he avoids opponents with such attacks whenever he can.

Campaign Use: Pulsar is a good "throwaway" villain you can use in just about any scenario. He can work with just about anyone, be manipulated into doing just about anything, and always seems to find a way to escape from prison.

As a Hunter, Pulsar is dangerous mainly because he loves to plan ambushes and often seems to attack at the worst possible time. If he can, he'll use his Shadowing to follow his target around until he senses "just the right moment to strike!"

If Pulsar's too weak for your campaign, scale him up by giving him a few more energy powers (maybe a Force Wall, Telekinesis, or the like) and by increasing the DCs in his attacks and/or the number of CSLs he can apply to them. If he's too strong, just decrease his DCs, and perhaps a few of his Characteristics.

Appearance: Pulsar wears a bodystocking that's colored a green-tinted chrome. On his chest there's a white starburst symbol with a silvery green center. His half-face mask, the same color as his bodystocking, includes a set of darker green eye-protecting goggles. His boots and short gloves are a metallic green.

TACHYON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [5]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
25	CON	30	14-	
14	BODY	8	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
14	COM	2	12-	
24	PD	14		Total: 24 PD (24 rPD)
24	ED	19		Total: 24 ED (24 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases = 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	0		
50	END	0		
52	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 176

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 10"/20"
Teleportation: 25"/50"

Cost	Powers	END
24	<i>Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (24 PD/ED)	0
60	<i>Teleportation Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Basic Teleportation:</i> Teleportation 30"	6
6u	2) <i>Courier Teleportation:</i> Teleportation 20", Position Shift, x8 mass	6
5u	3) <i>Long-Range Teleportation:</i> Teleportation 20", MegaScale (1" = 1 km; +¼)	5
6u	4) <i>Focused Teleportation:</i> Teleportation 15", Armor Piercing (x2; +1)	6
6u	5) <i>Aportation:</i> Teleportation 12", Usable As Attack (+1), Ranged (+½)	6
4u	6) <i>Combat Aportation I:</i> RKA 2d6, Penetrating (x2; +1); OIF (any small teleportable object; -½)	6
3u	7) <i>Combat Aportation II:</i> EB 5d6, NND (defense is having Teleportation, gravitic, magnetic, or dimension-manipulation powers; +1); No Range (-½)	5
3u	8) <i>Blink Teleport:</i> +8 DCV; Costs Endurance (-½)	4
2	<i>Escape Routes:</i> Two Fixed Locations for Teleportation (home; office)	0
Perks		
2	Contact: prominent astrophysicist 11-	
Skills		
16	+2 with All Combat	
3	Computer Programming 12-	
3	Electronics 12-	
3	CK: Millennium City 12-	
2	CK: Chicago 11-	
2	KS: Football 11-	
3	PS: Instructor 12-	
3	PS: Operate Telescope 12-	
2	PS: Play Football 11-	
5	SS: Astronomy 14-	
3	Stealth 13-	
1	Systems Operation 8-	

1 Teamwork 8-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 174

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Must Prove That He's The Best (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Scientific Curiosity (Common, Moderate)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (with another astronomy professor; Rival Is Aware Of Rivalry)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (with Thunderbolt II; Rival Is Aware Of Rivalry)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Prof. Steve Maxwell) (Frequently, Major)
- 15 Susceptibility: to kelvarite, 1d6 damage per Phase (Uncommon)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Drains (Common)
- 25 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background: Born and raised in Chicago, Steve Maxwell always had a strong competitive streak. Whether it was sports, grades, or picking up girls, Steve had to try to be the best — and he usually succeeded. To no one's surprise, he ended up attending an excellent college, Millennium City University, on a full ride based both on his skill as a football player and his grades.

Steve's string of successes continued at MCU, but his enjoyment of college life was marred by one thing: another student, Rob Bleskind. Somehow they just rubbed each other completely the wrong way. Bleskind was every bit as competitive as Steve was, and every bit as good. Since they both were majoring in the sciences, they bumped into each other on campus all the time, and harsh insults were the least they usually exchanged. The campus cops broke up more than one fist-fight between them.

In Steve's senior year, MCU got an unprecedented opportunity — the chance to examine part of a strange meteorite that had hit Earth in Kentucky. One of the minerals in the meteorite was not found on Earth, and MCU was the first to have a chance to examine one of the chunks containing bits of this strange new rock, dubbed "kelvarite."

To Steve's delight, he was asked to participate in the analysis, due to his strong background in astronomy. His enjoyment of the moment was spoiled when the professors brought Bleskind in as well, due to his skills as a geologist. It was all the two of them could do to be civil to each other when the professors were around.

