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THE MARVEL[®]-PHILE

Building better mousetraps – or better villains

Yes, it's time now for those dastardly denizens of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™ to step forward and be counted! Time for the downtrodden and somewhat dated villains to take a stand in the light! That's what we're here to discuss: Hack villains and what you can do with them, today in "The MARVEL-Phile"!

For years, Marvel Comics has been creating super villains to pit against their heroes, and many of those villains are nasty or tragic or downright disgusting. Some of them, however, verge on being laughable in the light of the modern day. Today, the Fantastic Four battles against Terrax and the Super Skrull, both of whom are great villains. In the early days, the Wizard and Paste Pot Pete (a.k.a. the Trapster) were almost as formidable a pair

for the four heroes. What makes the newer villains – or heroes, for that matter – better than those who have come and gone before them? It's simply all a matter of perception.

P.R. for villains

No matter how powerful a villain is, if people aren't afraid of him, he's doing something wrong. Many powerful Marvel villains have more than enough power to face the Avengers and escape without needing major dental work, but few have the public perception that they could fight the Avengers and hope for a measure of success. These villains need some help if you, as a Judge, intend to use them in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game and not

get snickers from your players the first time they encounter these ultra-criminals.

Aside from suggesting the simplest idea in the world for increasing power (namely, team up with others!), we can put forward some basic principles in creating villains that gain the respect of their superhuman peers.

- Find a gimmick that's quick, effective, and memorable. People remember Mr. Fear's fear gas. Giving a villain powers united by a strong theme helps him stick in your players' minds.

- Have the villain keep in good physical shape and learn some basic fighting techniques if he's out tussling with the heroes.

- Find a distinctive name and look for the crook that people will remember and respect. Doctor Doom's armor demands attention from its sinister simplicity.

Keeping all this in mind, we'd like to



discuss a few villains and what you can do in your campaigns to make them more formidable against your campaign's heroes.

Invincible Man: This villain has nothing more than a battlesuit of olive green with yellow boots, gloves, and belt, and a pink hood with goggles. Appearing only three times (Fantastic Four #32, #196, and #287), this suit of microcircuitry and metal can project Incredible (40) Force bolts from its goggles and gloves, fly at Good (10) speed, and levitate objects of Remarkable (30) weight. The only existing costume is in the Latverian Embassy in New York City; given some slight alterations to its looks, Doctor Doom could have an excellent supplementary suit of armor worthy of any villain. The name's also a little dated, but changing the look can allow any name change desired as well. Also, remember that New York has its share of criminals and super villains, so the armor could be stolen (which would probably irritate a certain Latverian monarch as well as your heroes).

Porcupine: One of Dr. Henry Pym's oldest foes from his days as Giant-Man, the Porcupine struck bottom a few years back after he attempted to sell his quill-shooting armor to other villains and found no buyers. All told, the Porcupine armor was very powerful indeed (see MU3, *Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE*), but Alexander Gentry wasn't a very good villain. In your own game, someone much more ruthless may have adopted the Porcupine's armor and can try to use it for his own ends. Now, if the villain takes a slightly better name (such as Spike or even Quill) that fits the suit's powers, he has a better chance of becoming a feared name among the super hero community. The armor is currently interred within Avengers Mansion in New York City to honor their dead foe. What if a duo of aspiring New York villains managed to steal the Porcupine armor and the Invincible Man battlesuit? Sounds like instant trouble for your heroes!

Trapster: He learned the power of a name change early on; he used to call himself Paste Pot Pete. With all his gimmicks and expertise with locks, traps, and technology, the Trapster could be one of the greatest thieves ever. By reworking his paste-shooters to add a wider variety of materials, Pete could improve his high-velocity arsenal with acids, mists or gases, and other materials (like Mr. Fear's fear gas, or something simpler-like napalm). The material's all there to make Trapster a major villain; you just have to work it into your games.

Wizard: Like his erstwhile partner above, the Wizard has some heavy-duty technology at his disposal and can certainly invent more. If this villain's so smart, why hasn't he improved his armor over

the years? The Wizard's antigravity discs and power gloves are great, but the helmet could be miniaturized into something a little more dignified. Give this man a tougher suit of armor for the '90s a few more offensive and defensive devices for that armor, and the Wizard steps back into the light as a major villain. How about a spray of miniaturized antigrav discs that can't be removed easily, or some shock field generated by the power gloves in addition to the armor's force field?

