CLASH AMONG THE STARS

CLASH AMONG THE STARS IS A SPECTACULARS SERIES THEMED AROUND SPACE EXPLORATION, COSMIC POWERS, AND THE STRUGGLES BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF EARTH AND THE GALAXY-SPANNING ALIEN RACES THAT THREATEN IT. THIS SERIES HEARKENS BACK TO COSMIC STORIES ABOUT INTERSTELLAR WARS, PLANET-DEVOURING TITANS, SUPERWEAPONS, AND SPACE TRAVEL, AND TAKES THE HEROES TO DISTANT WORLDS TO DEAL WITH THREATS BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO REACH EARTH.

MAKE SURE THAT ALL THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE BEFORE PROCEEDING:

❑ YOU AND YOUR PLAYERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE RULES.

❑ YOU HAVE FILLED OUT "THE BASICS" PAGES OF THE SETTING BOOK.

❑ YOU HAVE COMPLETED EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #4.

❑ YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN THE FIRST SCENARIO OF THIS SERIES, CLASH AMONG THE STARS.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO PROCEED...

HERO PLAYERS

❏ CREATE A TEAM OR CHOOSE AN EXISTING TEAM. THE NEXT FEW PAGES HAVE NEW TEAM ROSTERS FOR YOU TO CHOOSE FROM.

❏ EACH PLAYER SHOULD CREATE A HERO OR CHOOSE AN EXISTING HERO FOR THE TEAM. THE NEXT FEW PAGES HAVE NEW HERO ARCHETYPES FOR YOU TO CHOOSE FROM.

NARRATOR

❏ TEAR OUT THE ISSUE SHEET TITLED "DEATH BY A MILLION CUTS." SET ASIDE THE SERIES PAD FOR NOW.

❏ READ OVER THE ISSUE.

❏ FILL OUT THE SWARM MINION SHEET AND USE THAT SHEET FOR THE ISSUE'S MINIONS. FILL OUT THE ALIEN QUEEN OR ZEALOT VILLAIN SHEET AND USE THAT SHEET FOR THE ISSUE'S VILLAIN.

❏ RUN THE ISSUE!

AFTER YOU FINISH THE FIRST ISSUE, YOU CAN CONTINUE PLAYING SUBSEQUENT ISSUES, ONE AT A TIME, UNTIL YOU ENCOUNTER ANOTHER STOP PAGE. ANY TEAM, ARCHETYPE, MINION, OR VILLAIN SHEETS YOU COME ACROSS CAN BE TORN OUT OF THE PAD AND USED FROM THAT POINT FORTH. MOST WILL BE TIED DIRECTLY INTO THE SCENARIO THAT THEY PRECEDE, BUT UNLESS AN ISSUE CALLS FOR A SPECIFIC ENEMY, YOU CAN USE ANY ENEMIES (FROM THIS SERIES, OR OTHER SERIES) FOR THOSE ISSUES.

YOU CAN PLAY ISSUES FROM OTHER SERIES BETWEEN THESE ISSUES. HOWEVER, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU PLAY ANY MULTI-PART ISSUES BACK-TO-BACK UNTIL YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE MULTI-PART SCENARIO.

NARRATORS' TIP: MANY OF THE ISSUES IN THIS SERIES TAKE PLACE FAR FROM EARTH. HEROES OFTEN HAVE EARTH-RELATED ASPIRATIONS AND TURMOILS, SO FEEL FREE TO FRAME ASPIRATION AND TURMOIL SCENES AS FLASHBACKS TO WHEN THE HEROES WERE ALL ON EARTH.

COSMIC ALLIANCE

TEAM

Your team is composed of heroes who have some connection to the galaxy beyond Earth. Some or all of the members of your team might be extraterrestrials, or you might be Earthbound heroes whose mission is to protect the world from extraterrestrial threats. Examples from popular comics include Infinity Watch™ and Starforce™ (Marvel), and the Legion of Superheroes™, L.E.G.I.O.N.™, and the Omega Men® (DC).

PURPOSE
What is the reason for your team's continued existence?

❏ **Aliens in Exile** (the team consists of members of a single alien race, having formed on their homeworld and traveled to Earth in their fight against cosmic evils)

❏ **Joint Task Force** (the team's members, drawn from various starfaring civilizations, represent a cooperative diplomatic effort between those planets)

❏ **Sector Defense Force** (the team is a cosmic paramilitary force that protects and polices a sector of space that includes the Earth)

❏ **Sentinels of Earth** (the team was founded on Earth and protects it from extraterrestrial threats)

❏ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

VISIBILITY
How aware is the average inhabitant of Earth of your team's existence?

❏ **Totally Unknown** (the average Earth denizen knows nothing of your team's existence)

❏ **Known Heroes, Secret Mission** (though the people of Earth are aware of the heroes on your team, they think they are simply terrestrial heroes and have no idea of their cosmic mission)

❏ **Out in the Open** (your team operates out in the open on Earth, and your team receives media coverage just like any other team of heroes)

❏ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

BASE OF OPERATIONS
From where does your team launch its heroic missions?

❏ **Orbital Satellite** (the team works out of a space station in low Earth orbit)

❏ **Secret Facility** (the team operates out of a secret base, such as an old rocket launch facility)

❏ **Military Base** (the team is housed on an official military base, sanctioned by the government)

❏ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS:

Team: _____

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

PUBLIC REPUTATION

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

MEDIA REPUTATION

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

GOVERNMENT REPUTATION

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
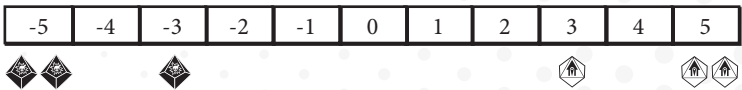
STARSHIP CREW

TEAM

This team is made up of the crew of a starship, with each member of the team having a specific role on the vessel or within a squadron. You travel from world to world, taking on jobs to keep the your ship running. Examples from popular comics include the Guardians of the Galaxy® and the Starjammers™ (Marvel).

Starship Name: _____

TEAM FORMATION — *What brought the team together originally?*

- ❑ **Hired** (a third party hired each member of your crew individually and paid for you to crew the ship on their behalf)
- ❑ **Jailbreak** (members of your crew were imprisoned and escaped together, stealing your ship as a part of making your getaway)
- ❑ **Mutiny** (your crew rebelled against your ship's previous captain, seizing the ship for your own)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

YOUR CREW — *How would other people describe your crew?*

- ❑ **Freelancers** (your crew takes on jobs, mostly legal, from other stellar citizens)
- ❑ **Space Pirates** (your crew calls piracy their trade, preying upon the rich space travelers)
- ❑ **Smugglers** (your ship carries contraband from one starport to another, avoiding the prying eyes of spaceport authorities)
- ❑ **Mercenaries** (you are hired guns, lending your might to whichever side can pay the most)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

YOUR STARSHIP — *What is your starship like?*

- ❑ **Cutting Edge** (your ship is a top-of-the-line model, and well maintained; it is a tool of your trade, and you treat your tools well)
- ❑ **Hunk of Junk** (your ship is a cobbled-together pile of scrap that malfunctions frequently)
- ❑ **Retrofitted Shuttle** (your ship began its life as a space shuttle or other early space exploration vehicle, retrofitted for interstellar flight)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS:

Team: _____

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired
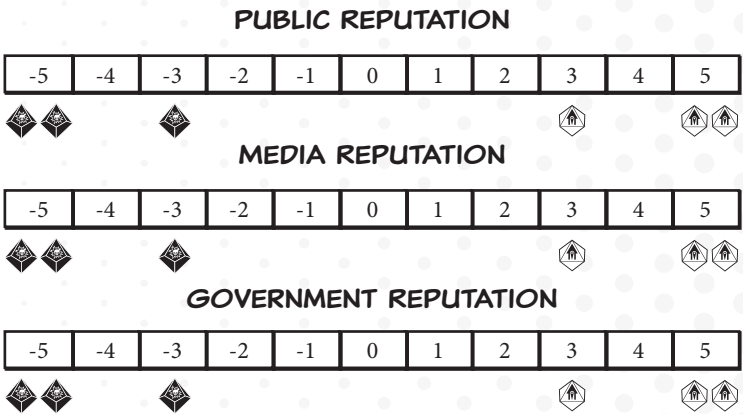
HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

HERO NAME: _____

❏ Founding Member ❏ Active ❏ Inactive ❏ Deceased ❏ Retired

PUBLIC REPUTATION

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

MEDIA REPUTATION

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

GOVERNMENT REPUTATION

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

HERO

POWERHOUSE

You might look like an ordinary human in street clothes, but when you exercise your powers you are among the fastest, strongest, and hardest-hitting heroes in the world. Examples from popular comics include Captain Marvel® and Rogue® (Marvel), and Superman® and Power Girl® (DC)..

POWER SOURCE

To what do you attribute the strength of your powers?

❑ **Born Powerful** (you were born different, suffused with a power that far outstrips others of your kind)

❑ **Enhanced** (you were given your tremendous power by someone else)

❑ **Natural Phenomenon** (you absorb energy from some natural phenomenon, like solar radiation or magnetic fields)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Cautious   ❑ Sarcastic

❑ Defensive   ❑ Short-Tempered

❑ Gregarious   ❑ Stoic

❑ Haunted   ❑ Wisecracking

❑ Humorless   ❑ _____

❑ Kind   ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Elemental Vulnerability** (you are severely harmed by a specific elemental force)

❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)

❑ **Proximity Weakness** (you grow weak when near a rare substance)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Deflection** (you deflect incoming attacks using your powers)

❑ **Improvised Defenses** (you use cars, slabs of concrete, heavy machinery, and other objects as improvised shields)

❑ **Invulnerability** (you shrug off attacks like they are nothing)

❑ **Mobility** (you move fast and dodge out of the way of attacks)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Bolt of Energy** (you zip to another place as pure energy)

❑ **Brachiation** (you swing from tall objects high overhead)

❑ **Leaping** (you leap long distances and great heights)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

SKILLS

IDENTITY

TEAM ROLE

PARAGON OF POWER

You add 1 extra hero point (✦) to your Hero Points per Conflict for each Basic power you have in your superpower, lesser power, and minor power slots.

Additionally, you can spend 1 hero point (✦) at any time to take any Basic power and place it near your archetype sheet. For the rest of the issue, you can use that power with a 70% chance of success and can use any of that power's benefits.

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

RESISTANCE
/ 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

✧ Remove 1 time token (🕐) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)
✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (✦) in the following ways:

✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◆) to the roll for each point spent.
✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (✦) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (🔷🔷) to their roll.
✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (🎭 🎭 🎭 🎭) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

✧ When an enemy hits you, after the attack you can make 1 attack against that enemy.
✧ Add 100 to your current & max resistance.
✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (🔷) to all melee attack rolls.
✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.
✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◆) to the roll.

BLASTER

You use your powers like a cannon, hammering your enemies with blasts of energy. While you dish out pain from a distance, you can also strike with precision and key timing, disrupting your enemies more accurately than straightforward attacks might. Examples from popular comics include Cyclops® (Marvel) and Solar® (Vertigo)..

RAW POWER

What do you struggle with as a result of possessing such a strong font of power?

❑ **Collateral Damage** (your power is imprecise and causes lots of damage)

❑ **Self Control** (your power is like walking around with a loaded gun, and every time someone goads you it is a struggle not to use it)

❑ **Unpredictable Power** (you struggle to keep your power under control)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Confident ❑ Unstable

❑ Grim ❑ Wary

❑ Gung-ho ❑ Wide-Eyed

❑ Honest ❑ Wisecracking

❑ Jaded ❑ _____

❑ Surly ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Energy Limits** (you need to recharge the source of your powers)

❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)

❑ **Out of Control** (you risk losing control when using your powers)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Danger Sense** (a sixth sense warns you of incoming attacks)

❑ **Deflection** (you deflect incoming attacks using your powers)

❑ **Shield** (you are protected by a layer of energy that shields you from harm)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Bolt of Energy** (you zip to another place as pure energy)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Slide** (you ride a wave of energy created by an elemental force under your control)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

IDENTITY

SKILLS

TEAM ROLE

POWER CANNON

You can make ranged attacks with powers that have time tokens on them.

Additionally, you have an intrinsic power that you can use to make ranged attacks, which you describe as fits your character's aesthetic.

SHOOT A BLAST OF ENERGY 70%

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

/ 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

- ✦ Remove 1 time token (🕐) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)
- ✦ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (🎖) in the following ways:

- ✦ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll for each point spent.
- ✦ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (🎖) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (⬧⬧) to their roll.
- ✦ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (🛡 🛡 🛡 🛡) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

- ✦ Teamwork maneuvers add 4 advantage dice (⬧⬧⬧⬧) to your roll.
- ✦ Add +20 to the damage of your attacks.
- ✦ You can take two different actions each turn.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

- ✦ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (⬧) to all melee attack rolls.
- ✦ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.
- ✦ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll.

TECH WIZARD

You are a skilled technician, so accomplished that other heroes rely on you to keep their technology running. You might not be a famous inventor, but you know how to get the most out of technology, improvising and getting your hands dirty. Examples from popular comics include Forge® and Rocket Raccoon® (Marvel)..

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

What best describes the nature of your technical skill?

❑ **Intuitive Prodigy** (technology speaks to you, and your work is pure intuition)

❑ **Jury-Rigger** (you slap together inventions and perform repairs that make use of junk parts you have lying around)

❑ **Misunderstood Genius** (you are a brilliant inventor, but your life has given you few opportunities to prove the legitimacy of your skill)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Angry　　　　❑ Morose

❑ Charming　　 ❑ Oblivious

❑ Cynical　　　❑ Stoic

❑ Innocent　　 ❑ Surly

❑ Kind　　　　❑ _____

❑ Loyal　　　　❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Dependents** (you have family or loved ones depending on you)

❑ **Proximity Weakness** (you grow weak when near a rare substance)

❑ **Uncontrollable Rage** (you lose your self-control when in a fight)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Danger Sense** (sixth sense warns of incoming attacks)

❑ **Mobility** (you move fast and dodge out of the way of attacks)

❑ **Training** (you possess combat training that helps dodge attacks)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Brachiation** (you swing from tall objects high overhead)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Running** (you run really, really fast)

❑ **Vehicle** (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

Hero Name: _____ **Team:** _____

Real Name: _____ **First Appearance:** _____

SKILLS

IDENTITY

TEAM ROLE

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

I CAN MAKE IT WORK

At the start of each conflict scene, draw three cards from the Deck of Powers and set them aside where you can see them. At any time during that scene, you can describe your hero improvising a use of one of those powers by jury-rigging some piece of technology. You can make a check or attack using that power with an 80% chance of success. You cannot use power stunts with this use of the power. After you make the roll, return that card to the bottom of the deck. At the end of the conflict scene, return any of these cards you still have to the bottom of the Deck of Powers.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

_____ / 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

✧ Remove 1 time token (⏱) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)

✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (⚡) in the following ways:

✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll for each point spent.

✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (⚡) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (◈ ◈) to their roll.

✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (👊 👊 👊 👊) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

✧ You regain 20 resistance every time you perform a teamwork maneuver.

✧ You gain 5 hero points (⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡).

✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (◈) to all melee attack rolls.

✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.

✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll.

MAVERICK

It's dangerous out there, and you survive by breaking the rules in increasingly creative ways. You rely on charm and lies as much as you do your quick, cunning mind, and baffle your enemies with unexpected, half-baked plans. Examples from popular comics include Gambit® and Star-Lord® (Marvel), and Grifter® (Wildstorm/DC).

YOUR GREATEST ASSET

What keeps you alive and leads you to victory more than anything else?

❑ **Brashness** (you act quickly, giving your enemies no chance to react)

❑ **Fearlessness** (you will take any risk, with no concern for safety)

❑ **Roguish Charm** (other people can't help but give you what you ask for)

❑ **Unorthodox Methods** (you have an uncanny ability to do the unexpected)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Carefree   ❑ Sarcastic

❑ Cold   ❑ Serious

❑ Confident   ❑ Short-Tempered

❑ Flamboyant   ❑ Wisecracking

❑ Honest   ❑ _____

❑ Humorless   ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Goaded** (you can be easily goaded into a fight by those who know what buttons to push)

❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)

❑ **Romantic Partner** (you have a girlfriend/boyfriend/spouse)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Improvised Defenses** (you use cars, slabs of concrete, heavy machinery, and other objects as improvised shields)

❑ **Mobility** (you move fast and dodge out of the way of attacks)

❑ **Training** (you possess combat training that helps dodge attacks)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Brachiation** (you swing from tall objects high overhead)

❑ **Leaping** (you leap long distances and great heights)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Vehicle** (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

Hero Name: _____   **Team:** _____

Real Name: _____   **First Appearance:** _____

SKILLS

IDENTITY

TEAM ROLE

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

DIRTY TRICKS ❏ ❏

Any time after the start of the first turn of the round, you can check off one of the boxes next to the name of this benefit and describe some clever trick or deception that you use to surprise an enemy, then move your initiative card to one space before any one of that enemy's initiative cards that you choose (and flip your card face-up if it is face-down). If you do this while another character is taking a turn, they finish their turn once you have moved your initiative card. At the end of the issue, erase any check marks in the boxes next to this benefit's name.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

_____ / 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

✧ Remove 1 time token (🕓) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)

✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (🦅) in the following ways:

✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll for each point spent.

✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (🦅) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (⬧⬧) to their roll.

✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (🎆 🎆 🎆 🎆) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

✧ Enemy attacks against you add 2 challenge dice (◈ ◈) to the roll.

✧ Halve all damage you would take.

✧ You can take two different actions each turn.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (⬧) to all melee attack rolls.

✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.

✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll.

CHAMPION

Champions are formidable fighters who rely on raw strength, cunning, and grit, rising above all others they face in combat. Many champions are current or former gladiators, proving themselves the greatest warriors in front of an audience. Examples from popular comics include Drax the Destroyer® and Shatterstar™ (Marvel), and Warblade™ and Zealot™ (Wildstorm/DC)..

PINNACLE MOMENT

Under what label have you proven yourself to be a champion?

❑ **Commander** (you are not just a fighter, but one who leads other fighters)

❑ **Gladiator** (you fight for show and rose through the ranks to become a celebrity among fighters)

❑ **Warrior** (you are an unrivaled warrior of a particular tradition)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Bitter ❑ Optimistic

❑ Defensive ❑ Sarcastic

❑ Edgy ❑ Wary

❑ Exuberant ❑ Wisecracking

❑ Gregarious ❑ _____

❑ Naive ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Dependents** (you have family or loved ones depending on you)

❑ **Out of Control** (you risk losing control when using your powers)

❑ **Uncontrollable Rage** (you lose your self-control when in a fight)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Danger Sense** (a sixth sense warns you of incoming attacks)

❑ **Improvised Defenses** (you use cars, slabs of concrete, heavy machinery, and other objects as improvised shields)

❑ **Training** (you possess combat training that helps you dodge attacks)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Brachiation** (you swing from tall objects high overhead)

❑ **Leaping** (you leap long distances and great heights)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Running** (you run really, really fast)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

IDENTITY

SKILLS

TEAM ROLE

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

THE THRILL OF VICTORY

Each time you or any other heroes on your team defeats a villain or a squad of minions while you are on the scene, you regain 20 resistance.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

RESISTANCE

/ 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

- ✧ Remove 1 time token (⏱) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)
- ✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (🎯) in the following ways:

- ✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll for each point spent.
- ✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (🎯) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (🔺🔺) to their roll.
- ✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (👣 👣 👣 👣) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

- ✧ Your minimum damage on a hit is 50.
- ✧ If you start your turn with 0 hero points, you gain 2 hero points (🎯🎯).
- ✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

- ✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (🔺) to all melee attack rolls.
- ✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.
- ✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll.

HERO

STARFARER

Starfarers travel the galaxy seeking adventure for the sake of adventure. They are widely skilled and succeed thanks to a combination of cleverness and survival instinct. If you are from Earth, you may be someone who seeks to visit the stars but has not yet explored them. Examples from popular comics include Adam Strange™ (DC) and Corsair™ (Marvel).

THE LIFE OF AN ADVENTURER

What is your favorite part about being an adventurer in space?
- ❑ **Discovery** (you seek knowledge and truth among the stars)
- ❑ **Thrill-seeking** (you enjoy the thrill of facing unknown challenges)
- ❑ **Visiting Strange Worlds** (you relish the chance to visit worlds beyond your own, and meeting the alien species that live there)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.
- ❑ Cautious
- ❑ Charming
- ❑ Cold
- ❑ Hotheaded
- ❑ Impatient
- ❑ Impulsive
- ❑ Reckless
- ❑ Stoic
- ❑ Supportive
- ❑ Wisecracking
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?
- ❑ **Elemental Vulnerability** (you are severely harmed by a specific elemental force)
- ❑ **Goaded** (you can be easily goaded into a fight by those who know what buttons to push)
- ❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?
- ❑ **Danger Sense** (a sixth sense warns you of incoming attacks)
- ❑ **Mobility** (you move fast and dodge out of the way of attacks)
- ❑ **Training** (you possess combat training that helps you dodge attacks)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?
- ❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)
- ❑ **Running** (you run really, really fast)
- ❑ **Vehicle** (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme)
- ❑ **Other** (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

Hero Name: _____   **Team:** _____

Real Name: _____   **First Appearance:** _____

SKILLS

IDENTITY

TEAM ROLE

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

IMPROVISATION

As your action, you can spend 1 hero point (⚡) to choose any of the Basic powers and make an attack or check using that power with an 80% chance of success, describing it as your hero creatively using the environment in some way. You can use power stunts associated with this power; for each time token the power stunt requires you to place, instead add 1 challenge die (◆) to your roll.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

/ 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

- ✧ Remove 1 time token (🕐) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)
- ✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (⚡) in the following ways:

- ✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◆) to the roll for each point spent.
- ✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (⚡) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (🔶🔶) to their roll.
- ✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (👟 👟 👟 👟) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

- ✧ You add 2 advantage dice (🔶🔶) to all attacks you make with powers.
- ✧ Each boon you roll counts as 2 (👟 👟).
- ✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

- ✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (🔶) to all melee attack rolls.
- ✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.
- ✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◆) to the roll.

THE SWARM

These minions are a swarm of bestial creatures, driven by primal urges with little capacity for thought or reason. They have little sense of self-preservation, hurling themselves heedless of danger at any goal they seek. Examples from popular comics include the Brood™ and the Phalanx™ (Marvel).

NAME:

FUNDAMENTAL NATURE

What is the nature of this swarm of aliens?

❑ **Cosmic Horrors** (they are alien monsters from the deep dark of space, with tentacles, beaks, and other cephalopod traits)

❑ **Degenerate Humanoids** (they might once have been sentient humanoids, but now are bestial and compelled by some shared delusion or psychosis)

❑ **Genetic Monsters** (they might once have been sentient humanoids, but have been mutated on the genetic level)

❑ **Insectoid** (these minions have the traits of insects or arachnids, but on a size comparable to humans)

❑ **Technological** (this swarm is composed of cybernetic or robotic entities, driven by programming instead of nature)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PRIMARY DRIVE

What core, primal drive compels these creatures?

❑ **Destruction** (these minions are driven to destroy, with a primal urge to tear down all life and civilization)

❑ **Hunger** (they seek to consume, driven by an insatiable hunger for nourishment that cannot be satisfied)

❑ **Infestation** (these minions seek to take over territory and transform it into their nest, hive, or home, a primal drive for conquest)

❑ **Replication** (they seek only to replicate themselves, requiring raw materials, nutrients, or host bodies to do so)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

TRAVERSAL OF THE STARS

How do these minions usually travel from planet to planet?

❑ **Hijacking** (they take over the ships used by starfaring civilizations and use them to reach distant worlds, completely eliminating the crews of those ships before claiming them as their own)

❑ **Hive Ships** (they construct their ships from raw materials, using their starfaring capabilities)

❑ **Subtle Parasites** (they infest ships or crew members subtly, emerging when they reach their destination)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PRIMARY ATTACK MODE

When you create these minions, choose one of the primary attack modes below, and describe the nature of the attack in the box.

❏ **STANDARD ATTACK (50% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**

Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10).

❏ **ACCURATE ATTACK (65% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**

Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 5).

❏ **POWERFUL ATTACK (40% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**

Melee attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled + 20 (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10 + 20).

Use this box to describe the minions' primary attack mode.

MINION PERK

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the perks below. For these minions, the Hive Mind perk is automatically selected, and you still choose one additional perk for them.

✔ **HIVE MIND**

While the squad's size is 2 or greater, add 2 advantage dice (🔼 🔼) to its attack rolls.

❏ **OUR NUMBERS ARE ENDLESS**

Add 3 to the size of any squad of these minions at the start of the scene.

❏ **PROTECTIVE**

When these minions are up close to a villain that leads them, if a hero attacks that villain, the Narrator can give that hero 2 advantage dice (🔼 🔼) on the attack if the attack targets these minions instead.

❏ **RAVENOUS**

When a squad of these minions damages a hero with an attack, if the squad's initiative card is not already at the end of the initiative track, move the squad's initiative card to the end of the initiative track, leaving it face-up. These minions can take another turn when the squad's initiative card is next on the track.

❏ **THEY JUST KEEP COMING!**

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, but before the first turn of the round begins, roll 4 advantage dice (🔼 🔼 🔼 🔼). For each boon you roll, add that number to the size of any squads of minions of this type. The size's squad cannot exceed its initial size.

MINION WEAKNESS

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ **DULL SENSES**

Any roll made to hide from these minions adds 2 advantage dice (🔼 🔼) to the roll.

❏ **FODDER**

Any time a hero hits a squad of these minions with an attack, reduce the squad's size by 1 more.

❏ **INSTINCT-DRIVEN**

These minions must always attack the hero that is physically closest to them.

❏ **SMALL-MINDED**

If there is no villain active in the scene to lead them, add 1 challenge die (◈) to the attack rolls of squads of these minions.

ALIEN QUEEN

This villain is the leader of the Swarm minions, of their same kind but elevated above all the drones both in influence and physical form. This villain commands the mindless hordes of the Swarm to do whatever bidding they choose, and despite its name is not necessarily female. Examples from popular comics include the Brood Queen™ (Marvel).

NAME:

PHYSICAL SUPERIORITY

How is this villain physically different from the Swarm minions?

☐ **Ensconced** (the villain is large, bloated, and nearly immobile due to being ensconced in a nest or restraint)

☐ **More Humanoid** (they more closely resemble humanity)

☐ **Towering** (the villain is much larger and more physically powerful than others of their kind)

☐ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

MENTAL SUPERIORITY

How is this enemy mentally superior to the member of the Swarm?

☐ **Cunning** (the villain is capable of complex thought and has a keen tactical sense)

☐ **Psychic** (the villain can communicate telepathically)

☐ **Speech** (the villain can speak the languages of humanoids)

☐ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

HINT OF HISTORY

What hints at this villain's unique history?

☐ **Noticeable Cybernetics** (the villain has had part of their body augmented by cybernetics, possibly unwillingly)

☐ **Scar** (the villain has a visible scar from a past conflict, such as a missing limb or damage to their carapace or flesh)

☐ **Trophies** (the villain wears or carries trophies of enemies that they and the Swarm have vanquished)

☐ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ At Large ✦ Incarcerated ✦ Deceased ✦ Reformed ✦ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%):

When you create this villain, draw three powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be this villain's superpower. The villain can use the power to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with this power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

FLEEING THE SCENE ❏ ❏

In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked.

❏ **CORNERED ANIMAL**

If at least two heroes are up close to the villain, the villain adds 2 advantage dice (⬡ ⬡) to each attack roll they make.

❏ **FAST**

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move any 1 of the villain's initiative cards 2 spaces toward the front of the track.

❏ **FLIGHT**

This villain can fly when they move.

❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ **SAVAGE**

When this villain hits with an attack, add +20 to the damage.

❏ **OVERSIZED**

This villain can make melee attacks against heroes that they are near or up close to.

❏ **TERRIFYING**

Heroes who are up close to this villain add 2 challenge dice (⬡ ⬡) to any rolls they make.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ **ANIMAL INTELLECT**

Any attack made against this villain that involves deception, trickery, or misdirection adds 2 advantage dice (⬡ ⬡) to the roll.

❏ **RECKLESS RAGE**

While this villain has fewer than 100 resistance, the villain must attack the nearest hero each turn if possible, and adds 2 challenge dice (⬡ ⬡) to the roll.

❏ **SLUGGISH**

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move 2 of this villain's initiative cards 1 step toward the end of the track.

❏ **TACTILE POWER**

This villain cannot make ranged attacks with their superpower.

THE ZEALOT

This villain has a deep conviction that drives them to do horrible things. They respond to anything that threatens their beliefs with extreme force and are capable of committing incredible atrocities in pursuit of their beliefs. Examples from popular comics include Cameron Hodge™ and Ronan the Accuser® (Marvel), and Poison Ivy® (DC).

NAME:

SOURCE OF ZEAL

What inspires this villain's incredible zeal?

❑ **Philosophy** (the villain believes in their vision for a utopian future, one that doesn't include certain people or groups)

❑ **Religion** (the villain is on a religious crusade)

❑ **Vengeance** (the villain seeks retribution for some past slight or injury)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

DEMEANOR

How does this villain behave?

❑ **Cold** (the villain is cold to the point of being almost emotionless, driven by certainty in the validity of their cause)

❑ **Fiery** (the villain rants and raves, punctuating their speech with apocalyptic hyperbole)

❑ **Simmering Hatred** (the villain tries to keep a handle on their emotions, but their disdain for their opponents is ill-disguised)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

ENDGAME

What is final outcome that the villain desires to achieve?

❑ **Conversion** (the villain seeks to convert everyone to a particular religion or belief set)

❑ **Enslavement** (the villain seeks to enslave a certain populace)

❑ **Genocide** (the villain wants to see all members of a particular population, species, or civilization eliminated)

❑ **Obliteration** (they wish to destroy some city or planet)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✧ At Large ✧ Incarcerated ✧ Deceased ✧ Reformed ✧ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%):

When you create this villain, draw three powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be this villain's superpower. The villain can use the power to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with this power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

FLEEING THE SCENE ❑ ❑

In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ BATTLE-TESTED

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move any 2 of the villain's initiative cards 2 spaces toward the beginning of the track, moving 1 card at a time.

❑ DEATH SPIRAL

If at least one hero has been defeated in the scene, the villain adds +20 damage to all attacks they make for the rest of the scene.

❑ FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ THAT WON'T WORK ON ME AGAIN

When a hero hits this villain with an attack using a power, use this perk to add 2 time tokens (🕑🕑) to the power card of the power the hero used for the attack.

❑ ZEALOUS LEADER

When this villain is in the same scene as minions that serve the villain, after the Narrator lays out the initiative track move those minions' initiative card to the beginning of the track.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❑ BLINDED BY ZEAL

While this villain is up close to a hero that has taken any damage in this scene, any heroes who are not up close to the villain add 2 advantage dice (🛡🛡) to attack rolls against this villain.

❑ EYE ON THE PRIZE

In any scene containing an opposed or enemy objective, this villain must use their actions to attempt to progress that objective until they have done so that round.

❑ TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

When this villain has less than 50 resistance, they must use their actions to attempt to flee the scene until they have done so each round.

❑ VULNERABLE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

When a hero rolls 3 or more boons (🛡 🛡 🛡) on a roll for an attack against this villain that hits, add +100 to the damage.

DEATH BY A MILLION CUTS
CLASH AMONG THE STARS #1

This issue opens with a distress call, issued from somewhere close to the solar system's asteroid belt and drawing closer by the minute. When the story begins, the heroes should be on Earth; if they are normally a starfaring team, ask the players to explain what they are doing on Earth at the time. **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** summons the heroes to the liaison's base of operations and plays the distress call for them.

The heavily distorted distress signal was picked up by satellites orbiting the Earth. Through bursts of static, a voice in the distress signal warns that a ship is on a collision course with Earth. The voice begs someone to rescue them but also warns that the ship is infested, though the transmission cuts off before it explains with what.

Before the heroes begin planning their rescue mission, you should choose the issue's main villain, the force that is driving **the Swarm** minions infesting the ship. You can use the **Alien Queen** villain, who leads the Swarm as the brood mother of a nest, with the same primary drive as the rest of the Swarm. Alternatively, you can choose a different villain, either the **Zealot** or a villain who has appeared in a previous issue (if you have played another series before this one). If you choose the latter option, decide why the villain would want to infest the Earth with the Swarm and choose one of the following explanations for why someone other than the Swarm's brood mother is leading it:

❑ **Enslaving Technology**. The villain has developed technology that allows them to control the Swarm. They seized control of this nest, though the Swarm continues to fight against that control. A disruption of the enslaving technology could break the villain's hold.

❑ **Partial Assimilation**. The villain was somehow partially assimilated into the Swarm; perhaps the Swarm attempted to consume the villain and failed, or assimilation is a normal aspect of the Swarm's behavior, especially when encountering something powerful.

