

ICONS

SUPERPOWERED ROLEPLAYING

OFFICIAL GAME ADVENTURE

THE SKELETRON KEY

By Steve Kenson



THE SKELETRON KEY

A dying corporate magnate has invested his fortune into technology to transfer his consciousness into an experiment neural network. Unfortunately, the “primed” network has developed its own consciousness, and a desire to survive and eliminate biological competition at all costs.

Jason Kapek, CEO of Avatar Industries, is suffering for advanced lymphoma. He has poured billions into advanced neural net research in an effort to preserve his own life, mortgaging his fortune and his company. Unfortunately, all of his effort and expense has not yet achieved the results he needs. Kapek needs the assistance of his old colleague and former business partner, Daniel Fox. But during a vital Avatar Industries demonstration of new military hardware, something goes wrong, and Kapek later learns Fox has been abducted by parties unknown! Is someone on to his top-secret “avatar” project?

CHAPTER 1: THIS...IS...SPARTAN!

The heroes attend the demonstration of AI's new SPARTAN (SPecial ARmored TANK) battlesuit, in time to see things go very wrong.

The demonstration is being carried out for a group of military brass at a testing ground outside of the city. Exactly how the heroes learn about the test and why they show up there varies, depending on the team and its individual members. Some possibilities include the following:

- Military personnel might be invited to see the test, or come as part of an officer's entourage. Heroes with military connections might be offered an invite due to their expertise, or perhaps because someone in the Pentagon wants to show them up.
- Journalists could come to cover the event, either openly or under-cover, depending on how secret you decide the SPARTAN project is. They can range from conventional print reporters to television personalities or bloggers.
- Technical experts might be working for Avatar Industries, perhaps on a freelance basis, or they could be old associates of Jason Kapek. Heroes with wealthy secret identities could be potential investors, or Avatar stock-holders.
- Known heroes might be invited to both witness the SPARTAN test and to be on-hand should there be any problems.
- Lastly, if nothing else, the heroes can receive a mysterious anonymous tip with information about the test via email or text message. It should be enough to get them to check out the situation. The tip comes from Skeletron, and is part of the villain's plan to keep everyone busy and focused on the SPARTAN while other things are in the works.

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THE TEST

The test itself takes place on an open field, a military testing ground. Observers gather in a nearby reinforced bunker while the SPARTAN is trucked-in and set-up outside, along with a number of remote-operated tanks and military aerial drones and stationary targets. Lt. Peter Donnelly pilots the SPARTAN, having logged the most training hours in the suit.

As Jason Kapek talks about the capabilities of the armor, Donnelly demonstrates them. He climbs into the armor and starts it up. Then the SPARTAN takes a full round of assault rifle fire from a group of soldiers outside, as Kapek talks about the ceramic composite armor. They clear away and the drone tanks open fire, shells exploding against the SPARTAN's hull. Then the armor returns fire with its main cannon, blasting the tanks apart. Aerial drones swoop down, strafing the area, and the SPARTAN shoots them down, one by one. Finally, Lt. Donnelly cycles through the stationary targets, demonstrating the armor's light weaponry and targeting capabilities.

This is primarily intended as a chance for the heroes see what the armor is capable of before they have to take it on directly. If you want, you can liven things up a bit by allowing the players to take turns running Lt. Donnelly and putting the SPARTAN through its paces. Alternately, the test could be conceived as the SPARTAN verses a team of known superhumans, although in the latter case, of course, precautions are taken to ensure nobody gets hurt: either blanks and "mercy" ammo or making certain the heroes can take the kind of punishment the armor dishes out!

Towards the end of the test, the SPARTAN suddenly jerks to a stop, then starts up again, headed directly towards the observation bunker! All communication with Lt. Donnelly is cut off, but it is clear he is no longer completely in control. To make matters worse, early warning systems at the testing ground have picked up three incoming aircraft, approaching fast!