Rocket Racer and the Leapfrog: Okay, some villains are so strange that there's no hope of them ever making it big in the bad-guy business. These two took the best route left to them: They became heroes! Yes, this is the last refuge of villainous incompetents, but they don't get arrested nearly as much.

Villains from surplus

Now that we've worked on improving existing villains, we'd like to show you that a "garage sale" of lost or forgotten technology in the MARVEL UNIVERSE might be the best thing ever to happen to any up-and-coming villain. There is so much powerful technology within reach that nearly any person could become the terror of his hometown. Your authors decided to test this by scrounging up available technologies that aren't getting much use in the MARVEL UNIVERSE these days, and we each created a new villain from those technologies. Thanks to Mark Gruenwald and his Scourge killings in the *Captain America* comic a few years back, there's lots of technology just lying around and waiting for us to use. We must also acknowledge all the other characters who were left out to dry by Marvel writers and editors over the years.

Keep in mind that the characters we've created are only examples of what you and your players could create in your own MARVEL SUPER HEROES game campaigns. Give it a try! Also remember that these two characters are not part of the MARVEL UNIVERSE and have no place in official Marvel Comics' continuity.

SENTINEL, ORION CLASS™

	Covert mode	Battle mode
F	EX(20)	RM(30)
A	EX(20)	RM(30)
S	EX(20)	IN(40)
E	IN(40)	MN(75)
R	EX(20)	EX(20)
I	RM(30)	RM(30)
P	TY(6)	TY(6)
Health	100	175
Karma	56	56
Resources	n/a	n/a
Popularity	n/a	n/a

POWERS: *Alter Ego:* An Orion Sentinel is capable of changing between two basic modes, Covert and Battle. The Covert mode appears as a normal human of either sex, while the Battle mode exhibits gender-neutral armored plates and various visible weaponry. An Orion can change modes with Excellent ability, accomplishing a switch in one full round (no other actions are allowed).

An Orion unit can be detected easily if it is damaged. Damage of more than 20% of its total Health in either mode disables its voice modulator and makes its voice sound hollow and mechanical. Damage of more than 60% to its Battle mode disrupts its shape-shifting ability so that its armor cannot later be folded into Covert mode without repairs.

Learning Program: This programming allows an Orion Sentinel to gain a +2CS against an opponent in all combat FEAT rolls after fighting that opponent for at least two rounds. This adaptability program stores a mutant's fighting style and power uses, and this information can be transferred into a database to be shared by all Sentinels when the Orion returns to base; this transfer must occur at central computers at Project: Wideawake and cannot be relayed through any other means. This information allows for modification and upgrading of all Sentinels to counteract the powers of a target mutant.

Robotic Construction: An Orion Sentinel is a sophisticated artificial life form, subject to powers that affect or control machinery. Use the Orion's Endurance of its current mode to resist attempts to control it. It is immune to disease, poisons, gas, or powers that affect the human mind or emotions.

Self-Repair Systems: Self-repair systems restore an Orion's lost Health with Poor (4) ability. This system only works if at least 25% of the Orion Sentinel (one-quarter normal Health points for the Orion's current mode) is still intact.

Note that the following abilities given for each mode are specific to those modes, so that a Covert-mode power cannot be used when an Orion is in Battle mode, though an Orion in either mode can use those powers given previously.

Covert mode

Gamma Energy Detection: An Orion can detect, identify, and trace all forms of gamma radiation at Monstrous ability and range. This is included as a subordinate system to track the Hulk and other gamma-irradiated beings.

Infravision: An Orion Sentinel can see in total darkness up to a distance of five areas using infrared-imaging techniques.

Leaping: An Orion can leap with Remarkable ability, clearing 30'.

Mutant Detection and Tracking: An

Orion can detect, identify, and track any mutants within a two-mile range with Unearthly ability. The tracking systems are triggered by the use of mutant powers, and use of any power for more than three rounds allows an Orion to lock onto that mutant and track its movements whether its powers are subsequently used or not.