❑ **Telepathic Command**. The villain has the ability to communicate telepathically and convinced the Swarm that following the villain's orders is their best chance at spreading to new worlds and satiating their hunger. The Swarm serves the villain willingly.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they seek it out.

LEARNING ABOUT THE SHIP

✦ The heroes can use any reasonable means at their disposal to learn more about the ship.

✦ If the heroes have means of tracking the vessel, they can discern that not only is the ship on a course for Earth, but that it is also making periodic course corrections to stay on that collision course (the issue's main villain damaged the vessel's computers, which triggered the ship's emergency autopilot).

✦ If the heroes obtain information about the ship in advance, they identify it as a cargo ship bearing the markings of **SE20: The Space Police Force**. Otherwise, they gain this information when they reach and board the ship.

GETTING TO THE SHIP

✦ The vessel has just passed the asteroid belt. To intercept it, the heroes need to travel out beyond the orbit of Mars.

✦ If the heroes are at a loss for how to get into space, they can call upon **SE02: The Super Science Lab** to provide them with a vessel capable of intercepting the ship sending the distress call. If the Super Science Lab has "In possession of alien technology" in its Truths box, the ship they obtain can interface with the alien ship, gaining access to a landing bay without having to force their way in.

✦ If the heroes do not have a ship capable of interfacing with the alien ship's computers, they need to force their way into the ship; doing so will require a successful check of a kind deemed appropriate by the Narrator.

LOCATING THE FALLEN GUARDIAN

✦ Once on board the ship, the heroes need to find the person who sent the distress call. The ship is large and of an alien design, so there is no intuitive way to know where to go.

✦ The fallen guardian who sent the distress call is in the ship's engine room, in the heart of the ship, where they tried to destroy the ship by breaching its core. They failed to do so and are now in the clutches of the Swarm.

✦ The ship's internal sensors can be accessed from the bridge. Using those sensors requires a hero to succeed on a check that the Narrator deems appropriate. Doing so reveals that the guardian is still clinging to life in the engine room but is surrounded by other life signs (the Swarm). Any boons rolled on this check also reveal the presence of the issue's main villain.

✦ The heroes might choose some other method of searching for the person who sent the distress signal. Finding the guardian without using the ship's sensors should be difficult; add 2 challenge dice (◈ ◈) to any attempt to do so. Additionally, it takes two successful checks to locate the guardian, instead of only one.

NAVIGATING THE INFESTED VESSEL

- ✦ Before heading to the engine room, the guardian placed the ship on lockdown. This shut down the power to most ship systems and sealed bulkhead doors throughout the vessel. Moving through the ship is a slow process that involves bypassing heavy emergency doors.
- ✦ The Swarm has begun converting the interior of the ship into something that fits their needs; there are signs everywhere, fitting with the Swarm's nature, that a transformation is underway.
- ✦ Each time the heroes choose a destination on the ship (the bridge, the engine room, or other location) they encounter an obstacle that impedes their progress. It can usually be overcome with a single successful check.
    - ◇ A sealed blast door blocks their progress; through a window in the door, the heroes can see a hull breach.
    - ◇ A gas pipe has burst, spewing toxic gas that filled a hallway with a low-hanging lethal fog.
    - ◇ A lone member of the **Swarm** (a single minion), separated from the rest of its kind, attacks the heroes.

INTERPLANETARY MISSILE ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

If the team's **Government Reputation** track is at −3 or lower, the governments of Earth work together to launch an interplanetary missile with a nuclear payload aimed at the infested ship. Not trusting the heroes to deal with it, they plan to destroy the vessel before it can reach Earth. The launch occurs shortly after the heroes arrive at the alien ship.

   Check off one of the progress boxes next to this entry's header each time the players start a new interlude scene, or any time a hero rolls 2 or more drawbacks (✴ ✴) on a single roll. When all the progress boxes are checked, the missile strikes the ship and detonates with nuclear fire. When the blindness fades from their eyes, the heroes find that they are back at their base of operations, with no explanation for how they got there.

RESCUING THE FALLEN GUARDIAN

When the heroes eventually reach the engine room, they have a chance to finally rescue the person who sent the distress signal. Unfortunately, a hostile swarm of aliens has other things in mind.

   Whenever the heroes find the fallen guardian, they face the following opposition:

- ◇ Two squads of **Swarm** minions, each of a size equal to 2 + the number of heroes.
- ◇ The issue's main villain, who has a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.

The scene ends when the heroes complete the objective and escape the ship.

- ✦ **Complication** (❑❑): The heroes need to rescue the fallen guardian, who is dying and has been ensconced in a makeshift binding (constructed from debris and cabling from the engine room) by the villain.
    - ◇ *Fully Resolved*: See the issue's "Wrapping Up" section.
- ✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑, Critical): Introduce this complication if a hero rolls 2 drawbacks (✴ ✴) on a roll during this conflict scene. The ship suffers damage during the fight, and a large piece of the ship threatens to break off. Each time this Complication initiative card comes up, the chunk of the ship separates further, threatening to send part of the ship filled with the Swarm floating through space, waiting to crash into Earth at some later time.
    - ◇ *Failure*: Add the following to the Truths box in "The Basics" section of the Setting Book: "Partial Swarm nest in Earth's solar system."
- ✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑, ❑❑❑ Opposed): The heroes need to destroy the ship to prevent the Swarm from reaching Earth. They can do so by finishing the work started by the fallen guardian: detonating the ship's engine core. They can use computer consoles in the engine room to force the core to detonate, or simply damage the core's housing enough to trigger an explosion. The villain wants to stop the heroes from doing so and can prevent this by triggering the ship's emergency core shutdown sequence.
    - ◇ *Hero Success*: The core goes critical; the heroes need to escape the ship before it explodes, navigating the vessel to get back to their own ship (or opting for some other form of escape).
    - ◇ *Villain Success*: The core shuts down, and the scene ends only when all enemies are defeated.
- ✦ **Scene Details**: Swirling red emergency lighting, alarm klaxons, broken tubing and pipes hanging down from the ceiling, coolant pipes crisscrossing the room, the bulky machinery of the engine room.

WRAPPING UP

- ✦ If the guardian's ship is destroyed by the interplanetary missile while the heroes are still on board, each hero gains the following lasting repercussion: **Saved by the Herald**.
- ✦ If any heroes were defeated by the Swarm, they gain the following lasting repercussion: **Infected by the Swarm.**
- ✦ If the heroes fully resolve the complication involving rescuing the fallen guardian, the guardian survives long enough to tell the heroes that they are a member of **SE20: The Space Police Force**. The guardian also explains that they placed the badge of office that gives all Space Police Force members their powers in an escape pod and jettisoned it toward Earth. Even now, someone on Earth may be discovering the escape pod and being deputized into the force. The fallen guardian implores the heroes to seek out this person, who will need help navigating their new responsibilities. A player who wishes to do so can create a hero using the **Guardian** archetype that is a member of the Space Police Force.

HERO

GUARDIAN

You are a member of an order of enforcers and protectors, assigned to a particular region, planet, or sector of space by your superiors. You watch over your assigned territory, protecting its inhabitants from villainous threats and bringing order to the chaos. Examples from popular comics include Vindicator/Guardian™ and Nova® (Marvel), and Green Lantern® (DC).

RAW POWER

What is the scope of your protective oath?

❑ **Personal** (you protect an individual or group of people)

❑ **Local** (you protect a city or region)

❑ **National** (you provide defense for an entire nation)

❑ **Planetary** (you defend an entire planet or sector of space)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Cocky ❑ Paranoid

❑ Cynical ❑ Passionate

❑ Dedicated ❑ Stoic

❑ Grumpy ❑ Witty

❑ Impulsive ❑ _____

❑ Level-Headed ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Elemental Vulnerability** (you are severely harmed by a specific elemental force)

❑ **Energy Limits** (you need to recharge the source of your powers)

❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Invulnerability** (you shrug off attacks like they are nothing)

❑ **Shield** (a layer of energy protects you from harm)

❑ **Training** (you possess combat training that helps dodge attacks)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Slide** (you ride a wave of energy created by an elemental force under your control)

❑ **Vehicle** (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

Hero Name: _____   **Team:** _____

Real Name: _____   **First Appearance:** _____

SKILLS

IDENTITY

TEAM ROLE

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

ABOVE AND BEYOND

At the start of your turn when you remove time tokens from your cards, you can spend 1 hero point (🏅) to remove up to 1 additional time token (⏱) from your cards, removing it from any card you choose.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

_____ / 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

- ✧ Remove 1 time token (⏱) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)
- ✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (🏅) in the following ways:

- ✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (♦) to the roll for each point spent.
- ✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (🏅) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (🔺🔺) to their roll.
- ✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (🏃 🏃 🏃 🏃) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

- ✧ You add 2 advantage dice (🔺🔺) to all attacks you make with powers.
- ✧ Each boon you roll counts as 2 (🏃 🏃).
- ✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

- ✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (🔺) to all melee attack rolls.
- ✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.
- ✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (♦) to the roll.

SUPREME SHAPESHIFTER

This villain can physically transform, impersonating others with uncanny accuracy. Clever and duplicitous, the villain makes allies doubt even their most trusted companions. Examples from popular comics include the Chameleon™, Mystique™, and Super Skrulls™ (Marvel), and Clayface™ and Madame Rouge™ (DC).

NAME:

SHAPESHIFTING CAPABILITIES

What is the scope of the shapeshifter's abilities?

❑ **Impersonation** (the villain can transform only into impersonations of other people roughly their size and physique)

❑ **Size/Material Change** (the villain can grow or shrink and change their flesh into metal, stone, or other material)

❑ **Partial** (the villain can transform individual body parts into weapons, shields, or other items)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

REVELATION

How is this villain's true form revealed?

❑ **Death** (when the villain is slain, they revert to their natural form)

❑ **Exposure** (the villain cannot remain in a transformed state while exposed to some specific element, energy, or force)

❑ **Injury** (when the villain is injured, the place where they are injured appears to revert back to their natural physiology)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

EFFECTS OF TRANSFORMATION

How has having a transient physical form affected them?

❑ **Consumption** (the villain kills and takes over the lives of others, consuming their identity and presenting it as their own)

❑ **Defensiveness** (the villain rarely appears in their natural form, preferring to transform into others as a defense)

❑ **Psychosis** (the villain lacks a sense of self, causing a psychosis that results in violence)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ☼ At Large ☼ Incarcerated ☼ Deceased ☼ Reformed ☼ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%):

When you create this villain, draw three powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be this villain's superpower. The villain can use the power to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with this power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

> *This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.*

FLEEING THE SCENE ❑ ❑

In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked. Additionally, this villain begins play with some of their perks automatically, in addition to the two you choose.

✔ SHAPESHIFTING

This villain has the Shapeshifting power, with a 75% chance of success when used to make a check or attack. Even when the villain fails a roll for this power, they still transform in the way they desire, but their transformation is imperfect and leaves some clue that they are not what they appear to be.

❑ ❑ ❑ CONFUSION

When a hero hits this villain with a melee attack, the Narrator can choose to instead have that attack target another hero that is up close to both the villain and the attacking hero.

❑ CUNNING

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, swap 1 of this villain's initiative cards with a hero's initiative card.

❑ FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

❑ MASTER OF DECEPTION

Add 2 challenge dice (◆ ◆) to any attack made against the villain.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ SURPRISE ATTACK

When this villain attacks a hero who has not yet taken a turn this round, add 2 advantage dice (⌂ ⌂) to the roll.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❑ CANNOT RESIST TOYING WITH THE HEROES

When the villain would reduce a hero to 0 resistance, the hero is instead reduced to 1 resistance unless the villain rolled at least 1 boon (⚲).

❑ DEEP COWARDICE

When this villain has fewer than 50 resistance, they must use their action to attempt to flee the scene.

❑ IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

When this villain misses with an attack, they add 2 challenge dice (◆ ◆) to the next attack they roll.

❑ OVERCONFIDENCE

When this villain damages a hero with an attack, that hero adds 2 advantage dice (⌂ ⌂) to any attack they make against this villain on their next turn.

CORRUPTED HEROES

This group contains members who were once considered heroes, but who have been corrupted and transformed into malicious shadows of their former selves. Where once people relied upon them, now the public fears their presence. Just as a fall is harder from a greater height, so too do ex-heroes make the most dangerous villains.

TEAM NAME:

FALL FROM GRACE

What caused these villains to turn from good to evil?

❑ **Mind Alteration** (their minds were tampered with by outside forces, turning them to evil against their will)

❑ **Promises of Power** (they were promised a quicker, easier path to greater power by turning to villainy)

❑ **Stoked Resentment** (their disdain for others was used as leverage to hasten their turn away from heroism)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

VILLAINOUS REBIRTH

How did turning to evil affect their powered personas?

❑ **Dark Reflections** (their aesthetic and monikers have changed to become villainous, but they are largely recognizable)

❑ **New Personas** (they took on entirely new evil personas)

❑ **Under the Radar** (they maintain their previous monikers and heroic aesthetics, and still outwardly pass as heroes)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

COHESION

How do these villains behave when acting as a group?

❑ **Infighting** (these villains constantly squabble among themselves and may engage in competition with one another)

❑ **Lone Wolves in a Pack** (each member operates independently, but when together they have little friction)

❑ **Well-Oiled Machine** (these villains fight as one, clearly aligned both tactically and motivationally)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ⬡ At Large ⬡ Incarcerated ⬡ Deceased ⬡ Reformed ⬡ Exiled

When you create these villains, draw seven powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be each villain's superpower (you may also choose from available Basic powers). These villains can use their powers to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villains attack with a power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled..

FLEEING THE SCENE

In every scene, each of these villains has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes. Each minor villain in this group has progress tracking boxes for this objective next to their type.

LEADER ❑ ❑

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

LIEUTENANT ❑ ❑

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

HARRIER ❑ ❑

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SKULKER ❑ ❑

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

BRUISER ❑ ❑

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SNIPER ❑ ❑

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

ONE BAD APPLE
CLASH AMONG THE STARS #2

The heroes receive a message from **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** containing grim news. The liaison was contacted by **NC04: The Team Mentor** for assistance after noticing strange behavior among the students of **SE17: The Hero Academy**. A batch of new students includes several promising prodigies, but a spate of "training accidents" and disruptions has the mentor concerned that the academy has been infiltrated. The liaison agrees, believing that an alien might be working at mysterious purposes within the academy.

This issue begins with the heroes' investigation. The heroes are welcomed to the academy by the mentor and given a tour of the training facilities. Some students were sent on "long-term remote training exercises" to get them out of harm's way. The remaining students are those who could not definitively be proven innocent. To avoid tipping off the infiltrator, the team mentor told the students that the heroes are guest instructors at the academy for a few days.

Create the **Supreme Shapeshifter** villain and choose one of the students below to be that villain in disguise. Also create the **Corrupted Heroes** minor villains from among the remaining student identities.

INVESTIGATING THE ACADEMY

Below are some suggestions for avenues of investigation at the Hero Academy.

THE ACADEMY'S STUDENTS

✦ The students currently in training at the academy include:
  ◇ Arturo Ramirez, aka Crackshot, who struggles to control his powers despite months of study.
  ◇ Chris Seymour, aka Volcano, who has been reprimanded for sneaking away from the academy.
  ◇ Melissa McDarnagan, aka Vorpal, who has a reputation for staring at other students for long periods of time.
  ◇ Ivan Rostoff, aka Cold Snap, who speaks so little as to be practically nonverbal.
  ◇ Makayla Hong, aka River Viper, who skips classroom sessions almost every day.
  ◇ Michael Delgado, aka Scimitar, who refuses any attempt to make friends.
  ◇ Veronica Malmsteen, aka Impact, who has sent other students to the infirmary with injuries multiple times.
  ◇ Alex Sawyer, aka Titanium, who has been reprimanded multiple times for threatening instructors.
  ◇ Idara Adeyemi, aka Mamba, who has been caught snooping in the private offices of academy staff.
  ◇ Farah al-Farsi, aka Cerberus, who has broken more training equipment than any other two students combined.

BREAK-INS

✦ There have been several recent break-ins at secure offices and administrative areas in recent weeks. Specifically, the security camera monitor post, the communications and server rooms, and the garage were all targeted.
✦ Each of these break-ins was performed by one of the students the villain corrupted, who used their powers in subtle ways to bypass security. Evidence of the use of specific powers remains at those locations.
✦ Each time the heroes are successful in an interlude scene intended to investigate these break-ins, the heroes can identify a corrupted student who perpetrated one.