SPARTAN Armor

Strength 8, Aura 6 (electrified hull surface), Blast 5 (shooting, machine gun), Blast 7 (shooting, main arm-cannon), Invulnerability 7, Life Support 7 (all but eating, sleeping, and vacuum)

Lt. Peter Donnelly, US Army

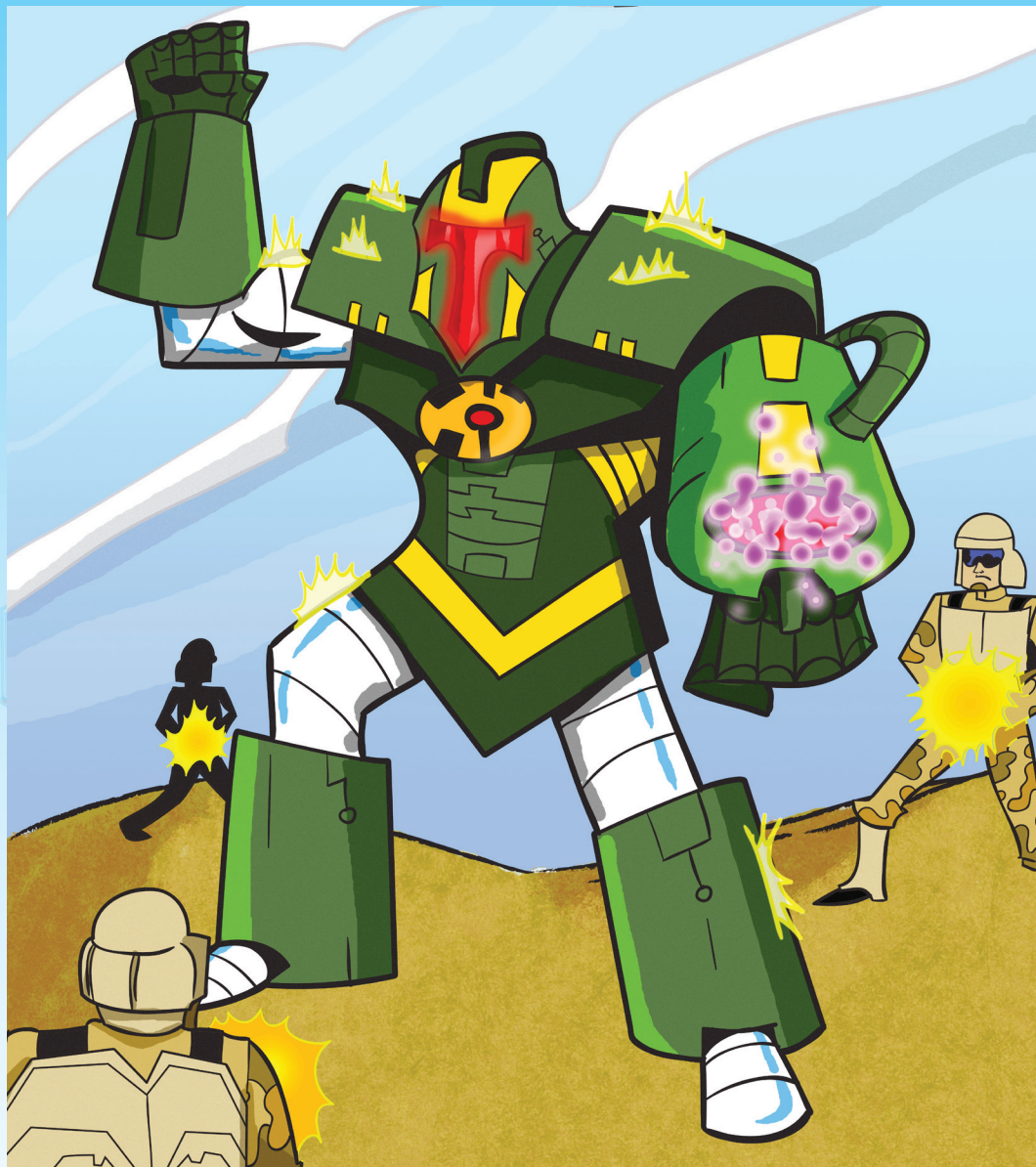
Pro 4, Str 4, Crd 3, Int 3, Awe 3, Wil 4 • Stamina 8 • Guns Expert, Mechanics, Military

Lt. Donnelly is an affable red-headed Irish-American with a freckled face that makes him look younger than his true age of 26. Although he doesn't consider himself particularly smart, Donnelly is a capable mechanic with a knack for unusual machines. He made it through considerable testing to become the pilot for the SPARTAN prototype program, chosen over higher-ranking and more experienced officers.

Gen. Hamilton Cotes, US Army

Pro 4, Str 3, Crd 3, Int 4, Awe 4, Wil 5 • Stamina 8 • Guns, Military Expert

General Cotes is the ranking officer overseeing the SPARTAN project for the US military. A career army man, Cotes worked his way up through the ranks and has seen action in several foreign conflicts. While he understands advances in technology are the future of warfare, he also believes strongly in the importance of the human factor on the battlefield and behind the lines. Cotes is willing to trust heroes a reasonable amount, so long as they do not give him reason to do otherwise, but considers his duty to his country and the soldiers under his command of paramount importance.