Resistance to Energy: An Orion Sentinel has Excellent resistance to all forms of nonmystical energy (heat, cold, electricity, etc.), reducing all nonmystical Energy damage by 20 points.

Scanning Shields: Remarkable-level shielding allows an Orion to masquerade as a human and avoid detection by any scanners (X-rays, metal detectors, etc.) of less than Remarkable rank.

Battle mode

Body Armor: A Battle-mode Orion has metallic blue plate armor that provides Incredible protection from Energy attacks and Remarkable protection from physical and Force attacks.

Flight: An Orion Sentinel flies using boot jets at Excellent speed (10 areas per round).

Weapons Systems: An Orion Sentinel's arsenal of weaponry is hidden within its azure armor, the most common ports for weapons coming from the forearms, hands, and eyes. These weapons include all of the following weapons:

– **Gas Jets:** Remarkable-intensity knock-out gas can be emitted from the palms of an Orion Sentinel to cover an area up to two areas away.

– **Grapple Rings:** These large rings are fired from an Orion's left forearm, and each Orion has 10 such constricting rings. The rings can be fired one per round up to three areas away and tightly wrap around any target (of up to 12' in diameter) upon contact, constricting with up to Incredible (40) strength, depending on the strength of resistance. The rings are of Incredible material-strength metals. These rings are not lethal weapons, being restraint devices instead.

– **Inhibitor Rings:** These large rings are fired from an Orion unit's right forearm and are capable of wrapping around targets of up to 10' in diameter. Armed with five rings, an Orion can fire one a round up to three areas away and entrap single targets with Excellent strength. Once in contact with a mutant (or within 2" of a mutant's skin), the Amazing-rank inhibitor negates any mental or psionic powers as well as enhanced physical powers like Colossus's strength and armor. It does not affect or negate blatant physical mutations such as Nightcrawler's tail and fur, or Angel's original wings; it simply blocks the neurological signals that allow their effective use.

Any targets with powers stronger than Amazing rank are reduced by 50 points

and need a successful Psyche FEAT roll to use their powers at the reduced rank. Note that cumulative inhibitor rings have a cumulative inhibiting effect on mutant powers, so two inhibitor rings project an Unearthly inhibitor field. The rings are made of Incredible-strength material.

– **Shock Blasts:** An Orion Sentinel can emit vibration-shock Force blasts of Remarkable (30) rank from its hands. The blasts have a range of two areas.

– **Shock Touch:** The gloves of an Orion Sentinel can maintain a high-intensity vibration pulse that is released on contact with a target (Fighting FEAT roll needed). The shock touch releases Amazing (50) Force damage and can destroy inanimate material of up to Incredible strength material. This shock touch can be used once every other round, needing the interim to build up the vibrations.

– **Heat Beams:** These heat beams issue from an Orion Sentinel's eyes, dealing Remarkable rank Energy (heat) damage to its target. The beams have a range of eight areas.

TALENTS: An Orion Sentinel can be programmed with any noncombat-oriented skills to aid it in masquerading as a normal human.

HISTORY: With the repeal of the Mutant Registration Act by the U.S. Supreme Court, elements of the United States government still wanted a check in the system against the often-uncontrolled mutant populace and the danger that mutants might present to people in general. Recently, the covert and highly classified mutant surveillance and detainment branch of the National Security Council, known as Project: Wideawake, was brought back into full operational status. With Henry Peter Gyrich as its acting head, this technically illegal government agency answers only to the President.

With the new Project: Wideawake appropriating large amounts of funds for its comeback, its first act was to rethink its strategy in producing Sentinels. The Mark V series had not performed up to expectations, and the Project needed more reliable agents to detain the growing number of dangerous mutant groups. Not willing to risk human agents, armored suits like the Guardsmen and the Mandroids were dropped from consideration. Then a Dr. Isaac Rheros came up with a plan to amalgamate numerous cybernetic and electronic systems into artificially created androids or robots.