THE CLUB

✦ Several of the students have been meeting in private in the early hours of the morning. Though these meetings usually take place in a secret location, other students have seen them sneaking off.
✦ These students are sneaking off to meet with the villain, who is far too careful to be seen by other students.
✦ Each time the heroes are successful in an interlude scene intended to investigate these secret meetings, the heroes can identify a corrupted student in this secret club.

TAKING THEM DOWN ONE AT A TIME

✦ If the heroes decide to isolate a student and take them down separately from the others, allow them to do so (though this may become a conflict scene).
✦ If they correctly identify a corrupted student and make this move, they can remove that minor villain from the final conflict scene. Making this move tips off the villain and causes them to accelerate their plans; check off two additional boxes for the passage of time under "The Villain's Plan."
✦ If the heroes attempt to isolate and take down the student who is the villain in disguise, immediately start the final conflict scene of the issue (see below). The villain has a way of alerting the corrupted students that they are in trouble, and those minor villains arrive at the start of the second round.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The villain came to the academy to recruit a team of powered individuals to act as saboteurs on Earth, weakening humanity's defense against future alien threats. The method that the villain uses to turn the academy students into their allies depends on the powers at their disposal. Choose one of the following options for the villain's method of corrupting the academy students, as best fits the villain's capabilities:

- ❑ **Brain-Altering Technology**. The villain uses advanced technology, such as a brain implant or brainwashing device, to alter the minds of the students and make them susceptible to the villain's influence.
- ❑ **Propaganda and Temptation**. The villain preyed upon the students' insecurities, fears, and desires to convince them to join the villain in their plot.
- ❑ **Telepathic Mind Control**. The villain uses telepathy to seize control of the minds of the students and turn them to evil.

Once the heroes start their investigation, the villain grows suspicious and begins making plans to abandon the school, taking the corrupted students. When the heroes confront the villains, they face the following opposition:

- ◇ The **Supreme Shapeshifter**, who has 1 initiative card per 2 heroes in the scene (round up).
- ◇ A number of **Corrupted Heroes** minor villains equal to the number of heroes, with 1 initiative card each.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated.

- ✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑❑): The other students, though not defenseless, are unprepared for a coordinated attack and need to be gotten to safety. Before the scene begins, for every 2 heroes (round up) mark off one of the boxes of this complication's progress track to accurately reflect the number of noncorrupted students at the academy. Each time the heroes progress the complication, they can get two students to safety.
  - ◇ *Fully Resolved*: Create minor characters for each rescued student and make a note on each that if a player chooses to create a hero using that student as the hero's basis, that hero starts with 2 extra check marks on their story progress track.

STEALING SUPPLIES ❑ ❑ ❑

Once the villain's suspicions are raised, they surreptitiously warn the corrupted students and set about stealing supplies for a long under-the-radar journey. They raid the food supplies, steal the keys to one of the academy's vehicles, and break into the administrative offices and steal petty cash kept on hand for emergencies.

SABOTAGING THE ACADEMY'S SECURITY SYSTEMS ❑ ❑

Preparing to make their escape to parts unknown, the villain and corrupted students set about disabling security systems around the academy, deactivating motion sensors and security cameras and unlocking doors that normally require administrative ID badges or specific keys.

- ✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑, Critical): A truck bringing in supplies through a security checkpoint is damaged by a stray attack and its fuel tank ruptures. The truck needs to be stabilized or gotten away from the academy.
  - ◇ *Failure*: The truck explodes. Make a physical ranged attack against every character in the scene, with a 50% chance of success, dealing damage equal to the number rolled.

MAKING A BREAK FOR IT

The villain and the corrupted students attempt to escape, taking the stolen supplies and a vehicle and making a run for it. If the final scene occurs at this point, the villain lets the corrupted students act as a distraction and a shield against the heroes. They use at least one of their actions each round to attempt to flee the scene.

WRAPPING UP

- ✦ If all the heroes are defeated in the conflict scene or the villain escapes, each hero who was defeated during this final conflict scene has potentially been replaced by the Supreme Shapeshifter and gains the following lasting repercussion: **Possible Impostor**.
- ✦ After uncovering the villain, the heroes have the chance to learn (either through interrogation or going through the villain's personal effects) the reason why they infiltrated the academy. If **SE07: The Star Empire** has "The Star Empire knows that the Artifact is on Earth" in its Truths box, the heroes learn that the Empire sent the villain to Earth specifically to assess Earth's defenses and to remain in hiding, waiting for the day when they will be called upon to sabotage those defenses from the inside. If that phrase is not in that Truths box, instead the heroes learn that the villain came to the Earth as the vanguard of a shapeshifter invasion. In the Truths box of **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison**, write "Watching for signs of a shapeshifter invasion."
- ✦ Additionally, among the villain's possessions they find a map that apparently shows the location of the ship in which they came to Earth. The map indicates that the villain left the ship at a location within **SE09: The Lost Civilization**. If you have not yet filled out the Lost Civilization's setting element sheet, do not do so at this time, and describe the map as indicating the ship lies at a location near no known human civilization.

ROBOT FROM SPACE

This villain is a robotic entity created by an alien race and constructed of such advanced technology that it can stand toe-to-toe with Earth's most powerful heroes. Examples from popular comics include Eradicator™ and the Missile Men™ (DC), and Kree Sentries™, Replicus™, and Torgo™ (Marvel).

NAME:

CREATION

How was this robot created?

❑ **Lone Creation** (this villain is one of a kind, either a prototype that never saw production or someone's greatest creation)

❑ **Mass Production** (the villain is one of many, mass produced for their creators' intended purpose)

❑ **Twisted** (there are other robots like the villain, but the villain's programming was corrupted or changed to make them evil)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

ORIGINAL PURPOSE

For what purpose was the villain created?

❑ **Defense** (the villain was originally created to stand guard over someone, some place, or something)

❑ **Hunting** (the villain was created to seek and destroy something)

❑ **War** (the villain is an autonomous drone, a combined weapon and soldier)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

ROBOTIC FORM

What form does this robot take?

❑ **Cyborg** (the villain is part living flesh, part technology)

❑ **Humanoid** (the villain is roughly human in shape and size)

❑ **Monster** (the villain is a metallic replica of some beast, monster, dinosaur, or other creature)

❑ **Nanocolony** (the villain is a multitude of much smaller robots, which combine together to form a larger whole)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ At Large ✦ Incarcerated ✦ Deceased ✦ Reformed ✦ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%):

When you create this villain, draw three powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be this villain's superpower. The villain can use the power to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with this power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

FLEEING THE SCENE ❏ ❏

In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked.

❏ **FAST**

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move any 1 of the villain's initiative cards 2 spaces toward the front of the track.

❏ **FLIGHT**

This villain can fly when they move.

❏ **OVERSIZED**

The villain can make melee attacks against enemies that they are near or up close to.

❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ **UNFLINCHING RETALIATION**

When a hero damages this villain with a melee attack, after the attack is resolved the villain makes a melee attack against that hero.

❏ ❏ ❏ **UNRELENTING**

When this villain would be reduced to 0 resistance, they are instead reduced to 1 resistance, and you move 1 of the villain's initiative cards to the space immediately following the current turn.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ **VULNERABILITY:**

Choose a common element, material, form of energy, or force as this villain's weakness, and write it in the box above. Double all damage dealt to the villain if an attack makes use of the villain's weakness.

❏ **INFLEXIBLE TACTICS**

Teamwork maneuvers performed on attacks against this villain also add 2 challenge dice (⬡ ⬡) to the villain's next roll if the attack hits.

❏ **SLOW TO REACT**

Each round, heroes add +30 to the damage of all their attacks against this villain before the villain has taken a turn.

❏ **TUNNEL VISION**

When this villain deals damage to a hero, the next hero other than the one who the villain damaged adds 2 advantage dice (⬡ ⬡) to their next attack roll against this villain on their next turn.

WHEN A STAR FALLS
CLASH AMONG THE STARS #3

Having uncovered a shapeshifter plot on Earth, the heroes learned the location of the alien ship that brought the shapeshifter to the planet. The ship crash landed in **SE09: The Lost Civilization**, its wreckage covered up by its shapeshifting pilot to keep it from falling into human hands.

If you are filling out the setting entry for the Lost Civilization for the first time, the heroes travel to the location on the map and stumble upon a civilization unknown to the rest of the world. If the Truths box in "The Basics" section of your Setting Book includes "Embassy of [the name of your Lost Civilization]," the heroes are greeted by an escort and treated as honored and welcomed guests. Otherwise, the heroes' arrival in the Lost Civilization is met with wariness. This issue does not open with a conflict scene, but instead begins with the heroes' exploration of the Lost Civilization.

Create the **Robot from Space** villain for use in this issue.

SEEKING THE LOST CIVILIZATION'S AID

✦ The heroes won't be able to roam freely around the Lost Civilization without assistance from the native inhabitants and their leaders. Each time the heroes create an interlude scene while in the Lost Civilization, after that scene is over the Narrator creates an additional interlude scene using one of the prompts below. These scenes do not count toward the passage of time in "The Sequence of Events" section and are meant to help flesh out the Lost Civilization and allow the heroes to experience more of its people and places.
  ◇ The heroes are invited to explain their intentions before the leader or leaders of the Lost Civilization in its capital. While there, untrusting politicians argue to have the heroes exiled.
  ◇ The heroes are paired up with a group of locals who specialize in hunting, tracking, search and rescue, and other skills relevant to finding the ship. Some among those locals are belligerent and need to be won over.
  ◇ The heroes encounter a natural barrier to their search (weather, hostile landscape, or predatory animals).
✦ If the Truths box of **SE09: The Lost Civilization** contains "Devastated by [the Ancient Evil's name]" the heroes have arrived in a land recently ravaged by an ancient force of evil. Use some of the following seeds for scenes instead of, or in addition to, the ones described above:
  ◇ A group of civilians is trying to raise a monument to the dead, but their equipment breaks mid-raising and the people struggle to keep the monument from crashing down and destroying itself.
  ◇ Workers attempting to clear rubble from a collapsed tunnel struggle to escape as more rubble starts to rain down on them from above.
  ◇ An accident at a construction site draws the heroes' attention, as a piece of heavy machinery or construction materials breaks loose and begins to roll toward a group of defenseless civilians.
✦ If the Truths box of **SE09: The Lost Civilization** contains "Ruled by [the Ancient Evil's name]" the heroes have arrived in a land that has fallen under the direct control of a tyrannical, ancient enemy, the **Ancient Evil** villain. Use some of the following seeds for scenes instead of, or in addition to, the ones described above:
  ◇ A group of freedom-fighters attempts to sabotage one of the despot's fuel reserves, causing an explosion that wounds many of the rebels and leaves them vulnerable to being captured by their ruler's minions.
  ◇ A vehicle full of refugees attempting to flee the Lost Civilization runs a security checkpoint and is shot at by automated weapons systems, whose shots get closer and closer to the fleeing vehicle.
  ◇ Automated security drones scour the capital of the Lost Civilization, their spotlights chasing a fleeing young freedom fighter who has stolen food and medical supplies for their cell.

SEARCHING FOR THE SHIP

✦ The ship crash-landed on Earth around the same time that the scout force from **SE07: The Star Empire** arrived in *Explorers of the Unknown* #3. The shapeshifter stowed away on the Imperial ship (blending in as a crew member) and stole a landing craft. Many inhabitants of the Lost Civilization witnessed a "falling star" that day.
✦ The ship crashed in a remote area of the Lost Civilization, near a small settlement (a village or modest town).
✦ The shapeshifter covered the ship with native camouflage and shut down all but its most simple systems, eliminating the chances that it could be picked up by sensors.
✦ The shapeshifter removed radioactive material from the ship's core and buried it near the center of the settlement. Within a month, all the settlement's inhabitants were dead, but due to the remoteness of the settlement they were not discovered for some weeks after. Their deaths were believed to be due to an illness, and the settlement was razed to prevent further spread.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The ship the heroes seek does not lie idle while they search for it. Around the time they arrive in the Lost Civilization, the ship wakes up (either waking when internal sensors detect the heroes' powerful presence, or triggered by the villain from the previous issue if the villain escaped). The ship quietly reactivates and its security systems come online (including deploying this issue's villain from within its security storage), defending the ship long enough for it to prime its warp engines and overload them.

   The heroes are not the only ones looking for the ship. Choose one of these options for who else is searching for it:

❑ **The Terrorist Organization**. **SE18: The Terrorist Organization** learned of the presence of the ship through spies in the government and dispatched agents to recover the alien craft. If you played *Streetlight Knights* #5, you can use the **Terrorist Soldier** minions. They appear in the final conflict scene of the issue as a squad of a size equal to the number of heroes × 3.

❑ **The Ancient Servants**. If the Ancient Evil villain rules over the Lost Civilization, they dispatch their most trusted followers to find what the heroes are looking for first (the crashed ship). You can use the **Ancient Servants** minor villains, a number of which appear in the final conflict scene equal to half the number of heroes (round up). Each such minor villain has 1 initiative card.

❑ **Insurgents**. A group of rebels, intent on overthrowing the leaders of the Lost Civilization, has been searching for the ship to arm themselves with the advanced technology inside. These insurgents appear as a squad of minions of a size equal to the number of heroes × 3; they attack with cheap automatic weapons and have a 50% chance of success on all rolls, dealing damage equal to the number rolled with maximum damage equal to the size of the squad × 10.

   Whenever the heroes find the ship, they face the following opposition:

   ◇ The issue's villain, the **Robot from Space**, who has a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.
   The scene ends when the heroes complete the objective and all enemies are defeated or fled.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑❑): The heroes need to shut down the ship's security system before it can self-destruct. The ship's computer communicates only in the alien language of the shapeshifter.

✦ **Complication**: Add a Hazard card face-down to the initiative track in the second round. When it comes up, introduce one complication from the Deck of Complications; if the complication's severity depends on a number of drawbacks rolled, treat the complication as though 4 drawbacks (✹✹✹✹) were rolled. Do this again the second time the Hazard initiative card comes up, then remove that initiative card from the track.

THE SHIP'S SECURITY SYSTEM ACTIVATES ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

The ship's security system starts to wake up, readying its imminent destruction. It deploys the **Robot from Space** villain, commanding it to destroy anyone who comes too close. If the heroes find the ship at this point, the other searchers (described above) don't join the conflict scene until the start of the third round of the encounter, giving the heroes time to deal with the villain and the objective before the other searchers appear on the scene.

THE OTHER SEARCHERS FIND THE SHIP ❑ ❑

At this point, the other searchers (as chosen above) locate the ship. They are cautious in their approach, which gives the ship more time to ready its destruction.

THE SELF-DESTRUCT SEQUENCE INITIATES

The ship's self-destruct sequence activates, its engines primed and overloading. The energy output is high enough that seismic and other energy sensors easily pinpoint the ship's location, drawing the heroes to it.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑, Critical): The ship's engines have been overloaded and are cycling up to a detonation. No longer under the control of the ship's computer, this overload is purely mechanical.

   ◇ *Failure*: The self-destruct countdown reaches its end, and the ship detonates in a massive explosion. Make an attack with an 80% chance of success against every character, dealing damage equal to the number rolled.

WRAPPING UP

✦ If the heroes retrieve the shapeshifter's crashed ship and bring it back to the city with them, **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** recommends that the heroes turn the ship over to **SE02: The Super Science Lab** for study. If they do, write "In possession of alien technology" in the Truths box of **SE02: The Super Science Lab** if it is not already there.

✦ The heroes might instead choose to turn the ship over to the representatives of the Lost Civilization.

   ◇ If they do and the Truths box of **SE09: The Lost Civilization** contains "Ruled by [the Ancient Evil's name]" the heroes put technology in the hands of the oppressed people of the Lost Civilization that gives them a fighting chance against the Ancient Evil. Erase "Ruled by [the Ancient Evil's name]" from the Lost Civilization's Truths box and replace it with, "In rebellion against [the Ancient Evil's name]."

   ◇ If they do and the Lost Civilization is not under the Ancient Evil's rule, write "Embassy of [the name of your lost civilization" in the Truths box of "The Basics" section of the Setting

   ◇ Book if it is not already there. If it is already there, instead adjust the team's **Government Reputation** track by +2.

ROGUE LAWBRINGER

This villain was once a bringer of law and order and an enforcer of the peace; perhaps they were once a member of **SE20: The Space Police Force**. They abandoned their oaths and turned to evil, violating the law they once swore to uphold. Examples from popular comics include Garthan Saal™ (Marvel) and Hal Jordan Parallax™ and Sinestro™ (DC).

NAME: _____

GUARDIAN NO MORE

How does the villain act in relation to their former organization?