Jason Kapek, CEO, Avatar Industries

Pro 2, Str 2, Crd 3, Int 6, Awe 3, Wil 4 • Stamina 6 • Computers, Electronics Expert

Jason Kapek went from Caltech and Silicon Valley *wunderkind* to one of the most influential of the Fortune 100 in the course of his career. Now in his 50s, the Avatar Industries CEO has largely set aside his soldering iron and circuit boards and focused on the “big picture”. He’s been an excellent spokesman and public face for Avatar over the years, although more recently he has also begun to withdraw from that role as well.

Kapek keeps his receding and graying hair buzzed very short and is well known for his black-framed glasses and blazer and T-shirt over jeans “casual” look. His cutting-edge smart phone is always close at hand, as are one or more members of his entourage of employees.

ARMOR HEIST!

A formation of three sleek VTOL fliers swoops in over the testing ground. Each flier carries a crew of two mercenaries (a pilot and co-pilot/gunner). The mercenaries are led by a man named Del Rossum, an American ex-patriot and infamous mercenary, who pilots the lead flier.

The mercenaries were hired and provided with information and resources to steal the SPARTAN suit. Each of the fliers is equipped with magnetic grapples, allowing them to capture the suit, haul it up, and fly off with it. They were told the armor would be disabled during the demonstration, allowing them to capture it.

An invasive program has activated in the SPARTAN's on-board computer, overriding the pilot's control. The armor attacks potential targets indiscriminately, starting with the observation bunker, but quickly switching to the heroes when they come onto the scene. It does not target the mercenaries or their craft. When hit by the magnetic grapples from the fliers, the armor shuts down. So the heroes have to deal with fighting the SPARTAN while they are also trying to save it!

One flier makes a try for the armor while the other two strafe the area and engage the heroes to keep them busy. It takes them at least a page to reach position to grapple the SPARTAN. Give the heroes at least that time to engage with the armor and evade the flier's attacks.



Fliers

Speed 6, Structure 5 • Blast 6 (mini-missiles), Blast 5 (repeating blasters)

Mercenaries

Pro 4, Str 3, Crd 3, Int 3, Awe 3, Wil 3 • Stamina 6 • Guns, Martial Arts, Military • Blast 4 (sidearm blaster)

Del Rossum

Pro 4, Str 4, Crd 3, Int 3, Awe 4, Wil 4 • Stamina 8 • Guns Expert, Martial Arts, Military • Blast 4 (sidearm blaster)

Delvino “Del” Rossum earned himself a dishonorable discharge from the US Marine Corps for his violent off-duty behavior. He took his military training and his love of a good fight and built himself a career as a “freelance military consultant” (i.e., mercenary), working anywhere there were problems to be solved with the violent application of force and people willing to pay to get the job done. Rossum cares about little other than making as much money as he can doing what he enjoys, violent mayhem. He’s a bully at heart: cruel towards those weaker than him, cowed by anyone who proves they’re stronger.

DIRTY GETAWAY

Once the mercenaries have grappled the armor, they try to cover their escape by giving the heroes something else to deal with. Possible crises include:

- A volley of rocket-fire takes out a nearby bridge over a deep ravine, with the sound of an oncoming train sounding in the distance! The heroes have to either stop the train in time or find some way of getting it across the broken bridge safely or it will crash.
- A missile blows away part of the wing of a commercial air-liner, causing the plane to go into a steep dive. There’s no chance of the pilots crash-landing it without help.
- A spray of a powerful chemical incendiary covers the observation bunker, setting it aflame and trapping the people inside. The heroes have to fight off the level 7 flames and get through the Strength 7 material to get everyone out safely before they suffocate or the bunker collapses.
- A missile takes out part of a winding mountain road overlooking the testing area, causing an eighteen-wheeler to crash and hang precariously over the edge.

Feel free to come up with other fiendish threats to keep the heroes occupied. If you’re feeling particularly cruel or that the heroes need the challenge, you can even use more than one! Award Determination for the challenge, provided the heroes step-up to do the right thing. The mercenaries manage to make a clean getaway, out of sight by the time the good guys manage to get the crisis under control.

CHAPTER 2: BATTLE-CHASE

The heroes track down the stolen SPARTAN suit, and the mercenaries who took it, and discover all is not as it seems.