Following that line of thinking, Dr. Rheros was placed in charge of developing the Orion-class Sentinel, named after the mythical hunter. Using information gathered from Ryker's Island, the Vault, and old Avengers' case files and security scans, Rheros gathered potential technologies for

assimilation into the new Orion Sentinels. Through various go-betweens, the Project gave Herman Schultz, the Shocker, a commuted sentence for his existing vibro-shock gauntlets and plans. From government warehouses and stockpiles came a number of old SHIELD Life Model Decoys (LMDs), various Sentinel systems for mutant detection, and the impounded equipment of the recently slain villain Ringer.

Dr. Rheros adapted the LMD technology to accept a wide number of mechanical upgrades and adaptations while still allowing it to maintain its human appearance. Hoping to avoid the amount of attention that Sentinels usually drew, Orion units are designed to function as unobtrusive covert agents that easily mix into a crowd under normal circumstances. If forced into battle, Orion Sentinels can comport themselves as well as, if not better than, their gargantuan predecessors. Mutants: Be alert, for a hunter may now be anywhere, keeping its eyes on you.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Orion Sentinels are generally programmed to act like normal humans. Their actual behavior depends on who they are disguised as in Covert mode. The first three Orions are designed to look like an African-American male, an Asian male, and a Caucasian female in Covert modes. They dress and act as very strict, prim-and-proper government agents (dark suits and glasses), but their individual personality programs should allow for some differences after their installation. Their voice modulators allow them human-sounding voices, but their actual voices are hollow and mechanical. Their primary programming, as with all Sentinels, is to track down and capture mutants.

HURRICANE™

Roger Philip Banks
Criminal mercenary

	Normal	Armor-enhanced
F	GD(10)	EX(20)
A	GD(10)	EX(20)
S	GD(10)	RM(30)
E	EX(20)	IN(40)
R	EX(20)	EX(20)
I	GD(10)	GD(10)
P	GD(10)	GD(10)
Health	50	110
Karma	40	40
Resources	GD(10)	GD(10)
Popularity	0	- 2

POWERS: All of Hurricane's powers originate from his battlesuit. These abilities include:

Body Armor: His reinforced battlesuit provides Hurricane with Excellent (20)

protection from physical and Force attacks and Good (10) protection from Energy attacks. The suit also enhances Banks' physical abilities (FASE) as noted.

Wind control: Hurricane's suit gives him the power to control wind and air patterns with Amazing (50) ability within his own area and up to one area away in every direction. Hurricane is immune to the effects of his own winds. This power grants him the following Power Stunts:

– *Air Shield:* Hurricane can swirl his winds closely about him, which creates an Amazing-rank shield vs. physical attacks.

– *Flight:* Hurricane can fly at Good (10) air speed, eight areas per round.

– *Flight disruption:* Using his wind-control power, Hurricane can disrupt other flying or gliding characters. Flying characters must make an Agility FEAT roll vs. Amazing intensity to avoid being buffeted by winds (see next Power Stunt) and moved about through the air at Hurricane's bidding. Gliding characters must always get a red FEAT result to avoid falling under Hurricane's control.

– *Buffeting:* Airborne characters who fall under Hurricane's control suffer an Amazing-rank attack due to wind buffeting. This buffeting attack can inflict up to Remarkable (30) Blunt Attacks damage, and victims can be Slammed or Stunned.

– *Lifting:* Hurricane can use his winds to lift unanchored people or objects off the ground. Hurricane's winds lift objects with Amazing (50) strength. Characters must make a successful Strength or Agility FEAT roll (whichever is better) vs. Amazing intensity to avoid leaving the ground. Hurricane can control the movements through the air of those who fail the roll, and he can inflict buffeting damage, as noted earlier. Characters who make the FEAT roll and remain grounded can still take up to Excellent (20) buffeting damage, but cannot be Slammed or Stunned (they are assumed to be avoiding the worst effects of the winds by getting under cover, holding onto anchored objects, etc.). Hurricane is also fond of lifting powerful, nonflying opponents high off the ground, buffeting them, then dropping them to cause even more damage to the hapless victim (see "Downward Movement: Advanced Set, Players' Book, page 21).

– *Vacuum:* Hurricane can create a small, partial vacuum around a single target. Victims of this attack must make an Endurance FEAT roll vs. Amazing intensity or be forced to roll on the Stun table.