❑ **Rival Order** (the villain founded a similar but rival organization that shares many trappings with their former order)

❑ **Twisted Protest** (the villain appears as a dark reflection of their life as a lawbringer)

❑ **Wearing the Badge** (the villain still claims membership and wears the uniform of their former organization)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

REASON FOR FALLING OUT

Why did this villain abandon their oaths?

❑ **Betrayed** (the villain was betrayed by someone in the organization and has vowed revenge)

❑ **Cast Out** (the villain was discharged from their former organization as a result of a crime or rule violation, guilty or not)

❑ **Tragedy** (the villain suffered a tragedy that caused them to transform into the antithesis of what they once stood for)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

CRACK IN THE WALLS

What weakness lies at the heart of this villain's evil identity?

❑ **Fear** (the villain may affect a hard demeanor, but deep down they fear something that can be used as leverage against them)

❑ **Rage** (the villain has an uncontrollable temper, and when provoked they make critical mistakes)

❑ **Redemption** (this villain commits evil deeds, but a part of them still clings to their former oaths and ideals)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

FIRST APPEARANCE _____

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ At Large ✦ Incarcerated ✦ Deceased ✦ Reformed ✦ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%):

When you create this villain, draw three powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be this villain's superpower. The villain can use the power to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with this power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

FLEEING THE SCENE ❑ ❑

In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked.

❑ ❑ ❑ DEMANDING LEADER

As an action, the villain chooses any combination of 2 minor villains or squads of minions that can see or hear this villain and that serve this villain. Those chosen enemies can immediately make 1 attack each.

❑ EFFORTLESS VILLAINY

When this villain progresses an opposed or enemy objective, they progress it 1 additional time.

❑ FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ THAT WON'T WORK ON ME AGAIN

When a hero hits this villain with an attack using a power, use this perk to add 2 time tokens (🕓🕓) to the power card of the power the hero used for the attack.

❑ TOUGH

Increase this villain's maximum resistance by 25 for each initiative card the villain has.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❑ BLINDED BY SUPERIORITY

Whenever any hero spends a hero point to perform a maneuver with another hero who is attacking this villain, add +20 to the attack's damage.

❑ CAUGHT UP IN THE MOMENT

When this villain damages a hero, at the end of the villain's turn move 1 of the villain's face-up initiative cards to the end of the initiative track.

❑ OVERCONFIDENCE

When this villain damages a hero with an attack, that hero adds 2 advantage dice (⬡ ⬡) to any attack they make against this villain on their next turn.

❑ VISIONS OF DEFEAT

When a squad of minions or minor villain that this villain is leading is defeated, the hero players can choose up to 2 of the villain's initiative cards and move them to the end of the initiative track.

This issue opens when the heroes receive a distress call from **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** requesting their assistance. The liaison's base of operations has come under attack; if the Cosmic Liaison works out of an orbital space platform, this issue takes place on that platform. Otherwise, choose a suitable location outside of the city as the liaison's base of operations, such as a space shuttle launch facility, a deep space radio telescope observatory, or a rocket assembly factory.

If the **Alien Commander** villain survived *Explorers of the Unknown* #4 and is still at large, choose them as the villain; they intend to destroy Earth's cosmic defenses, paving the way for the future invasion of **SE07: The Star Empire**. Otherwise, create the **Rogue Lawbringer** villain, who plans to overthrow the Star Empire. This villain demanded humanity's subservience in that cause, and when the Cosmic Liaison refused, the villain retaliated.

Additionally, choose one of the following options as the form of the attack the villain uses:

❑ **The Swarm**. If the Truths box of "The Basics" section for your setting includes "Partial Swarm nest in Earth's solar system," the villain retrieved the nest of Swarm ejected from the derelict spacecraft in issue #1. Use the **Swarm** minions as the enemies attacking the Cosmic Liaison alongside the issue's villain.

❑ **The Invasion Survivors**. If the above condition is not true, the villain rallied the disparate survivors from the alien ship that crashed into the moon in *Explorers of the Unknown* #4 and uses their desire for revenge to provoke them into attacking the Cosmic Liaison. Use the **Alien Invaders** minions as the enemies attacking the Cosmic Liaison alongside the issue's villain.

This issue is likely to involve a single conflict scene that spans several phases of the villain's attack. If at any point all the heroes are defeated, the issue does not end; instead, mark 1 of the boxes next to the "Destruction of Earth's Cosmic Defenses" entry in the "Wrapping Up" section. The heroes fall back, regroup (recovering all resistance and hero points, and clearing all time tokens), and have a chance to prepare to rejoin the fray. If this happens, allow each player to create one interlude scene. For each additional interlude scene they wish to create beyond that, mark 1 of the boxes next to the "Destruction of Earth's Cosmic Defenses" entry.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO
Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they are forced to retreat and regroup.

SEEKING HELP FROM THE SUPER SCIENCE LAB
✦ If **SE02: The Super Science Lab** has "In possession of alien technology" written in its Truths box, the heroes can secure advanced technology capable of combating cosmic threats like those attacking the base. Draw a card from the Deck of Powers to represent this technology and describe it in a way that fits the power's description. The lab loans this device to the heroes, and any hero in possession of that device can use that power as though it was one of their other powers, with an 80% chance of success.

SEEKING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE
✦ **Reputation**: If the team's **Government Reputation** track is 3 or higher, agents from **SE03: The Government Agency** join the fight on the heroes' side. These form a squad of minions of a size equal to the number of heroes × 3, making attacks with their sidearms with a 50% chance of success and dealing damage equal to the number rolled, to a maximum equal to the size of the squad × 10. They fight as the heroes' allies when defending the base.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN
The villain has three main parts to their plan, each of which is described as a segment of the conflict scene that encompasses this entire issue. Each segment is described below; the conflict proceeds through all three segments in order, with the heroes' success or failure in defending the Cosmic Liaison's base in each segment determining the outcome of the issue. The issue's main villain does not appear until the third and final segment, as they let their minions do their dirty work in the first two segments.

The enemies in this scene behave as follows:

◇ At the start of each segment, add 3 squads of the minions chosen above to the scene, each one of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. If there are already such minions in the scene (for example, if the enemies complete the enemy objective in that segment), you can combine the new squads of minions and the existing squads; at the start of each segment, you should have 3 squads of minions active in the scene. Each time all the minions in the scene are defeated, the scene progresses to the next segment.

DESTROY THE EARTH'S DEFENSES

The conflict scene begins in the outer areas of the base, where the enemies battle their way through the base's defenses (automatic turrets, defensive lasers, and forcefields) and smash into storage chambers where weapons intended for use against cosmic enemies are stored. During this segment, the enemies seek only to cause as much damage as possible to cripple the base's defensive ability.

✦ **Hazard**: The base's defenses are going haywire trying to defend against the enemies. Add a Hazard initiative card to the initiative track. When the Hazard initiative card comes up, choose one hero and make a physical ranged attack against that hero with a 65% chance of success and dealing damage equal to the number rolled, representing the haywire defenses. Remove this initiative card at the end of the segment.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑, Enemy): The enemies seek to destroy defensive systems; each success destroys the contents of one of the storage chambers where various cosmic defense weapons are stored.

◇ *Enemy Success*: Mark 1 of the boxes next to the "Destruction of Earth's Cosmic Defenses" entry in the "Wrapping Up" section, and move on to the next segment.

ELIMINATE COSMIC SPACE FLIGHT CAPABILITY

The battle spills over into the hangar where the Cosmic Liaison keeps several deep space-capable vehicles, which could soon represent the only means the Earth has for reaching out to allies in the stars. The vehicles are largely disassembled, with crews scrambling to save everything they can from the destruction wrought by the minions.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑): Flight crews, engineers, and mechanics who work in the hangar are imperiled by the conflict spilling over into this area and need to be gotten to safety.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑, Critical): Rocket fuel storage containers are damaged during the fight, and as they leak fuel into the hangar they threaten to explode.

◇ *Failure*: The tanks detonate; progress the objective below once. Make a physical ranged area attack against all characters in the scene, with a 65% chance of success (dealing damage equal to the number rolled).

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑, Enemy): Three long-range space vehicles in the hangar are in various states of construction, and the enemies seek to destroy them and cripple humanity's reach.

◇ *Enemy Success*: Mark 1 of the boxes next to the "Destruction of Earth's Cosmic Defenses" entry in the "Wrapping Up" section, and move on to the next segment.

ERASE ALL INTELLIGENCE ON COSMIC THREATS

The villain uses the chaos of the conflict to infiltrate the heart of the base. , In its command center they set about destroying the Cosmic Liaison's most valuable asset: the knowledge they have collected about alien threats. Add the issue's villain to the scene during this segment; the villain has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene. The scene ends when the issue's villain has either been defeated or has fled the scene.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑): Analysts, administrators, and other support staff who work in the base huddled in this area to hide from the attack and now need to be gotten to safety.

◇ *Fully Resolved*: Adjust the team's **Public Reputation** track by +1.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑, Critical): Introduce this complication only if the Truths box of **SE07: The Star Empire** does not contain "The Star Empire knows that the Artifact is on Earth" and the **Alien Commander** is the issue's villain. The villain inserts a hostile program into the base's computer that will overwhelm its defenses and eventually broadcast a message to the Star Empire using the base's communications equipment.

◇ *Failure*: Write "The Star Empire knows that the Artifact is on Earth" in the Truths box of **SE07: The Star Empire**.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑❑, Enemy): The villain seeks to destroy the records that the Cosmic Liaison has collected regarding potential cosmic threats, wiping the data banks of the base's massive supercomputers.

◇ *Enemy Success*: Mark 1 of the boxes next to the "Destruction of Earth's Cosmic Defenses" entry. Once this objective is complete, the issue's villain attempts to flee the scene.

WRAPPING UP

✦ If the Rogue Lawbringer was this issue's villain and **SE07: The Star Empire** has "The Star Empire knows that the Artifact is on Earth" in its Truths box, write "Searching for allies to overthrow the Star Empire" in the Rogue Lawbringer's Truths box if they survived the issue and were not captured.

DESTRUCTION OF EARTH'S COSMIC DEFENSES ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

Each time some event in this issue tells you to do so, check one of the boxes next to the title of this section.

✦ The number of unchecked boxes above represents the remaining resources, technology, and intelligence that the Cosmic Liaison had gathered and that the heroes managed to preserve.

✦ Write "Cosmic Defenses: [the number of unchecked boxes in the header above]" in the Truths box of "The Basics" pages of your Setting Book. If none of the boxes are checked, adjust the team's **Government Reputation** track by +2.

✦ If all the boxes are checked, adjust the team's **Government Reputation** track by −2.

MIND THIEVES

These alien creatures steal the minds of those they capture. They are feared not only because they rob their victims of their freedom, but also because they leave behind empty shells of the people that the captives once were.

NAME:

APPEARANCE

What do these minions look like?

❑ **Cephalopods** (these creatures have tentacles, large round eyes, and look like squids or octopuses, even if they have generally humanoid bodies)

❑ **Creepy Humans** (these minions appear human, but something is not quite right about them, such as their sallow skin, sunken eyes, or the stench of decay that surrounds them)

❑ **Insectoid** (these creatures are massive insects, so alien in physiology and thought that they are difficult to recognize as sentient beings)

❑ **Robotic** (they are robots, cyborgs, or some other kind of clearly technological beings)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

METHOD OF MIND STEALING

How do they steal the minds of their captives?

❑ **Consumption** (they literally consume the brains of those they capture, eating them whole or perhaps draining vital fluids, energy, or memories)

❑ **Technology** (they inject nanites or insert technology into the skulls of their captives, letting tiny robots or computers drain their captives' minds)

❑ **Telepathy** (they forcefully intrude the minds of their captives using telepathic powers, draining them psychically)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

REASON FOR THEFT

What drives these minions to attack?

❑ **Pleasure** (they derive great pleasure from whatever they extract from their captives' brains)

❑ **Power** (something they take from the minds of their captives causes them to grow more powerful)

❑ **Research** (they seek knowledge of some kind and take it by force directly from sentient minds)

❑ **Sustenance** (they drain the minds of their captives as a food source)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

PRIMARY ATTACK MODE

When you create these minions, choose one of the primary attack modes below, and describe the nature of the attack in the box.

❏ **STANDARD ATTACK (50% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10).

❏ **ACCURATE ATTACK (65% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 5).

❏ **POWERFUL ATTACK (40% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled + 20 (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10 + 20).

Use this box to describe the minions' primary attack mode.

MINION PERK

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the perks below.

❏ **HIVE MIND**
While the squad's size is 2 or greater, add 2 advantage dice (🛡 🛡) to its attack rolls.

❏ **MINOR VILLAINS**
These minions are actually minor villains and are more dangerous and durable than minions. When you would add a squad of these minions to the scene, instead add a number of minor villains equal to the size of the squad divided by 3. As minor villains, they each have 1 initiative card, 50 resistance, and no maximum on their damage on a hit.

❏ **RAVENOUS**
When a squad of these minions damages a hero with an attack, if the squad's initiative card is not already at the end of the initiative track, move the squad's initiative card to the end of the initiative track, leaving it face-up. These minions can take another turn when the squad's initiative card is next on the track.

❏ **UNKNOWN TECHNOLOGY**
These minions use incredible technology that is beyond current human science. Their attacks using weapons or technology add +10 to damage.

MINION WEAKNESS

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ **PHYSICALLY FRAIL**
Physical attacks that hit these minions reduce the squad's size by 1 more than normal.

❏ **PROXIMITY WEAKNESS:**
Choose a common element, material, form of energy, or force as these minions' weakness and record it in the box above. When these minions are up close to that weakness-inducing source, add 2 advantage dice (🛡 🛡) to all attack rolls against them.

❏ **PSYCHIC VULNERABILITY**
Heroes add 2 advantage dice (🛡 🛡) to mental attacks made against these minions using telepathy or other psychic powers.

❏ **SELF-PRESERVATION**
When a squad of these minions is size 2 or smaller, the squad must use its action to flee.

SLAVERS

Unscrupulous criminals who profit from taking the freedoms from others, these minions take advantage of the vastness of space to commit heinous acts of slavery. They travel between worlds, using their might to scoop up unwilling victims and sell them to wealthy buyers who have equally callous views on individual freedom. .

NAME:

GENERAL AESTHETIC

How would most people describe these minions?

❑ **Conquerors** (acting with military precision and adorned with professional regalia, these minions make taking captives and enslaving them look like the work of a conquering army)

❑ **Monsters** (these minions are monstrous creatures that fly in out of the depths of space and snatch up captives)

❑ **Space Pirates** (a ragtag group of criminals and vile ruffians, these minions resemble the traditional image of pirates, claiming captives as a form of plunder)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

METHOD OF CAPTURE

How do these enemies take their captives?

❑ **Brute Force** (they use their superior size and strength to grab captives and drag them off to their ships)

❑ **Control Collars** (they snap collars around the necks of their captives, controlling them either through direct brainwave manipulation or the threat of detonating the collars and the captives' heads along with them)

❑ **Electric Nets/Lassos** (they bind their captives using electrified nets or lassos, subduing them with the threat of electrocution)

❑ **Rapid Teleportation** (they attach small devices to their captives and use a remote teleportation system to instantaneously teleport them back to the slavers' ship)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

TECHNOLOGY

What kind of technology do these slavers use?

❑ **Cobbled Together** (these minions have pieced together technology from scrap and junk, yet despite frequent malfunctions it gets the job done)

❑ **Crude But Functional** (their technology looks outdated and clunky, giving them a brutish appearance)

❑ **Stolen, Cutting-Edge Tech** (these minions clearly steal their technology from other alien cultures)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PRIMARY ATTACK MODE

When you create these minions, choose one of the primary attack modes below, and describe the nature of the attack in the box.

❏ **STANDARD ATTACK (50% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10).

❏ **ACCURATE ATTACK (65% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 5).

❏ **POWERFUL ATTACK (40% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled + 20 (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10 + 20).

Use this box to describe the minions' primary attack mode.

MINION PERK

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the perks below.

❏ **COVER-SEEKERS**
Heroes who make ranged attacks against these minions add 2 challenge dice ( ) to the roll if these minions have or can reach cover.

❏ **DEATH BLOW**
Whenever a hero hits a squad of these minions with a melee attack, the squad also deals 10 damage to that hero.

❏ **HOSTAGE-TAKERS**
While these minions are up close to a hero or bystander, add 2 challenge dice ( ) to all attack rolls against these minions.

❏ **OPPORTUNISTIC**
For each boon these minions roll on an attack, add +10 to the damage of the attack, in addition to any other effects from that boon.