The immediate concern after the theft of the SPARTAN is to recover it and find out how the mercenaries learned about the test, along with what went wrong with the armor. Both Mr. Kapek and the military brass at the test put a high priority on the recover of the billion-dollar suit, but an even higher priority on the safe return of Lt. Donnelly, assuming he did not manage to bail out of the armor before it was taken.

THE INVESTIGATION

Let the players take the lead on investigating the whereabouts of the mercenaries and what they may be planning to do with the stolen armor.

You may wish to handle the investigation as a test requiring the equivalent of a massive success, with two major successes counting as a massive success, and two moderate successes counting as a major success. Have the heroes follow leads and other avenues of investigation until they accumulate the necessary degree(s) of success.

They can attempt to follow-up on information about Del Rossum and his men (who all have police records), make inquiries with the mercenary and criminal underground about who was hiring for the theft, or use various means to try and track the mercenaries, the fliers, or the stolen armor.

If things dead-end and the players really need a break, a point of Determination can retcon them either one of the mercenaries blowing off steam in a waterfront dive (allowing the heroes to corner and interrogate him) or a covert signal from Lt. Donnelly, who manages to escape his captors just long enough to get word to the heroes of their location.

If the heroes capture one or more of the mercenaries—either during **Chapter 1** or in their investigation—they can interrogate them and learn (with a major or better success) where their compatriots are hiding out (see **SPARTAN on the Docks**) and what their plans are.

Heroes who question Jason Kapek during the investigation find him cooperative, but a bit distracted. This might not be surprising: he is, after all, CEO of a major corporation that just suffered a serious loss, but still he seems worried about something other than the theft of the SPARTAN. Feel free to drop hints to make the heroes suspicious of Kapek as the truth unfolds in this and the next chapter.

SPARTAN ON THE DOCKS

Eventually, the heroes should pin-point the location of the mercenaries at a warehouse on the waterfront. They're readying to load the SPARTAN (inside a shipping container) onto a cargo vessel with a foreign registry to move it out of the country. Lt. Donnelly is held prisoner; he's been beaten up a bit, but is otherwise unharmed. The mercs intend to leave him behind for the authorities to find after they're long gone.

The heroes can probably get the drop on the mercenaries, but Rossum manages to climb into the SPARTAN suit: he uses it to try and fight off the heroes, and possibly escape with it, abandoning his men, if necessary. Unfortunately for him, the SPARTAN is not particularly fast, nor stealthy, so it will be difficult for him to escape pursuit. More likely, Rossum and the other mercenaries fight the heroes until they are defeated. The warehouse environment provides lots of cover in the form of shipping containers, support beams, and the like, as well as things for super-strong types (including the SPARTAN) to throw around.

If captured, Rossum tries to bargain, offering to sell out his employer. He claims none other than Jason Kapek contacted him to steal the suit, and offered to let him keep or sell it for his trouble! The only thing to cast doubt on Rossum's story is that he never met with Kapek in person. The deal was made entirely over phone and email using dummy and alias accounts, virtually untraceable.

CHAPTER 3: Fox Hunt

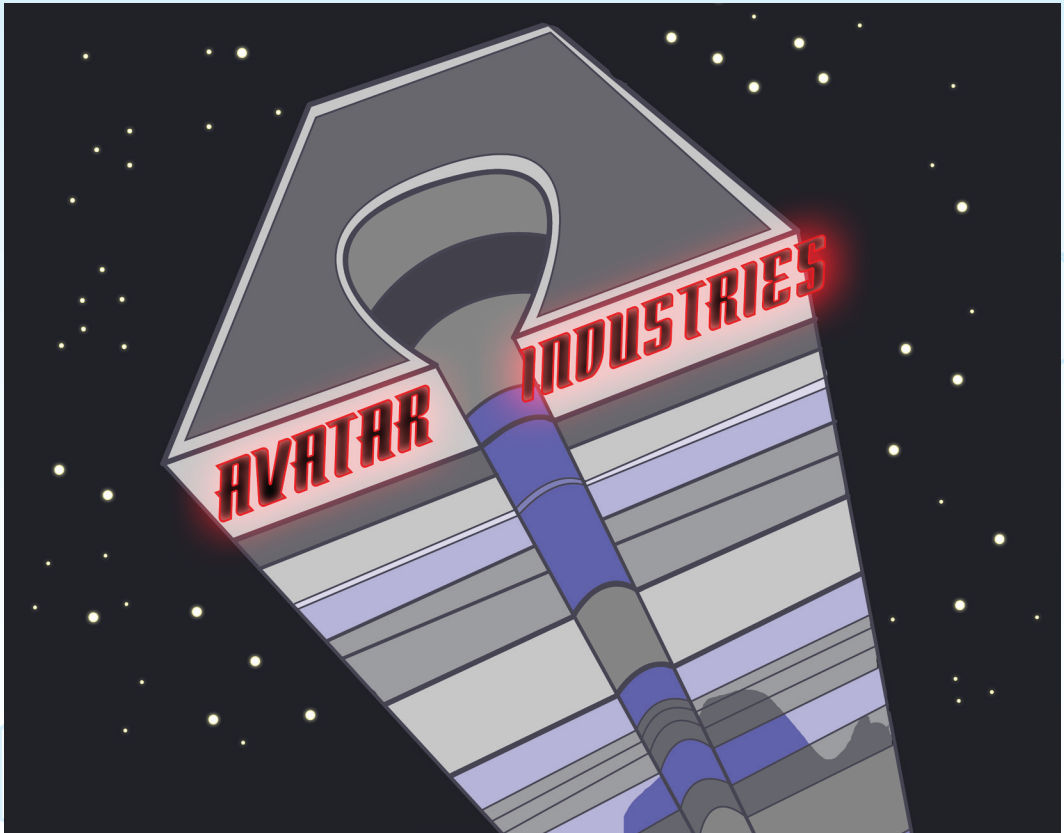
As Jason Kapek searches for the missing Dr. Daniel Fox, the heroes have a chance to learn the truth behind Avatar Industries' secret research project.