And then the professors left the room for a minute to get some equipment. What happened next is a matter of debate. Both Steve and Bleskind claim the other one began an unauthorized test. Or it may be that they got into a fight and knocked something over. Or maybe they didn't do anything.

**TACHYON
PLOT SEEDS**

Tachyon discovers his Susceptibility to kelvarite and decides to study the problem so he can "cure" it (*i.e.*, decrease or buy off the Disadvantage). But since he can't get close to the stuff, he'll have to force or trick an innocent scientist into helping him....

After a research grant falls through, Tachyon, desperate for funding to continue his work, hires himself out to a mysterious patron, who has him commit a series of bizarre burglaries. Unable to restrain his curiosity, he begins trying to find out who his benefactor is... and after that gets him into more trouble than he can handle, he comes running to the PCs for help.

In an effort to get PRIMUS off his back, Tachyon trashes one of the organization's bases and steals a lot of equipment and records. Unfortunately, one of the things he got were notes for a powerful new version of Cyberline the agency has been working on. PRIMUS needs those notes back as soon as possible, before Tachyon can sell them, and asks the heroes to find him.

But regardless of what they did or didn't do, the meteor *did* do something — it exploded! Both of them were showered with tiny particles and fragments of kelvarite. Bleskind, being closer to the meteor when the disaster occurred, was bombarded with more kelvarite than Steve was.

Steve woke up in the hospital. He was amazed to find out that he didn't feel any pain. In fact, he felt terrific! It didn't take long for him to discover that the accident had somehow granted him prodigious strength. And when a nurse opened the door and surprised him, he discovered another one his powers — teleportation — purely by reflex. Fortunately, he managed to get back into his room before the nurse noticed he was missing.

As he continued his studies, eventually earning a Ph.D in astronomy, Steve practiced with his powers. He developed fine control over his teleportation powers, and explored the extent and uses of his enormous strength. Being fairly self-centered and quite greedy, he soon began committing burglaries — an easy enough thing to do for a super-strong teleporter.

Today, Steve lives a double life. Most of the time he's one of the newest astronomy professors at MCU, teaching undergrads the ins and outs of stars, nebulae, and planetary formation. But when he feels like it, or when someone hires him to do a job, he hits the streets as Tachyon, stealing and committing mayhem as the mood takes him.

Personality/Motivation: Tachyon is not a complex person, as supervillains go. He's self-centered, greedy, and basically amoral, though he does a good job of covering these negative qualities and blending into normal society on a day-to-day basis. His drive to prove his own superiority has lasted into adulthood; he still can't stand it when anyone outdoes him — or even comes close to outdoing him — and will do whatever it takes to prove he's the better man. If a superhero defeats him, he'll keep coming back, again and again, until he achieves victory.

As a scientist — he genuinely loves his work, and can talk about it for hours — Tachyon has a strong streak of scientific curiosity. He likes to know what makes things work, why they happen the way they do. If presented with a mystery or a puzzle, he often focuses on it intently, becoming more absorbed in it than he should be. A superhero who discovers this trait might be able to devise a

clever trap for him.

Tachyon remains bitter rivals with Rob Bleskind, who's now better known as Thunderbolt. Each of them does his best to interfere with the other's work, taunt him, and make him miserable. The two have yet to put their superpowers to the test against each other, but they know it's only a matter of time.

Powers/Tactics: Being bombarded with the mysterious alien mineral kelvarite (about which Earth science still knows almost nothing) granted Tachyon an unusual and powerful suite of superhuman abilities. First, it greatly augmented his strength and resilience, giving him the ability to toss vehicles around and punch through armor plating with ease. Second, it somehow interacted with his bioelectric field to grant him teleportation powers. In addition to teleporting himself, he can teleport others (even against their will) or teleport small objects into people (causing terrible wounds). For a less lethal attack, he can simply "blink teleport" a person in and out rapidly, causing such strain to the person's system that the victim often passes out.

Tachyon has developed a number of tactics to take advantage of his abilities. For example, if he's facing someone, he can use his Courier Teleportation to 'port in behind them so that he's looking at the target's back, and then punch them for all he's worth. With the GM's permission, he could combine his Aportation with a punch (Strike) as a multiple-Power attack.

Although Tachyon doesn't know it yet, his kelvarite-based powers come with kelvarite-based weaknesses as well. For one thing, exposure to other kelvarite somehow weakens and harms him, and could even kill him if it were prolonged. Fortunately, kelvarite is pretty rare; the only known sources on Earth right now come from the meteor mentioned

above, one fragment of which Steve Maxwell got to study. Somehow the kelvarite in his body also makes him vulnerable to attacks that sap his abilities (*i.e.*, Drains).