❏ **STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**
While the squad's size is 2 or greater, melee attacks against these minions add 2 challenge dice ( ) to the roll.

MINION WEAKNESS

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ **EASILY RATTLED**
When these minions are hit by an attack, they lose the benefit of their minion perk on their next turn.

❏ **NOT VERY BRIGHT**
When a hero performs a maneuver with a hero who is attacking these minions, add 3 advantage dice ( ) to the roll instead of 2.

❏ **SLOW**
After the Narrator has laid out the initiative track but before the first turn is taken in the round, move these minions' initiative card 2 spaces back toward the end of the track.

❏ **WILD ABANDON**
When these minions damage a hero with an attack, after the attack is fully resolved another hero other than the one who was attacked can immediately make a single, non-area attack against these minions.

SHACKLED STARS

CLASH AMONG THE STARS #5

In the aftermath of the attack on **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison's** base in the previous issue, the Cosmic Liaison approaches the heroes with a new mission, this time taking them far from Earth. During the cleanup from the attack, the Cosmic Liaison's base received a transmission from deep space, originating from **SE22: The Distant World**. This transmission bid the Earth to send representatives on a diplomatic mission to the Distant World, inviting them to discuss defending the Earth against further aggression from the Star Empire. The Cosmic Liaison asks the heroes to go, since they are the most experienced in dealing with cosmic matters. If the heroes do not possess a ship capable of interstellar travel, the Cosmic Liaison provides them with one, an experimental vessel that has recently been approved for space travel. The Distant World is too far to make in a single interstellar jump, and the message from the Distant World included a charted course that leads the heroes to **SE21: The Starport** as a stopover point before making the final jump to their destination.

Ask each of the players to briefly describe one thing their hero does to prepare for the long interstellar journey, then allow them to set off for the stars, a trip that will not return them to their home system for several issues.

When they arrive at the Starport, the heroes find it under siege by violent enemies. Choose either the **Mind Thieves** or the **Slavers** minions as the enemies for this issue. As the heroes exit their hyperspace jump, they see the attack against the Starport is just ending; several enemy ships make the jump to hyperspeed right as the heroes arrive, leaving behind a small handful of ships awaiting the return of their raiding parties.

As the heroes approach the Starport, they see groups of enemies dragging away unwilling captives, people snatched from the interior of the Starport.

In the opening scene, the heroes face the following opposition:
  ◇ Three squads of **Mind Thieves** or **Slavers** minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2.
  ◇ Two raider skiff vehicles, which are treated as minor villains. Each has 1 initiative card, 50 resistance, and a laser cannon attack with a 65% chance of success (damage equal to the number rolled), with a 50% chance for anything else.

The scene ends when all the enemies have been defeated, or the enemies complete their objective.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑ ❑❑❑ ❑❑❑, Enemy): The enemies have captured inhabitants and visitors from the Starport and are attempting to retreat back to their starfaring vessels (which are too large for the heroes to affect with their powers). There are three sets of progress boxes for this objective, each one representing the progress of a single squad of enemy minions. Each squad of minions progresses this objective separately.
  ◇ *Enemy Success*: For each squad of minions that succeeds in progressing the objective three times before being defeated, they reach one of the waiting starships and make a hyperspeed jump. The number of enemy ships that escape during this scene will be relevant in the final conflict scene of the issue.
✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑): Groups of gawking bystanders, desperate families futilely trying to catch up to the raiders, and inept Starport defenders are all in harm's way and need to be gotten to safety.
  ◇ *Fully Resolved*: Adjust the team's **Public Reputation** track by +1.
✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑❑, Critical): As a cover for their attack, the slavers opened fire on a large space cruiser that was attempting to dock at the Starport. The ship is coming apart, and though for the moment its structural integrity is intact, it rolls with a twisting motion and centrifugal forces threaten to tear it apart. Each time this Complication initiative card comes up, the ship's hull fractures and it gets closer to disintegrating.
  ◇ *Failure*: The ship rips itself apart, spilling cargo and passengers out into space. Adjust the team's **Public Reputation** track by −1.
✦ **Scene Details**: Debris from the destroyed vehicles of the Starport's defenders, clouds of liquid fuel floating amorphously in space, emergency forcefields.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO
Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they seek it out.

WHERE THE RAIDERS WENT
✦ The raiders have a base of operations inside a hollowed out asteroid, which is bristling with defenses.
✦ The raiders never hyperjump straight to their base, but instead make several small hyperjumps first.
✦ The raiders have sent notice to unscrupulous groups throughout the galaxy that they will be auctioning off their captives, and invited anyone with money (and no qualms about owning other sentient beings) to the auction.

NAVIGATING THE ASTEROID BELT

✦ The enemies' base is located deep inside a dangerous asteroid belt. The safe paths through the belt are constantly shifting, and only the enemies have up-to-date charts.

✦ To reach the raiders' base, the heroes must describe reasonable ways to get their ship through the asteroids (such as expert piloting, using scientific knowledge to plot a course, or blasting asteroids out of their path) and succeed on checks to proceed. The heroes need 6 successes to navigate the asteroids and reach the base (2 to navigate the high-density areas of the field, 2 to bypass planetoid-sized asteroids, and 2 to pass through the raiders' defenses). For every 2 boons (🏮 🏮) a hero rolls, grant 1 additional success. Each time the heroes fail an attempt, check off one box for the passage of time below, as the heroes have to slow down to make repairs.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

If the heroes do not decide to do so on their own, the operators of the Starport beg the heroes to bring back the captured victims. When the heroes arrive at the enemies' asteroid base, they have a chance to rescue the captives.

Whenever the heroes confront the enemies, they face the following opposition:

◇ Three squads of **Mind Thieves** or **Slavers** minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2.

◇ Three raider captains, minor villains with 1 initiative card, 50 resistance, and a laser whip attack with a 65% chance of success (damage equal to the number rolled), with a 50% chance for anything else.

The scene ends when the heroes complete both of the scene's objectives.

✦ **Objective** (❏❏❏❏❏): The heroes need to rescue the captives from the Starport. For each group of captives that the heroes rescued in the opening scene, check one of this objective's boxes before the scene begins.

◇ *Success*: Once the captives have been rescued, the heroes can begin progressing the second objective, below.

✦ **Objective** (❏❏❏❏❏): With the rescued captives in tow, the heroes need to escape the base and make their way back out through the asteroid field so that they can hyperjump back to the Starport.

THE CAPTIVES ARE PROCESSED ❏ ❏ ❏

Upon arriving at their base, the raiders process their captives and put them into prison cells. If the issue's enemies are **Mind Thieves**, "processing" means rendering them docile for later consumption. Though they will eventually recover, this technique makes them pliable and easy to hold. If the issue's enemies are **Slavers**, "processing" means branding each captive with the slavers' sigil and attaching an explosive collar to their necks, which can be detonated on command. At this point, the enemies are focused on unloading and processing the captives and performing routine work on their raiding ships, and they are quite scattered around the base.

THE SLAVE AUCTION ❏ ❏

Eventually, ships coming in for the slave auction are escorted by the enemies' ships through the field following a brief interview to make sure that they are legitimate buyers. Once on the slavers' base, these unsavory buyers gather in an empty hangar where the auction takes place and enjoy refreshments until the auction begins. At that point, the auction goes quickly, with buyers purchasing entire groups of captives all at once.

✦ **Complication** (❏❏❏): Several of the buyers bring slaves with them as servants and attendants; these slaves can be freed from their captors, in addition to the captives from the Starport.

◇ *Fully Resolved*: Adjust the team's **Public Reputation** track by +1.

THE CAPTIVES ARE DISPERSED ACROSS THE GALAXY

Once all payment is rendered, the buyers load their captives onto their ships and then are escorted back out through the asteroid field, the same way they were brought in. Once the buyers' ships reach the edge of the field, they start making hyperjumps back from whence they came, making it all but impossible to track down the captives. If the heroes intervene at this point, the captives are being wrangled into the buyers' ships in the base hangar, and the buyers are attempting to make a quick escape with their captives.

✦ **Complication** (❏❏❏, Critical): One buyer, hoping to flee before the heroes bring them to account, recklessly fires up the engines of their ship, which sets much of the hangar ablaze where caked-on fuel spills ignite.

◇ *Failure*: A group of captives perishes in the flames; adjust the team's **Public Reputation** by −1 and progress the first objective in the scene once (without awarding a hero point) if that objective is not yet complete.

WRAPPING UP

✦ If all the heroes are defeated, the raiders abandon the base, leaving the heroes behind with no way of knowing where they have gone. Adjust the team's **Public Reputation** by −2 when the heroes return empty-handed.

✦ If the heroes return to the Starport with rescued captives, they are given a warm welcome and showered with gifts. You may wish to give the heroes an opportunity to explore the Starport before setting off for the Distant World. Furthermore, among the rescued captives is a potential ally; a player who wishes to do so can create a new hero using the **Exile** archetype, describing that hero as a rescued captive.

EXILE

Once, you had a place where you belonged. That inclusion came to an end when you were exiled from your people, cast out into an uncaring galaxy. Yet still you fight for what is right, an act of defiance against your unjust circumstances. Examples from popular comics include Starfire™ and Starman™ (DC), and Longshot™ and Mar-Vell™ (Marvel).

THE NATURE OF EXILE

What best describes the reason for your exile from your people?

❑ **Atonement** (you committed a crime or sin and were exiled as punishment)

❑ **Rebellion** (you stood against your people to fight for what you believed to be right and were cast out as a result)

❑ **Rivalry** (a political rival came to power and banished you from your home)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Arrogant ❑ Kind

❑ Bitter   ❑ Morose

❑ Charming ❑ Naive

❑ Diplomatic ❑ Reckless

❑ Humble   ❑ _____

❑ Impulsive ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Energy Limits** (you need to recharge the source of your powers)

❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)

❑ **Proximity Weakness** (you grow weak when near a rare substance)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Advanced Healing** (you regenerate wounds too quickly to see)

❑ **Danger Sense** (a sixth sense warns you of incoming attacks)

❑ **Deflection** (you deflect incoming attacks using your powers)

❑ **Invulnerability** (you shrug off attacks like they are nothing)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Bolt of Energy** (zips to another place as pure energy)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Vehicle** (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme)

❑ **Other** (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

Hero Name: _____ **Team:** _____

Real Name: _____ **First Appearance:** _____

SKILLS

IDENTITY

TEAM ROLE

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

When you have no hero points remaining, at any time on your turn you can choose to gain up to 2 hero points (⚡⚡). For each hero point you gain in this way, lose 10 resistance.

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

_____ / 100

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

✧ Remove 1 time token (🕐) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)

✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (⚡) in the following ways:

✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll for each point spent.

✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (⚡) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (⬦⬦) to their roll.

✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (👤 👤 👤 👤) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

✧ When an enemy hits you, after the attack you can make 1 attack against that enemy.

✧ Add 100 to your current & max resistance.

✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (⬦) to all melee attack rolls.

✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.

✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll.

THE GLADIATOR

More than just a warrior, this villain is an entertainer, a symbol, and an instrument of their masters' will. The gladiator fights against heroes not just to defeat them but also to humiliate them in the process, to exert their dominance over the heroes and prove that the villain (or the masters the villain serves) is superior. Examples from popular comics include Spiral™ (Marvel) and Darkseid's Elite™ (DC).

NAME:

RELATIONSHIP TO THE MASTERS

Why does this villain fight on behalf of others?

❑ **Enslaved** (the villain is a slave, wholly owned by and forced to do the bidding of their master)

❑ **Redemption** (the villain committed a crime or betrayal and now fights to pay off their transgression)

❑ **Rewarded** (the villain is given a lavish lifestyle in exchange for fighting)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIGHTING STYLE

How does this villain behave during a fight?

❑ **Brutal** (the villain is unnecessarily brutal, making a show of the pain they inflict to satiate the audience's bloodlust)

❑ **Efficient** (the villain fights with efficiency, humiliating opponents with how little effort it takes to defeat them)

❑ **Showy** (the villain uses flashy maneuvers and plays to the crowd, acting more like an entertainer than a warrior)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

ECHOES OF PAST BATTLES

What visible signs does this villain display of their violent past?

❑ **Cybernetics** (the villain is missing an arm, leg, eye, or other body part that has been replaced by a cybernetic prosthetic)

❑ **Scars** (the villain is badly scarred, with each one telling the tale of some past injury that failed to fell them)

❑ **Trophies** (the villain carries skulls, pelts, or some other trophy taken from the enemies they have defeated)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ At Large ✦ Incarcerated ✦ Deceased ✦ Reformed ✦ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%): _____

LESSER POWER (65%): _____

MINOR POWER (55%): _____

When you create this villain, draw five powers from the Deck of Powers and choose up to three to be this villain's powers (you may also choose from available Basic powers). The villain can use these powers to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with these powers, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

> *This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.*

FLEEING THE SCENE ❑ ❑
In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS
When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked. Additionally, this villain begins play with some of their perks automatically, in addition to the two you choose.

✔ EVER-CHANGING TACTICS
This villain adds 2 advantage dice (⬡ ⬡) to the first roll they make with each of their powers each round.

❑ ❑ ❑ AURA OF DREAD
After taking an action, the villain takes a second action this turn. This action must be to deliver an intimidating monologue, a mental attack that targets every hero in the scene who can hear the villain. The attack has a 75% chance of success, deals damage equal to the number rolled, and any hero who would be reduced to less than 50 resistance by this attack is instead reduced to 50 resistance.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ BATTLE-TESTED
After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move any 2 of the villain's initiative cards 2 spaces toward the beginning of the track, moving 1 card at a time.

❑ FLIGHT
This villain can fly when they move.

❑ MOMENTUM
For each boon (🛡) this villain rolls, the villain regains 10 resistance, in addition to any other effects of that boon.

❑ SPECTACLE OF VICTORY
When the villain defeats a hero, flip 1 of the villain's face-down initiative cards face-up.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS
When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❑ OVEREXTENSION
After this villain takes two turns in a row, flip 1 of their face-up initiative cards face-down.

❑ PRIDE
When this villain attacks a hero and deals no damage, this villain takes 30 damage.

❑ SLOW TO REACT
Each round, heroes add +30 to the damage of all their attacks against this villain before the villain has taken a turn.

❑ TACTILE POWER
This villain cannot make ranged attacks with their superpower.

TRIAL BY COMBAT
CLASH AMONG THE STARS #6

The issue opens with the heroes emerging from a hyperjump to **SE22: The Distant World**. After taking in the sight of the planet, they are contacted by the planet's space force and welcomed, then provided with a landing vector that takes them on a brief tour of the planet's surface, leading to its capital. Once they arrive, they are greeted by diplomats and offered a welcome fitting dignitaries from a trusted ally, which includes opulent accommodations, a banquet in their honor, and promise of a parade celebrating their visit. They are assigned an aide (create a minor Narrator character native to the Distant World), who sees to their every need and sticks closely to them. Throughout these early moments, the heroes sense that something is off about their welcome; when pressed, their guide insists that they are simply meant to feel welcome, though savvy heroes adept at reading people could sense an undercurrent of fear in their hosts. What, exactly, they are afraid of remains a mystery for the time being.

The heroes learn that they have a few days before official diplomatic talks begin, and they are invited to explore the Distant World. Their handler accompanies them on all such excursions. Allow each player to describe a scene in which they and the other heroes explore the world. During each such scene, add a detail that sows further doubts in their minds about the diplomatic situation and their welcome. Some examples for what these events could look like include:

   ✧ During a visit to a remote locale, the heroes witness a huge starship approaching and landing in the capital.
   ✧ During a pleasant visit with locals, the heroes' handler seems to rush them along just as they are making friends with people. The locals are confused, and the handler seems to be afraid of the heroes forming a bond.
   ✧ If the heroes return to their ship, they find that it mysteriously sprung a fuel leak and needs both repairs and refueling before the ship will fly again. The handler assures them that they will be given fuel.
   ✧ The heroes see crudely written graffiti that encourages readers to "Fight for Freedom" and "Kneel to No One."

Eventually, the time for their "parade" nears. Their handler leads them to a facility where they, the greatest warriors of Earth, are adorned in traditional garb from the Distant World—which resembles crude, mismatched armor—before the parade. Their handler leads them through a subterranean tunnel to a staging area for the parade, then arranges them on an elevator platform for their "ascension into the crowd." When the elevator carries them up to the surface, they emerge not on a parade ground, but in the middle of a massive gladiatorial arena. The circular arena is surrounded by rings of spectators protected by impenetrable forcefields, which pen the combatants in. The spectators seem mostly to be from other worlds (in fact, they are the crew of the Imperial ship that brought the villain and the other gladiators here), and the villain and several uneasy-looking members of the Distant World's ruling body watch from a shielded observation box high in the air.