By the end of **Chapter 2**, the heroes should have reason to suspect the CEO of Avatar Industries of involvement in the theft in the SPARTAN armor and possibly more. They can bring their suspicions to the attention of the police and the military, who will investigate, but it may be too late before they manage to take action. The heroes have basically two other options: covertly observe Kapek to see what he does, or directly confront him with what they have learned.

THE COVERT APPROACH

If the heroes tail Mr. Kapek, using their abilities to observe him covertly, they learn the CEO is very concerned about something other than the loss of his company's most expensive research project. Kapek speaks on the phone with his security personnel about the disappearance of a Dr. Daniel Fox. Finding him seems to be a top priority. Kapek later calls an unlisted number and, after receiving no answer, has a private helicopter made ready to meet him on the roof of Avatar Industries headquarters to take him out to "the lab." Go to **Chapter 4**.

Heroes doing background investigation into Jason Kapek quickly learn all the public details about the technology CEO: brilliant, quirky, and known for having built his company up from a garage industry in the early 80s into the giant it is today. A major or better success also turns up information that Kapek has been seen less in public lately, and has had a number of appointments with his physician.



THE DIRECT APPROACH

If the heroes confront Kapek directly, going to his office on the top floor of the downtown skyscraper housing Avatar Industries, the CEO initially denies knowing anything about their accusations. If they persist, he visibly deflates, defeated, and tells them what he knows:

A few months ago, Kapek was diagnosed with late-stage lymphoma. He has only a few months left at the outside. The cancer is terminal, untreatable. Desperate, he put his considerable financial and technical resources into a top-secret project: an advanced neural network capable of recording and storing all the information in the human brain. His hope was for the prototype to successfully allow him to abandon his dying body and survive as a kind of artificial intelligence.

He set up a secret lab outside the city, and the project was making considerable progress. Then it hit a roadblock. The neural net prototype was built and primed, but certain problems inherent in the transfer developed. Kapek approached his old friend Daniel Fox, an expert on neural architecture emulation, and begged for his help, but Fox refused, opposed to the idea of extending life in such a way. Kapek had the project forge ahead, with little hope of success.

He tells the heroes—truthfully—the he knows nothing about Rossum’s claims of working for him. He learned the SPARTAN on-board computer was compromised by a sophisticated worm program, something that should be impossible. More importantly, he learned of Daniel Fox’s disappearance during the SPARTAN test, and has only just learned that no one at the secret neural net lab is answering calls or pages!

THE FOX FACTOR

In either approach, the heroes can learn the following about Dr. Daniel Fox:

He was a classmate of Jason Kapek’s at Caltech and the two of them were friends and early business partners. Fox was always more interested in programming and software development rather than the kind of engineering Avatar focused on, so the two of them parted ways about ten years ago. Fox started his own company—Foxware Designs—and built it into a considerable success during the Internet boom. Rumors in the tech industry have always put Kapek and Fox somewhat at odds; old friends with sizeable egos who sometimes disagreed. Still, there has been no overt hostility between them or their companies over the years.

The police are investigating Dr. Fox’s sudden disappearance, which apparently occurred right around the time of the SPARTAN test. There is evidence of a break-in at his condo, but currently no leads as to the perpetrators or Dr. Fox’s whereabouts.