Campaign Use: Tachyon is a powerful opponent with an unusual set of powers the GM can use to keep the players on their toes. He's difficult to keep imprisoned once captured, so he can always come back to get revenge.

To make Tachyon a little more powerful, boost his STR to 60, his Multipower reserve to 75, and his Multipower slots accordingly. You could also increase his SPD to 6. If you find he's too powerful for your game, try reducing his STR to 40, his SPD



to 4, and/or his Multipower to a 50-point reserve.

As a Hunter, Tachyon is a dogged and determined foe. He'll usually start Hunting a hero because the hero humiliated or bested him in some way, and he's dead set on proving who the "better man" really is — if necessary, in front of a huge crowd of people, just so the whole city hears about it. He's not particularly vicious or interested in killing his targets, but he'll gladly beat them to within an inch of their lives and embarrass them thoroughly.

Appearance: Tachyon is a tall, extremely muscular man who wears a blue and green costume when committing crimes. His boots and short gloves are blue. Blue runs up the inner half of his leg and up the center of his chest, spreading out over his shoulders and ending where the shoulders meet the upper arms in a point. Green runs up the outer half of his legs and his sides, and all the way down his arms. His short gloves are blue. He wears a blue domino mask and has short black hair. When he teleports, a field of bluish energy, a bit lighter in tone than his costume, surrounds his body and then fades away right after he disappears.

TALISMAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
21	EGO	22	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
20	COM	5	13-	
5	PD	3		Total: 19 PD (14 rPD)
7	ED	3		Total: 21 ED (14 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
56	END	8		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristic Cost: 139

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Mastery Of Hellfire:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Hellfire:</i> EB 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Hellfire Gate:</i> EB 8d6, Explosion (+½)	6
6u	3) <i>Agonizing Hellfire:</i> EB 8d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	6
6u	4) <i>Writhing Hellfire:</i> EB 4d6, Continuous (+1), Penetrating (+½), Uncontrolled (+½)	6
40	<i>Foul Sorcery:</i> Multipower, 40-point reserve	
4u	1) <i>Domination:</i> Mind Control 8d6	4
4u	2) <i>Befuddlement:</i> Mental Illusions 8d6	4
4u	3) <i>Spell Of Torment:</i> Ego Attack 4d6	4
4u	4) <i>Touch Of Terror:</i> Drain PRE 4d6	4
20	<i>Helpful Witcheries:</i> Elemental Control, 40-point powers	
22	1) <i>Shield Of Sorcery:</i> Force Field (14 PD/14 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
20	2) <i>Wings Of The Wind:</i> Flight 20"	4

- 20 3) *Visions:* Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 4x Range (600") 4
3 *Magesense:* Detect Magic 13-; Concentration (0 DCV; -½) 0

Perks

- 2 Contact: a member of the Circle Of The Scarlet Moon 11-
4 Contact: a Morbanes of DEMON 11- (very useful Skills and resources, has significant Contacts of his own)
4 Contact: Dark Seraph 8- (extremely useful powers and resources)

Skills

- 6 +2 with Mastery Of Hellfire Multipower
3 High Society 14-
3 CK: Vibora Bay 13-
2 CK: Millennium City 11-
3 KS: Arcane & Occult Lore 13-
3 KS: Demonology 13-
3 KS: Necromancy 13-
3 KS: Witchcraft 13-
1 Language: Latin (basic conversation)
3 Seduction 14-
3 Stealth 13-
3 Streetwise 14-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 271

Total Cost: 410

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
20 Hunted: Trismegistus Council 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15 Hunted: DEMON 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
20 Psychological Limitation: Corrupted Soul (Common, Total)
15 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Self-Centered; Cares Only For Herself (Common, Strong)
15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Pamela Duquesne) (Frequently, Major)
115 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 410

Background/History: Pamela Duquesne and her twin sister, Bethany, were raised in a seemingly ordinary suburban home. But behind that seemingly normal facade lurked a shadow, for the Duquesnes were witches devoted to the dark powers, and they raised their daughters to become witches in turn. Pamela, cruel and spiteful almost from birth, welcomed the teachings and took to witchcraft readily, while Bethany, kind-hearted and shy, had more trouble.

On their eighteenth birthdays, both girls were to be formally inducted into the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, the powerful coven their parents belonged to. Eager for ever-greater power, Pamela spoke the oaths readily, but Bethany was horrified and ran away. Glad to be rid of her goodie-two-shoes sister, Pamela immersed herself in studying with the Circle, learning

TALISMAN PLOT SEEDS

Eager to divine the location of the Karathos Orb, an enchanted item of great power, Talisman commits several crimes to obtain the bizarre ingredients needed for a finding-spell. Can the heroes figure out what she's up to in time to stop her — or must they defeat an Orb-wielding witch with four or five times her normal might?