Limitation: Hurricane's powers affect everyone in an area, with Hurricane himself being the only exception. Hurricane can control the amount of buffeting damage taken by victims, but all victims in an area take the same amount of damage.

Energy Beam: Hurricane can fire this

variable-setting energy projector from his suit's helmet. This beam can inflict up to Incredible (40) Energy damage at Remarkable range. He calls this weapon the "Eye of the Hurricane."

TALENTS: Banks has the Engineering, Computers, Electronics, and Repair/Tinkering skills.

CONTACTS: Hurricane has no current contacts, though he is seeking some in organized-crime and super-villain mercenary circles. Banks knows a few people employed by Stark International, but they are not considered to be contacts as they are disinclined to be on friendly terms with Banks (see "History" below).

HISTORY: Roger P. Banks was an electrical engineer by trade and a computer hacker by hobby. He filled his free time by doing his best to break into computers illegally. Until recently, Banks was a mid-level engineer for Stark International. He stayed late after work one evening to test a new hacking program he had been developing. Curiosity and greed drove him to try breaking into some of Stark International's restricted files, something he had been unable to do before. He hoped this new program would crack the security of restricted areas of the main-frame computer. Banks had some success, managing to access and download low-clearance files on one of Stark's inventions, the Guardsman armor. He also broke into some mid-level security-clearance Research & Development files concerning two technology-based villains.

Banks found some files concerning the power horn of one of Iron Man's old foes, the Unicorn. Iron Man had once captured Unicorn, only to find the man inside the Unicorn suit was seriously ill. Tony Stark (Iron Man) devised a special bath treatment in which Unicorn's suit and helmet were removed and the villain was placed in the treatment bath. Some of Stark's technicians analyzed the power horn, though little was done with the information gained. Stark International kept this information after Unicorn left and subsequently disappeared. It was these files and partial plans that Banks discovered.

Banks also came across some files concerning the battlesuit of a deceased villain, Cyclone. (After Cyclone and so many others were killed in "The Bar with No Name" by Scourge a few years back, some of the technology that Scourge did not completely destroy was sent by the authorities to Stark International for testing.) Banks found virtually complete plans for the wind-controlling suit, and he decided to make that suit the basis of his new identity: Hurricane!

Once he had this information, Banks did his best to electronically cover his tracks. In this, he was less successful. Computer Security personnel discovered the data break-in but could not determine the identity of the thief. Banks soon quit Stark International and moved away with his illicit information, assembling his suit from components stolen from Stark International. The company later discovered the missing equipment and discerned that Banks was the thief; it reported the theft to the authorities and left it at that. The company was unaware that Banks planned to turn the stolen components into a functioning battlesuit.

Recently, Hurricane completed his suit and has been committing crimes (bank and armored-car robberies, wanton public displays of his wind-controlling powers, destruction of property, etc.) in an effort to attract the attention of those who might be interested in hiring superpowered muscle or an assassin. He has had little success so far. He has neither encountered any super-heroic resistance nor received any offers of employment from normal criminals or super villains. Whether this changes in the future is up to you.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Roger P. Banks is a greedy man. Born and raised in lower-middle-class family, he grew to resent those who possessed more than he. As a teenager, his family noticed his talent for electronics and his fascination with computers. Banks' parents encouraged him to turn these abilities into his career, and they put him through college. Banks did well and got an entry-level job at Stark International after graduation. Over the next few years, he did good work and was promoted twice. This, however, was not enough for Banks; although he enjoyed his work, he came to resent Tony Stark, the wealthy owner of Stark International, for the latter's material wealth. This resentment grew over time until Banks became bitter. The bitterness (and his hobby of hacking) was what led to him breaking into Stark's files.

In your campaign, Hurricane can appear as a thug for a criminal mastermind or as a super villain. Due to the nature of his powers, Hurricane will work most effectively when he works alone. Hurricane would also gladly work as an assassin, as long as he was very well paid for the act. He does have a penchant for destroying property, seeing this as another way of harming those who have more than he by destroying what he feels "they" possess.

The main thing to remember about Hurricane is his greed, his prime motivation. For example, Hurricane would not be above stealing from the home of someone who he was contracted to assassinate. Ω