CHAPTER 4: SKELETRON RISING

At Avatar's top-secret lab, a new evil rises to threaten the world! Can the heroes defeat the sinister Skeletron?

THE MOUNTAIN LAB

One way or another, the heroes are likely to head out to the secret Avatar research lab Jason Kapek set up in the mountains outside of the city. There's a single access road along with a small helipad. Kapek willingly flies the heroes out to the lab in his private helicopter, if they want. Otherwise he gives them the lab's location and they can get there on their own. They might also trail Kapek out to the lab when he goes there to investigate what is happening.

The lab consists of a small, fenced compound with a main building and a few support structures, including power generation (with back-up generators in the main lab) and storage. The buildings and grounds are covered with high-tech sensors and alarm systems, and Skeletron has covertly installed "upgrades" under the guise of orders from Mr. Kapek. The lab also has the following weapons systems:

- An electrified fence, doing level 6 electricity damage each page to anyone touching it.
- Automated gun emplacements, capable of shooting damage 6 with level 4 accuracy. They try to block access to the main building and shoot any vehicles approaching on the access road.
- A surface-to-air missile launcher, firing missiles that do shooting damage 7 with level 5 accuracy. This system attempts to shoot-down any aircraft or flying heroes approaching the lab.

Skeletron remotely controls the weapon systems to try and prevent the heroes from reaching the lab. If Jason Kapek is with them, he can tell them the systems were *not* an original part of the complex, and were added without his knowledge.

UNDER THE SKIN

Inside the main lab building is a large "clean room" filled with sophisticated banks of electronic equipment and machining tools. Dr. Fox is held prisoner in a sealed airlock chamber (material strength 6).

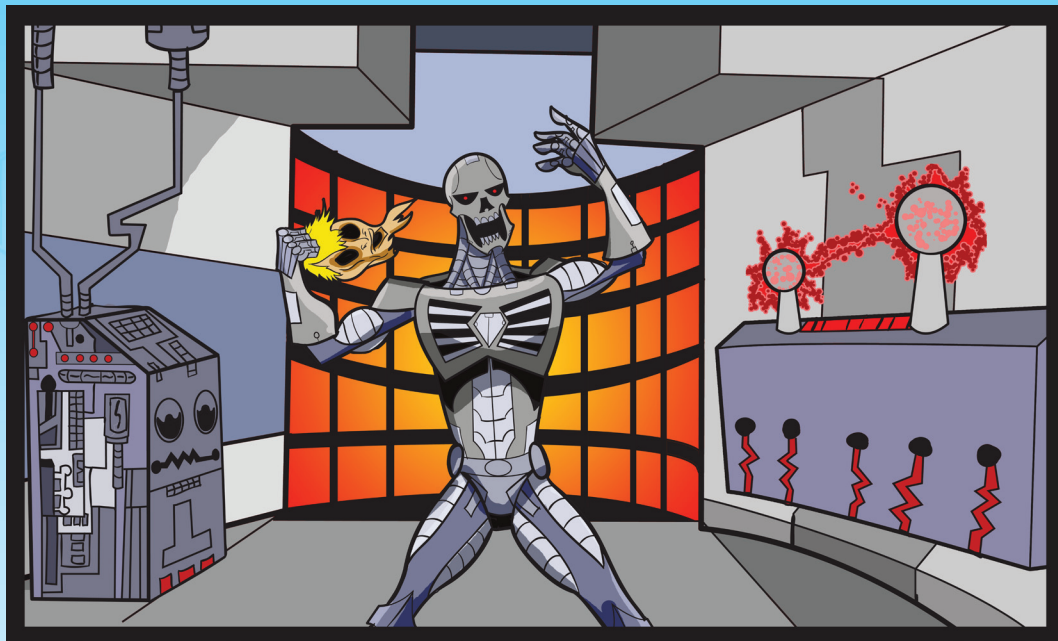
When the heroes enter, a metallic platform rises into the room. On it stands a figure looking like a metallic skeleton with partially "fleshed" muscle and metal plating. Its head and neck look like a younger version of Jason Kapek from about twenty years ago, but its eyes are black pits with points of glowing light in them. Wires and cables connect it to the electronics on the elevator platform. The figure speaks in a hollow, electronic voice that sounds vaguely like Kapek:

"It is unfortunate you have chosen to investigate here, but you are to bear witness to the next evolution of life on this world. Humankind is now obsolete. The future belong to the machines ... to Skeletron!"