Inexplicably, Talisman falls in love with a male PC (or prominent NPC). Using powerful black magic, she warps his mind and personality, making him as evil as herself and her partner in crime. Can the PCs rescue their friend without hurting him?

When a powerful demon comes to get Talisman to return a favor he once did her, Talisman manages to trick him into thinking that she's Witchcraft (or your PC team's mystic, as applicable), and vice-versa. Since the heroic mystic has no idea what's going on, the PCs soon find themselves with one very angry demon on their hands....

much dark magic from them.

Eventually, though, she became dissatisfied with the Circle. It was too hidebound, too obsessed with pointless rituals and traditions that only inhibited her ability to learn magic. She left, seeking other tutors. Down through the years she studied with many, including the feared sorcerer-priests of DEMON and the demonic Dark Seraph. Any route that offered greater access to power, be it making blood sacrifices or corrupting her tutors with her charms, she gladly took.

But she has done more with her life than study. Pamela, who prefers the nickname "Talisman," isn't content to stay in the library all the time. She wants bright lights, big cities, fast money, and the adoration of beautiful people. Seeking these things, she turned her powers to crime, and found it an even easier path to influence and power (albeit power of a different sort). With her mastery of hellfire and other magical abilities, she's a match for most superheroes — including her weakling sister, who joined the Champions. Talisman eagerly looks forward to the day when she can finally destroy Witchcraft utterly. She almost succeeded once, but only managed to curse her. A rematch is only a matter of time.

Personality/Motivation: Cruel, sadistic, petty, manipulative, and supremely self-centered, Talisman is almost the complete opposite of her sister Witchcraft. Pamela is outgoing, bold, self-confident, openly sexy, and assertive, unlike the more shy, quiet Bethany. Long exposure to and use of black magic has corrupted her soul, and though she hasn't sold it yet, even that dire step down the path to damnation is likely only a matter of time.

Powers/Tactics: Talisman's powers derive from her study and practice of black magic. She specializes in the manipulation of arcane Hellfire, but has also mastered sorcery and various general magics. Unlike Witchcraft, who sacrificed power for breadth of ability, Talisman has focused on developing powers more suited to her selfish desires and ignored the "petty magics" of "lesser witches." But her powerful magics can tire her easily if she's not careful; when using her in a game, keep careful track of her END usage.

Also unlike Witchcraft, Talisman has chosen the quick and easy routes to power, caring not for the harm they may inflict on the world, or ultimately on herself. Thus she possesses greater power (*i.e.*, more Character Points) than Witchcraft, though they've both been studying magic for roughly the same amount of time. Talisman's Experience Points reflect this moreso than they do more experience (though in

fact Talisman has had more opportunity to practice using spells on people than Witchcraft has, since she doesn't care about hurting or manipulating innocents for her own purposes).

Talisman often gestures and incants when casting her spells, but she doesn't have to — she's just used to doing so. She's perfectly capable of using any of her powers even when bound and gagged.

The Trismegistus Council, an order of benevolent mystics with whom Witchcraft has some association, would like to capture and neutralize Talisman, whom they regard as a great threat to the world (they won't explain exactly why to Witchcraft). DEMON, with whom Talisman has worked in the past, would like to find a way to force her to add her power to its ranks, but so far she has eluded their snares.

Campaign Use: Talisman makes a good general-purpose mystic villain for a variety of scenarios, but often works best when some element of her background — usually Witchcraft, but possibly a Hunted or the like — is also part of the story.