SE07: The Star Empire has arranged for the heroes to be put on trial by combat for the crime of wiping out an Imperial scout force (the same force from *Explorers of the Unknown* #3). The Star Empire forced the Distant World to distract the heroes and lure them into the arena under threat of attack. The issue's villain, the **Gladiator**, came to the Distant World to oversee the trial, and with grandiose proclamations they start the trial by urging several gladiators to charge the heroes and attack.

In the gladiatorial combat scene, they face the following opposition:

   ✧ The **Gladiator**, a villain with a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes in the scene. The Gladiator does not start the scene involved in the conflict, but instead observes from the safety of a viewing box. When half of the minor villains are defeated, the Gladiator joins the fight at the start of the next round.
   ✧ Several slave fighter minor villains, in number equal to the number of heroes. Each has 1 initiative card, 100 resistance, and a sword, axe, whip, or spear attack with a 65% chance of success (damage equal to the number rolled), with a 50% chance for anything else.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated or have fled the scene.

✦ **Hazard**: The arena is filled with hazards, such as laser grids, whirling buzzsaws, stun fields, and land mines. Add a Hazard initiative card to the initiative track. When its turn comes up, one of these hi-tech dangers attacks one of the heroes with a physical attack with a 50% chance of success, dealing damage equal to the number rolled.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑❑, Critical): Five locals from the Distant World, supposedly criminals, have been thrown into the gladiatorial arena as fodder for the fight. They are clearly outmatched and need to be protected. Each time this Complication initiative card comes up, one of the enemies cuts down one of the outmatched locals.
   ✧ *Failure*: Adjust the team's **Public Reputation** track by −1.

✦ **Scene Details**: Twisted debris from a previous fight, a metal cage with its door standing open, a flickering fluorescent torch on the wall of the arena, a loose metal floor panel.

WHEN THE VILLAIN IS DEFEATED OR FLEES...

If the villain is defeated or flees, just before they exit the scene they deliver shocking information: that the heroes were lured to the Distant World by the Star Empire not to stand trial, but because the Empire wanted to draw them away from Earth while they sent a fleet to wipe out all life on their home planet.

With the villain defeated, the heroes' handler finally works up the courage to lower the forcefield around the arena, allowing the heroes to escape to freedom as the crowd panics and flees.

ESCALATION: PRISON BREAK

If the heroes are all defeated in the gladiatorial arena, they awaken as captives inside the Imperial ship alongside the other gladiator prisoners. From there they can make their escape, using the information in "Prisoners from Earth" below as guidance for creating a conflict scene surrounding their escape.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

Though the heroes are likely to want to head home quickly, they may have business to take care of on the Distant World. Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they seek it out.

PRISONERS FROM EARTH

✦ Aboard the Imperial cruiser, captives forced into gladiatorial combat by the issue's villain are trapped in prison cells. Hundreds of cells contain combatants from as many worlds.

✦ If any heroes have the **Captive of the Star Empire** lasting repercussion, they are among the prisoners. The heroes can mount a rescue by breaking into the Imperial ship.

✦ Rescuing the captives almost certainly requires a conflict scene to resolve, though this is at the Narrator's discretion based on the heroes' plan of action for the rescue.

✦ The challenges the heroes face when rescuing prisoners from the ship can include any or all of the following:

 ◇ Navigating the ship; the massive ship is labyrinthine, and finding the prison cells without getting caught will require skill, luck, or good planning. Three successes on checks made to do so should be sufficient.

 ◇ Squads of **Alien Invaders** minions patrol the ship, each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. If alerted to the heroes' presence, two such squads respond and attack right away.

 ◇ The ship possesses automated security systems, from laser turrets to electrified floors, each of which makes physical attacks with a 50% chance of success, dealing damage equal to the number rolled.

HELPING THE REBELS

✦ Not everyone from the Distant World agreed that they should acquiesce to the Star Empire's demand that the heroes be put on trial. A rebellious faction tried to fight the collaborators, only to be driven underground.

✦ If the heroes seek out and aid the rebels in any way, they learn that they call themselves the Uprising, and that they have sympathizers all over the planet waiting to topple the Imperial collaborators.

✦ **Reputation**: If the team's **Public Reputation** track is at 3 or higher, a member of the Uprising warns the heroes that someone ordered their ship's fuel cells drained, but the Uprising refueled the ship shortly thereafter.

ESCAPING THE DISTANT WORLD

The division among the people of the Distant World keeps the authorities from catching up to the heroes immediately. Eventually, the heroes will certainly seek out their ship and try to return to Earth. If their fuel cells were drained, they'll also need to find some way of quickly recharging their ship.

Their escape does not go unnoticed, and the Imperial starship that brought the villain to the Distant World pursues them. In this brief final conflict scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

 ◇ The Imperial ship, which has 2 initiative cards, infinite resistance, and makes ranged area physical attacks against all the heroes in the ship with each attack using its laser cannons. Each attack has a 65% chance of success and deals damage equal to the number rolled.

The scene ends when the heroes complete the objective and make the hyperjump.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑❑): To make the hyperjump, the heroes need to pilot the ship to the edge of space, clear the planet's protective forcefield, calculate their jump trajectory, avoid the Imperial ship's tractor beam, and accelerate to hyperjump speed (which normally takes several minutes of sublight acceleration).

WRAPPING UP

✦ If the heroes rescued any prisoners from the Imperial starship, those rescued heroes lose the **Captive of the Star Empire** lasting repercussion and can be selected again for play during future issues.

✦ If the heroes helped the rebels on the Distant World, write "Wracked by Civil War" in the Truths box of **SE22: The Distant World**.

TWISTED GUARDIANS

These villains were once members of an organization dedicated to protecting people (such as **SE17: The Space Police Force**), but they have since fallen from their heroic role and turned to evil. They remained together, continuing to work as a unit even after having been cast out of their order. Examples from popular comics include the Sinestro Corps™ and the Red Lanterns™ (DC).

TEAM NAME:

FALL INTO DARKNESS

Why were these villains exiled from their former order?

❑ **Extremism** (they adopted extreme attitudes or violent methods, which the others of their order could not abide)

❑ **Followed the Wrong Leader** (they sided with a leader who clashed with the organization's other leaders and were cast out)

❑ **Mutiny** (they sought to overthrow their order's leaders and transform the organization to fit their own vision)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

NEW ORDER

How would others describe these villains?

❑ **Crusaders** (these villains have adopted an extreme philosophy and forcefully spread it as far as they can)

❑ **Mercenaries** (these villains hire themselves out to the highest bidder, using their formidable power for profit)

❑ **Terrorists** (these villains see their exile as an injustice that can be corrected only by violence against their former order)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

COHESION

How do these villains behave when acting as a group?

❑ **Infighting** (these villains constantly squabble among themselves and may engage in competition with one another)

❑ **Lone Wolves in a Pack** (each member operates independently, but when together they have little friction)

❑ **Well-Oiled Machine** (these villains fight as one, clearly aligned both tactically and motivationally)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ At Large   ✦ Incarcerated   ✦ Deceased   ✦ Reformed   ✦ Exiled

When you create these villains, draw seven powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be each villain's superpower (you may also choose from available Basic powers). These villains can use their powers to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villains attack with a power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

FLEEING THE SCENE

In every scene, each of these villains has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes. Each minor villain in this group has progress tracking boxes for this objective next to their type.

LEADER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____   **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

LIEUTENANT ❏ ❏

NAME: _____   **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

HARRIER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____   **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SKULKER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____   **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

BRUISER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____   **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SNIPER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____   **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SHAPESHIFTER DRONES

These enemies come from a species of shapeshifters, and as a group they infiltrate and commit crimes and violence against unsuspecting victims. They use their ability to transform their appearance as misdirection, keeping their enemies from discovering what they are planning until it is too late. Examples from popular comics include the Skrulls® (Marvel).

TEAM NAME:

SHAPESHIFTING ABILITY

What is the scope of the shapeshifter's abilities?

❑ **Impersonation** (the villains can transform only into impersonations of other people roughly their size and physique)

❑ **Partial** (the villains can transform individual body parts into weapons, shields, or other items)

❑ **Size/Material Change** (the villains can grow or shrink, and change their flesh into metal, stone, or other material)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

MODUS OPERANDI

How do they use their shapeshifting?

❑ **Assassination** (they use impersonation to get close to a target before killing them)

❑ **Civil Strife** (they impersonate leaders and followers and stir up strife that leads groups they infiltrate to tear themselves apart)

❑ **Sabotage** (they infiltrate secure areas and commit violent sabotage against sensitive targets)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

COHESION

How do these villains behave when acting as a group?

❑ **Infighting** (these villains constantly squabble among themselves and may engage in competition with one another)

❑ **Lone Wolves in a Pack** (each member operates independently, but when together they have little friction)

❑ **Well-Oiled Machine** (these villains fight as one, clearly aligned both tactically and motivationally)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ At Large ✦ Incarcerated ✦ Deceased ✦ Reformed ✦ Exiled

When you create these villains, draw seven powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be each villain's superpower (you may also choose from available Basic powers). These villains can use their powers to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villains attack with a power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled..

FLEEING THE SCENE

In every scene, each of these villains has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes. Each minor villain in this group has progress tracking boxes for this objective next to their type.

LEADER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

> This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

LIEUTENANT ❏ ❏

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

> This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

HARRIER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

> This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SKULKER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

> This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

BRUISER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

> This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

SNIPER ❏ ❏

NAME: _____ **SUPERPOWER (75%):** _____

> This villain starts each conflict scene with 100 resistance. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

At the conclusion of the previous issue, the heroes made a hyperjump headed back to Earth after learning that **SE07: The Star Empire** sent a fleet of warships to wipe out the planet. As the heroes race back home, things don't go according to plan: the ship unexpectedly lurches as it is sucked through a wormhole, and for a few brief minutes their journey is all vertigo and alarm klaxons. Their ship, including its hyperjump engine, is badly damaged by the unexpected diversion. When the heroes emerge into normal space, they see an unfamiliar starfield; scientifically minded heroes could deduce that they are hundreds of lightyears off course, in space uncharted by humanity.

Also floating in their field of vision is a massive, dark object, though glints of metal can be seen reflecting the stars' light even from this distance. As they approach it, they see that it is the semidecayed carcass of a massive creature that most closely resembles a dragon. Though pieces of its skeleton are visible through its decayed and space debris-pocked flesh, its underbelly, throat, skull, wings, and tail appear to have all been reinforced with tough, reflective metal. When the heroes see the sublight engines welded under the wings, it confirms that someone retrofitted the corpse of a gargantuan space dragon, transforming it into an interstellar starship. The interior of the ship is likewise a blend of bones, toughened flesh, and artificially installed metal.

The heroes' ship, emptied of fuel and in desperate need of repair, isn't going to make it back to Earth in its current condition. The heroes' best hope of recharging their ship's hyperjump fuel cells is to scavenge the fuel and parts they need from the drifting ship, if there are any such parts to be had.

This issue does not open with a conflict scene. Instead, the heroes start the issue with the opportunity to explore the dragon-ship and hunt down the supplies and fuel they need to get moving once more.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO
Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they seek it out.

EXPLORING THE SHIP
✦ As the heroes explore the ship, there are four main challenges to be dealt with. Each one can be permanently resolved by spending a scene exploring particular parts of the ship and succeeding on a check to perform the required task. Until a challenge is dealt with, it will slow the heroes down. The Narrator should insert one of these challenges into each interlude scene the heroes create; dealing with such a challenge requires only that a hero describe what they are doing to deal with it in that scene, and succeed on a check to do so. If they fail this check, mark off one additional box for the passage of time in "The Sequence of Events," and they can then try again.
✦ **Hull Breaches**: Battle damage and years floating in space left huge breaches in the hull, exposing the interior to open space. This hazard can be dealt with by activating the emergency breach forcefields in the ship's Engineering bay.
✦ **Lack of Gravity**: The ship's artificial gravity generator is offline, making moving around inside the ship challenging. Gravity can be restored by reactivating the gravity generator in the ship's Power Core.
✦ **Lack of Life Support**: The ship's life support systems have been shut down since the ship was set adrift, and there is no breathable air inside. They can be reactivated from the ship's Environmental Systems bay.
✦ **Lack of Power to Lights/Internal Transportation**: Even as it "awakens," the ship is only on emergency power. Many of its doors and elevators are nonfunctional, making traversing the ship challenging. Power can be restored to these systems from the ship's Command Bridge.

REACTIVATING THE COMMAND BRIDGE
✦ The ship's Command Bridge, located in the dragon's head and using its eye sockets for viewports, is remarkably intact compared to the rest of the ship. The computer consoles are all locked down, but a successful check could restore their functionality...presuming the heroes have some way of translating the alien writing.
✦ The ship's computer contains basic information about its crew. Furthermore, a scan of the ship's interior reveals the major sections of the ship, as well as an area marked simply "Bunker" at the ship's center.
✦ The heroes can learn what happened to cause the ship to become adrift in low-power mode. Choose one of the following options for the truth about how the ship came to be here:
❑ **Failed Escape**. The ship was fleeing a pursuing vessel from the Star Empire and sustained critical damage that set it adrift.
❑ **Exiled**. The ship's crew was banished from the Star Empire, their ship intentionally damaged so they cannot return.
❑ **Sabotaged Invasion**. The crew was part of an invasion force heading for **SE22: The Distant World** when it was sabotaged from the inside by spies from the intended target.

SCAVENGING PARTS & REPAIRING THEIR SHIP

✦ There heroes can scavenge parts from the dragon-ship's Engineering bay, if they spend an interlude scene to dig through the supplies of backup parts and redundant systems. Alternatively, the heroes could scavenge parts from the ship's working systems elsewhere, but doing so takes longer (mark off one additional box for the passage of time in "The Sequence of Events").

✦ With parts in hand, technically minded heroes can use an interlude scene to perform the necessary repairs on their own ship, which will be sufficient to get them up and running again.

SIPHONING HYPERJUMP FUEL

✦ In the ship's Power Core, the heroes can find stores of the liquid crystal fuel that powers hyperjump engines.

✦ The heroes can siphon off enough fuel to make their ship hyperjump-worthy once more. However, doing so before internal power has been restored from the Command Bridge takes longer (mark off one additional box for the passage of time in "The Sequence of Events").

OPENING THE BUNKER

✦ The area of the ship marked "Bunker" is a cargo hold full of cryogenic stasis pods. It is sealed off from the rest of the ship by armor plating and blast doors; the hold would likely survive the ship's destruction around it.

✦ The Bunker is sealed and cannot be opened from the Bridge; as a failsafe, only the ship's automated computer systems will open the Bunker doors once the living beings inside have been decanted from cryostasis.

✦ Inside, nearly all of the 700 cryogenic stasis pods have been damaged, and only dessicated corpses remain inside. The few that do remain intact house this issue's villains.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The main danger the heroes face comes from the few remaining members of the ship's crew awakening from their cryogenic slumber and finding the heroes scavenging on their ship and siphoning off their fuel. If the heroes are exceptionally fast and fortunate, they can board the dragon-ship, get what they need, and be on their way without ever encountering the ship's crew.

   If the heroes stumble across the awakened crew or are still on the ship when the awakened crew attempts to seize the Command Bridge, they face the following opposition:

◇ The villains of the issue. If **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** has "Watching for signs of a shapeshifter invasion" written in their Truths box, use the **Shapeshifter Drones** minor villains for this issue. Otherwise, use the **Twisted Guardians** minor villains for this issue. There are a number of minor villains in this scene equal to the number of heroes. Each minor villain has 1 initiative card.

   The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated or the heroes return to their ship (provided that they refueled and made repairs already).

THE SHIP'S COMPUTER AWAKENS IN LOW-POWER MODE ❏ ❏

When the heroes' ship approaches, the dragon-ship's computer awakens from its slumber but remains in low-power mode, slowly cycling through pre-activation checks in preparation for awakening the crew.

THE THAWING BEGINS ❏ ❏

The ship issues orders in the Bunker to awaken the remaining crew members from cryogenic sleep. The ship's automated systems begin the unfreezing process, diverting significant power to the Bunker's life support systems.

THE VILLAINS EMERGE FROM CRYOSLEEP ❏ ❏ ❏

The ship's surviving crew members awaken from their cryogenic slumber. At this point, they remain groggy and stay inside the Bunker to regain their bearings. If the heroes disturb them at this point, the crew will attack, though they add 1 challenge die (◈) to all rolls due to their need to recover from the long hibernation.