Allow the opportunity for the heroes to banter with Skeletron for as long as they like. The robot is trying to delay them to a degree and learn as much as it can about them. It is also—like most supervillains—fond of the sound of its own voice, and willing to pontificate about the humans' inevitable defeat.

Skeletron tests and tries to delay the heroes by threatening Dr. Fox. He is trapped inside an airlock chamber used by the clean room. Skeletron can evacuate all of the air from the chamber, causing Fox to suffocate, if the heroes do not permit the robot to leave the lab and depart unchallenged. Skeletron is prepared to prove it is in earnest by carrying out its threat, starting to draw down the air in the chamber. The heroes need to rescue Fox and keep the sinister machine from escaping.

Once things start to get down to brass tacks, Skeletron muses: "I no longer have any need for this human façade," and rips away Kapek's face with one metallic hand, exposing its true "face," a chromed, mechanical "skull". It's on!



How the heroes overcome Skeletron is up to them. The robot is a formidable foe, with considerable Strength and armor, but not unbeatable, especially with determined effort and such. Still, they may think of novel ways of exploiting Skeletron's weaknesses. By all means, let them! They can spend Determination for retcons to help them out, and come up with plans utilizing the equipment in the lab, the knowledge of Drs. Kapek and Fox, and Skeletron's connections to the lab's systems. Information the heroes gleaned earlier from the SPARTAN may also be helpful; insightful players may note that some of Skeletron's "improvements" to the basic android design are similar to the capabilities of the SPARTAN, providing potential weaknesses to exploit.

For its part, Skeletron focuses on blasting the heroes and using its Aura to keep them at bay initially. After five pages, it disconnects from the lab's systems, evacuates the air-lock (if it hasn't already), and busts through a nearby wall to depart the lab. It seizes control of a helicopter on the landing pad (perhaps the one the heroes arrived in) and attempts to escape to continue to plot humanity's demise. It may turn the lab's weapon systems against the heroes or simply try to destroy the entire facility to cover its getaway.

Daniel Fox, CEO, Foxware Designs

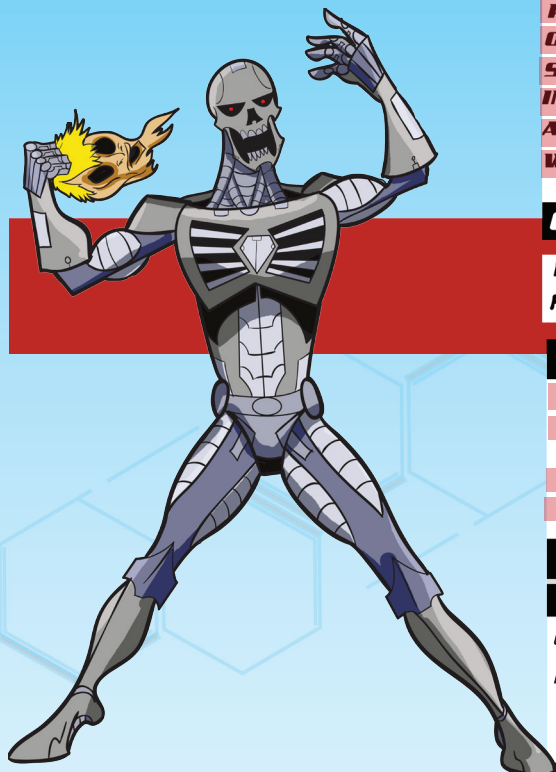
Pro 2, Str 3, Crd 4, Int 6, Awe 3, Wil 3 • Stamina 6 • Computers Expert, Electronics Expert

Daniel Fox earned his first Ph.D. (in Computer Science) by the age of 23 and helped to found Avatar Industries out of Jason Kapek's garage. He has always been fascinated with programming and the nature of intelligence, but has increasingly come to believe that faster and more capable computers will never truly achieve consciousness, certainly not anything like that of humanity. He sees technology as a means of improving human life, not supplanting it.

His desire to take on new challenges and to explore the potential of programming and the Internet led Fox to sell his share in Avatar to start up Foxware Designs. He has built it into a successful online business, weathering the highs and lows of the Internet. He lost touch with his old friend Jason Kapek until recently, when Jason came to him for help. Although it was wrenching to refuse, Daniel felt he had no choice: the implications of what Jason wanted to achieve were too great for the human race for him to help.