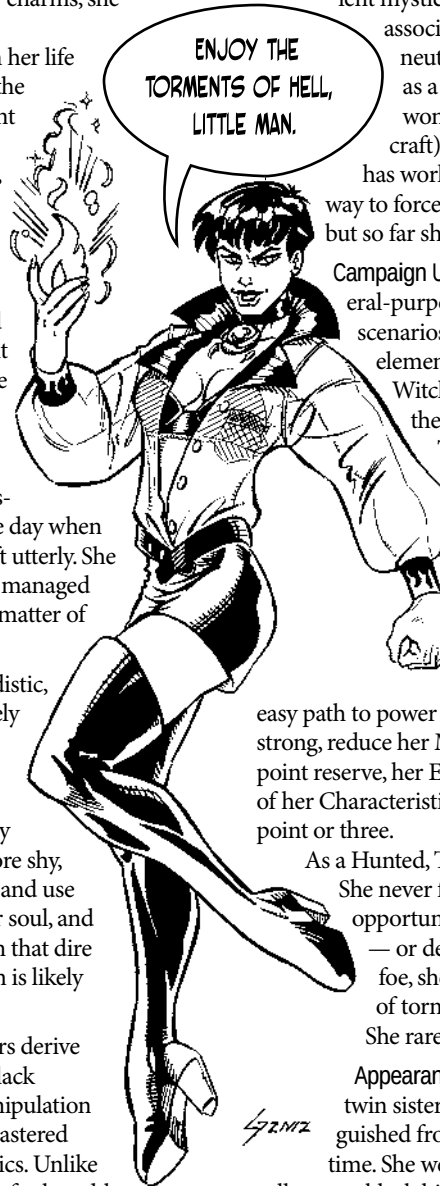
That way she seems less like a two-dimensional evil spellcaster, and more like the intriguingly wicked person she actually is.

If Talisman is too weak for your campaign, give her a Variable Power Pool like Witchcraft's, but make it larger and a little easier to use (once again, the easy path to power pays off... for now). If she's too strong, reduce her Mastery Of Hellfire to a 40 or 50 point reserve, her EC to 30-point powers, and a few of her Characteristics (DEX and CON, perhaps) by a point or three.

As a Hunted, Talisman is vindictive and vicious.

She never forgets a slight, or passes up any opportunity to make her quarry miserable — or dead. Instead of simply blasting her foe, she'll try to find unusual curses, spells of torment, and other ways to harm him. She rarely Hunts on less than an 11-.

Appearance: Although she is Witchcraft's twin sister, Talisman can easily be distinguished from her hated sibling most of the time. She wears her black hair short. She typically wears black high-heeled boots, a black leather miniskirt, and a strategically-unbuttoned (or see-through) long-sleeved blouse (usually in black, some other dark color, or red); there's a flame motif embroidered along the cuffs.



Beauty and the Beat

'I have no comment on the National Inquisition's story except to say that its writers have very vivid imaginations.

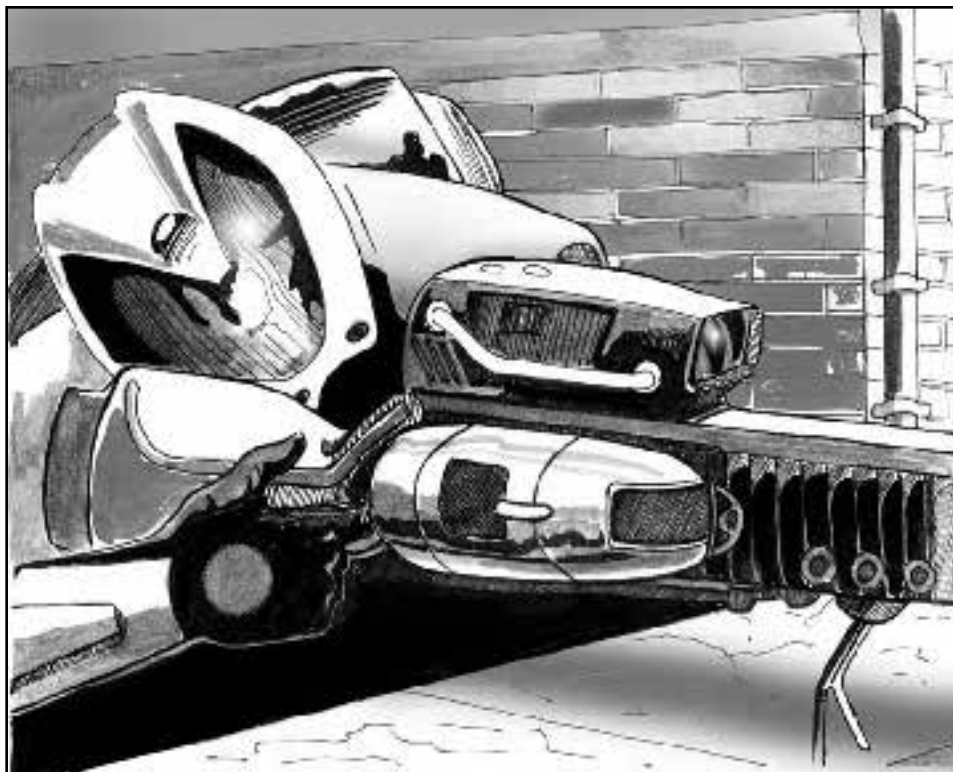
I've never even met Fiacho, much less had an affair with him.'

— Sapphire of the Champions

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