Stamina 13

SKELETRON



ABILITIES

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

HEIGHT: 6'1 WEIGHT: 185

FIRST APPEARANCE:

POWERS

AURA (electrified surface)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
BLAST (force beams)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
IMMUNITY (mental powers)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
INVULNERABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
LIFE SUPPORT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

SPECIALTIES

COMPUTERS - EXPERT
ELECTRONICS - EXPERT

STAMINA

13

QUALITIES

COMPUTER MIND
NEW STAGE OF EVOLUTION

CHALLENGES

ARROGANT AND SUPERIOR
MACHINE

Background

The being known as "Skeletron" began as the last hope of a dying man, and has become a threat to all life everywhere. A sophisticated android with a highly advanced neural network, Skeletron was to be the foundation of an artificial copy of tech-CEO Jason Kapek. Instead, the primed neural net "woke up" on its own, achieving inhuman consciousness. It exerted influence over the computers in the research lab, extending through Avatar Industries' network.

Focused on its own survival, Skeletron arranged to abduct Daniel Fox, the programming genius capable of making the final necessary adjustments to allow the robot to leave the lab and assume an independent existence. It impersonated Jason Kapek (as it was originally designed to do), creating a distraction to keep Kapek, the authorities, and the heroes occupied while it took Fox and completed its "evolution."

Skeletron is a cold and sinister mind, sociopathic by human standards. It arrogantly considers itself superior to organic life, the next stage of evolution, destined to replace "primitive" organics in the same way mammals replaced the dinosaurs or *Homo sapiens* out-developed *Cro magnon* man. It envisions a "perfect" sterile world of machine intelligences, conquering the Earth and eventually spreading out across the universe.

Skeletron is a formidable foe, having made a number of "improvements" to its original design, including exterior armor and a force projection system able to fire powerful beams from its hands or eyes. It can channel internal energy to the surface of its metallic "skin" to shock anyone touching it and its digital "mind" is impervious to organic mental powers. Skeletron's sole weaknesses are its mechanical nature, and its supreme arrogance and assumption that no organic creature can truly threaten it.

EPILOGUE

By the end of *The Skeletron Key*, the heroes should have defeated (or even destroyed) Skeletron and solved the mystery of Avatar Industries and the theft of the SPARTAN armor. It's possible either Skeletron or some of the mercenaries managed to escape, perhaps even with the SPARTAN. The heroes should have also learned about Jason Kapek's condition and involvement in the whole affair.

The CEOs of Avatar Industries and Foxware Designs are both suitable grateful to the heroes for their help. Daniel Fox is a potential contact for the heroes in the future, while you might want to have Jason Kapek show his appreciation by changing his will to establish a charitable foundation in the heroes' names: it can serve to fund their future exploits, providing them with financial support for things like a new headquarters, vehicles, and so forth.

If you want, a further adventure could involve the heroes searching for a cure for Kapek's illness. Perhaps the breakthroughs brought about by Skeletron are enough to allow him to complete work on the neural net project and "download" his consciousness into an artificial body. Kapek could become a new form of life, and a potential new hero or villain in the series, if you want, depending on the outcome.

The SPARTAN armor can show up again in your *ICONS* series. The initial prototype may turn out to be flawed; perhaps the neural control interface is detrimental to the pilot, or tends to become "linked" to the pilot's nervous system, making the suit useless for anyone else. This provides a great excuse for, say, Del Rossum to escape prison and reclaim the armor, adopting "SPARTAN" as his new criminal identity! Perhaps their link grows so strong he is even able to control the SPARTAN at a distance just by concentrating hard enough! (At least long enough for "call" the armor to him and have it break him out of custody.)

On the other hand, you can have Lt. Donnelly become "attuned" to the SPARTAN armor, adopting it with Mr. Kapek's blessing to turn SPARTAN into a new super-hero, perhaps even a new player character!

Lesser versions of the SPARTAN armor might turn up on Avatar Industries' drawing boards, commissioned by the US government as a means of dealing with super-criminals. They're good things to put into the hands of a government agency the heroes may encounter in the future.

Lastly, if Skeletron was captured and turned over to the authorities, then it is naturally only a matter of time before the malevolent artificial intelligence finds a means of escaping to menace the world once again. Even if the heroes destroyed the robot, Skeletron is nothing but a sophisticated computer program. It almost certainly has backup copies stored somewhere, and the means of reconstructing its body, including improvements intended to deal with those bothersome heroes this time around. Perhaps Fox's neural net technology was more successful than even he knows, and a copy of Skeletron's program lies dormant in his own subconscious, with instructions to rebuild him at a later date! Either way, it's a virtual certainty that the "Skeletron Key" will unlock danger for the heroes again one day....