THE VILLAINS ATTEMPT TO SEIZE THE BRIDGE

Fully recovered from their slumber, the villains attempt to seize control of the Command Bridge and kill or expel the heroes from the dragon-ship. The villains care little about the heroes and see them only as an impediment to getting their ship up and running again, and then contacting the others of their kind scattered throughout the galaxy.

WRAPPING UP

✦ From here, the heroes need to return to familiar space before they can chart a course for Earth. Their ship's sensors pick up on a habitable planet just a short hyperjump away, a likely first step to get home.

✦ Just before the heroes make the hyperjump, a loud signal broadcasts from the dragon-ship: a signal, written in the alien tongue of the villains, that says merely, "Wake up."

THE HERALD

This villain is the forerunner for a powerful force of destruction. Though they are certainly an antagonist toward the heroes, it is a stretch to call them truly evil. Instead, they are forced to serve as the agent of a cosmic force far greater than themselves, even as they watch it wreak havoc and are helpless to stop it.

NAME:

MARKED

How is the villain marked as an agent of the force of destruction?

❑ **Aura** (the villain is surrounded by a strange force, such as being wreathed in flame, exuding a frosty mist, or other effect)

❑ **Inhuman Traits** (the villain has striking physical traits, such as a huge stature, metallic skin, or glowing eyes)

❑ **Livery** (the villain wears a costume with an aesthetic similar to the physical form of the force of destruction)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

CHOSEN

How did they become the herald?

❑ **Created** (the force of destruction created them whole out of the cosmic fundament explicitly to serve as the herald)

❑ **Saved** (they were the only one of their people allowed to live after the force of destruction devoured their homeworld)

❑ **Self-Sacrifice** (they volunteered to become the herald in exchange for sparing their planet from destruction)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

THE VOICE OF DESTRUCTION

How does the villain deliver their proclamations to the planets they visit?

❑ **Booming Voice** (the villain's voice booms out so loudly that it can be heard everywhere on the planet)

❑ **Projections** (the villain projects illusory images tens of thousands of times over so their message is delivered)

❑ **Telepathy** (the villain communicates telepathically, broadcasting a psychic message to the planet's inhabitants)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ☆ At Large ☆ Incarcerated ☆ Deceased ☆ Reformed ☆ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%):

When you create this villain, draw three powers from the Deck of Powers and choose one to be this villain's superpower. The villain can use the power to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with this power, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 100 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

FLEEING THE SCENE ❑ ❑

In every scene, the villain has a permanent enemy objective to get away without being caught or killed. When the villain has progressed this objective once, any hero can use their action to attempt to stop the villain from escaping in some way; if they succeed, erase that progress. When the villain has progressed the objective twice, they exit the scene safely, escaping from the heroes.

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked.

❑ MOMENTUM

For each boon (🏃) this villain rolls, the villain regains 10 resistance, in addition to any other effects of that boon.

❑ FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

❑ OVERSIZED

The villain can make melee attacks against enemies that they are near or up close to.

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ PRECOGNITION

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move up to 3 of this villain's initiative cards 2 spaces forward.

❑ ❑ ❑ SURGE OF POWER

When the villain attacks a hero using their superpower, they add 3 advantage dice (🏃 🏃 🏃) to the roll.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❑ VULNERABILITY:

Choose a common element, material, form of energy, or force as this villain's weakness, and write it in the box above. Double all damage dealt to the villain if an attack makes use of the villain's weakness.

❑ CRACKS IN THE ARMOR

When this villain takes 30 or more damage from a single attack, the next hero who attacks this villain adds 2 advantage dice (🏃 🏃) to their roll for the attack.

❑ FLAGGING STAMINA

For every 200 damage the villain takes, remove 1 of the villain's initiative cards from the initiative track for the rest of the scene.

❑ STILL RESISTING THE CONTROL

Each time this villain takes 50 or more damage from a single attack, flip 1 of the villain's initiative cards face-down.

❑ TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

When this villain has less than 50 resistance, they must use their actions to attempt to flee the scene until they have done so each round.

The heroes have repaired their ship and now search for a way back to known space and eventually, Earth. Their first hyperjump takes them to a nearby planet, which long-range scans noted as being habitable. Emerging into normal space, they get their first look at the planet. Choose one of the following options for the nature of the planet:

❑ **Sentient Planet**. The planet is a single, massive organism, and what look like flora and fauna are the equivalent of organs and the microorganisms that live within other creatures. The planet is lush, verdant, and covered with brightly colored and occasionally luminescent plant life. There are no signs of civilization. When the heroes make landfall on the planet, they feel the psychic presence of the sentient world, which communicates with them in bursts of emotion and mental images instead of words. The planet welcomes them, but it knows nothing of Earth or humanity, or any way to get back to what the heroes consider known space.

❑ **Abandoned Ecumenopolis**. The planet is completely covered in an urban sprawl, with no undeveloped terrain visible from space. Despite this incredible technological buildup, the planet is dark and the entire city-planet is completely abandoned. Though much of the city has been ravaged by what appears to be centuries of abandonment, the heroes can land their ship safely, and they can explore a world that was once technologically advanced but is now falling into disrepair.

❑ **Game Preserve**. The planet is covered in sprawling forests, jungles, and rolling plains, all laid out with far too much symmetry to be natural. On closer examination, these massive landscapes are arranged to form natural barriers, and within them are entire ecosystems clearly drawn from many different worlds. Some powerful race or being terraformed the planet, sculpting both its landscape and its flora to provide divided habitats for millions of species of animals, birds, fish, and other alien wildlife. Several of these landscapes also contain primitive sentient creatures.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

This issue begins not with a conflict scene, but with the heroes arriving at the strange new world and exploring it. Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they seek it out. Additionally, note that there is no tracking of the passing of time during these interlude scenes; instead, allow each hero to create one interlude scene, and then introduce the issue's villain, as described under "The Herald's Arrival" below. You can also introduce the Herald sooner, if the players are having a difficult time figuring out how to proceed.

EXPLORING THE SENTIENT PLANET

✦ The sentient planet tries to communicate to the heroes that they are not the first visitors to arrive via ship. A crashed starship is lodged deep in a canyon on the far side of the planet from where the heroes initially landed. Its crew died on impact, and it has lain untouched ever since (the planet feared to interact with it, lest it explode or release some toxic gas). The ship's design matches the aesthetic of **SE07: The Star Empire**, and the vessel is relatively intact, if half-buried in the dirt floor of the canyon. The ship's power core long ago failed, and its backup batteries are completely drained. The heroes could spend interlude scenes exploring the ship, transferring power from their ship to the crashed ship, extracting the ship's navigational computer and plugging it into their own, or even trying to pull the vessel free of the planet and haul it into space (the sentient planet would be very grateful). Though the ship contains far more expansive star charts than those possessed by the heroes, extracting and translating them will take some time (at least until after the issue's villain arrives).

✦ The planet also communicates that it has recently become partially infested with a small nest of the **Swarm** minions (from issue #1). If the heroes clear out the infestation, the planet would be very happy.

  ✧ The nest consists of 3 squads of **Swarm** minions, each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 3.
  ✧ **Lasting Repercussions**: If any of the heroes have the **Infected by the Swarm** lasting repercussion, they can sense these creatures even at a distance. While the heroes are trying to clear out the Swarm, the infection within this hero suddenly activates, and this hero is wracked with pain, taking 10 physical damage at the start of each of their turns until the Swarm minions are defeated. If the heroes succeed, the planet offers up a cure for the Swarm infection in the form of a fruit, and the hero can erase this lasting repercussion.

EXPLORING THE ABANDONED ECUMENOPOLIS

✦ The abandoned ecumenopolis is crumbling, but the technology of its former people is well preserved. The heroes could spend interlude scenes searching the ruins for computer systems, reactivating fallow power systems, repairing damaged power and data conduits, and working on a translation for the unrecognizable language.

✦ These computers contain far more expansive star charts than those possessed by the heroes, though extracting and translating them will take some time (at least until after the issue's villain arrives).

- Additionally, the heroes can learn why the planet is abandoned: its people discovered that the planet was in the path of a looming planet-killing cosmic disaster, and they evacuated the world with hundreds of years to spare.
- The heroes can also scavenge in the ruins for advanced technology that they could repurpose for their own use. Though most of the technology left behind on the world constitutes common-use items (however strange in form), the heroes can search out a starship launch facility, where a half-constructed interstellar warship sits in dry dock. If they take the time to successfully salvage the dry dock's technology (usually requiring three successful checks of appropriate skills or powers), they can outfit their ship with advanced laser cannons and hull-busting slug launchers. Should they do so, write "[The heroes' ship] is outfitted with advanced alien weapons" in the Truths box of the team's roster sheet.

EXPLORING THE GAME PRESERVE

- The game preserve planet is a marvel of terraforming and cultivation, but little on the surface seems useful in the heroes' current predicament. If they seek out one of the primitive tribal cultures in the preserve, they are met with fear and violence. If a conflict scene is appropriate, the native aliens should be treated as squads of minions of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2, with primitive weapon attacks with a 50% chance of success that deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum equal to the size of the squad × 10).
- If the heroes seek a peaceful first contact with the aliens, they find that, though primitive in terms of the technology at their disposal (they exist in a preindustrial agrarian state), the aliens are quite knowledgeable when it comes to stellar matters and possess great knowledge of the stars that dates back hundreds of years to when they were first brought to this world by its unknown creators.
- The heroes could spend interlude scenes making first contact with these aliens, establishing a means of communication, learning their method for charting the stars, and blending the knowledge gleaned from the aliens' star charts with those aboard their own ship.

THE HERALD'S ARRIVAL

The heroes' exploration of the alien world is interrupted by the arrival of the issue's villain, the **Herald**. This being hovers over the world not far from where the heroes are exploring at the time, accompanied by a massive, floating monolith (which resembles a huge brazier sitting atop a narrowing pedestal). In a booming voice that seems to reach all corners of the globe, the Herald makes a grand proclamation that is translated into the native language of the person hearing it: Destruction is coming, and soon. With a wave of their hand, the Herald gestures to the monolith. It slams down into the ground, creating earthquakes, tidal waves, and a blast of displaced air and soil consistent with a bomb being detonated. An electromagnetic pulse washes over the entire planet, temporarily disabling all technology, including the heroes' ship. When the dust settles, the top of the monolith is glowing, projecting a beam of light into the sky. The function of the monolith is clear: this is a beacon, summoning someone, or something, to this world.

If the heroes confront the Herald, the Herald ignores them and goes about the business of checking the structural integrity of the planted monolith. If the heroes attempt to interfere with the Herald or with the monolith in any way, the Herald attacks them, trying to stop them from disrupting the beacon (though even if the Herald is defeated the beacon cannot be tampered with).

In this conflict scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

◇ The issue's villain, the **Herald**, who has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene.

The scene ends when the Herald is defeated.

- **Hazard**: Debris from the monolith's impact continues to rain down on the heroes from above, with some chunks of rock the size of cars still falling minutes after impact. Add a Hazard initiative card to the initiative track. Each time this Hazard card comes up, choose a random hero to be in the path of falling debris and make a physical ranged attack against that hero with a 65% chance of success, dealing damage equal to the number rolled.
- **Lasting Repercussions**: If any of the heroes have the **Saved by the Herald** lasting repercussion, the Herald reacts to them with curiosity and confusion. Throughout the conflict scene, the Herald delivers cryptic lines with phrases like, "I did not save your life to later end it myself," and "Perhaps what compelled me to intervene in your fate was merely ensuring that you are consumed by my master." The Herald also adds 1 challenge die (◈) to all rolls made for attacks against heroes with this lasting repercussion.

WRAPPING UP

- The story continues in *Clash Among the Stars* #9.

COSMIC FORCE

The Cosmic Force is a strange, powerful entity that operates on a level incomprehensible to humans. It is less of an individual being and more of a force of nature, an entity that is primeval and godlike at the same time. It is driven to destroy worlds by its nature; it is a force of aggressive entropy, hastening the end of all things. Examples from popular comics include the Phoenix Force™ (Marvel) and the Parallax™ entity (DC).

NAME:

PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION

What does this Cosmic Force look like in physical form?

- ❑ **Energy Cloud** (the Cosmic Force appears as an amorphous cloud of energy, such as fire, electricity, or other energy)
- ❑ **Shadow** (the Cosmic Force is an unnatural darkness that swallows the light of the stars as it moves through space)
- ❑ **Space God** (the Cosmic Force appears as a godlike being barely able to exist in our reality)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

INTERACTION WITH MORTALS

How does this force interact with living beings?

- ❑ **Absorption** (the consciousness of any being it kills is absorbed and retained within the Cosmic Force)
- ❑ **Deification** (the Cosmic Force demands worship from mortals and bestows favor upon those who please it)
- ❑ **Possession** (the Cosmic Force can possess a living body, bestowing some of its power upon that mortal)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GODLIKE POWER

What power does this villain possess that is on par with that of the gods?

- ❑ **Higher Reality** (the Cosmic Force can perceive reality on a higher plane of existence, giving it near-omnipotence)
- ❑ **Resurrection** (the Cosmic Force can bring the dead back to life, either through reanimation or rebirth)
- ❑ **Space/Time Manipulation** (the Cosmic Force can warp reality at a whim; time and distance are meaningless to it)
- ❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✦ **At Large** ✦ **Incarcerated** ✦ **Deceased** ✦ **Reformed** ✦ **Exiled**

SUPERPOWER (75%):

LESSER POWER (65%):

MINOR POWER (55%):

When you create this villain, draw five powers from the Deck of Powers and choose up to three to be this villain's powers (you may also choose from available Basic powers). The villain can use these powers to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with these powers, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 200 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

When this villain is defeated, they are never captured or killed. Instead, the villain retreats to a place of safety, you check one of the boxes of the Eternal Nemesis perk, and all heroes in the scene gain the lasting repercussion "Vengeance of [this villain's name]."

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked. Additionally, this villain begins play with some of its perks automatically, in addition to the two you choose.

✔ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ **ETERNAL NEMESIS**

This villain adds 4 advantage dice (🛡 🛡 🛡 🛡) to an attack it makes against a character with the lasting repercussion "Vengeance of [this villain's name]."

❑ **EVER-CHANGING TACTICS**

This villain adds 2 advantage dice (🛡 🛡) to the first roll it makes with each of its powers each round.

✔ **FORCE OF DESTRUCTION**

This villain can fly and can make melee attacks against heroes that it is near or up close to.

❑ ❑ ❑ **LASH OUT**

When a hero hits the villain with an attack, after that attack is resolved the villain makes a physical attack against that hero. On a hit, in addition to dealing damage the villain also pushes that hero to be far away from the villain.

❑ ❑ ❑ **PSYCHIC SCREAM**

As an action, the villain psychically screams, making a mental attack against each other character in the scene and adding +20 to the damage of each hit.

❑ **UNLEASH DEVASTATION**

At the start of each round, draw three cards from the Deck of Complications and choose one to add to the scene.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❑ **BLINDED BY SCALE**

Add 2 challenge dice (⬡ ⬡) to attacks this villain makes against heroes who have not yet attacked it this round.

❑ **FLAGGING STAMINA**

For every 200 damage the villain takes, remove 1 of the villain's initiative cards from the initiative track for the rest of the scene.

❑ **SLUGGISH**

After the Narrator lays out the initiative track, move 2 of this villain's initiative cards 1 step toward the end of the track.

❑ **SLOW TO REACT**

Each round, heroes add +30 to the damage of all their attacks against this villain before the villain has taken a turn.

EATER OF WORLDS

This villain destroys only to consume, and it does so on an incredible scale. The Eater of Worlds devours entire planets, grinding them into dust which it then ingests. Nothing seems to satiate the Eater of Worlds, since shortly after consuming a planet it quickly moves on to the next one. Examples from popular comics include Galactus™ (Marvel) and the Anti-Monitor™ (DC).

NAME:

PHYSICAL FORM

What physical form does this villain take?

❑ **Monster** (the villain resembles a beast or monster, such as a whale, a dragon, an octopus, or other creature)

❑ **Planet** (the villain is a planet that consumes other planets)

❑ **Titanic Humanoid** (the villain is roughly humanoid in shape but immense in scale)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

SPACE TRAVEL

How does the villain travel from world to world?

❑ **Faster-than-Light Travel** (the villain flies through real space, accelerating past the speed of light)

❑ **Teleportation** (the villain teleports directly from one star system to the next)

❑ **Wormholes** (the villain creates wormholes that connect two star systems, stepping through like walking through a doorway)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

INTERACTION

How does the villain interact with the heroes?

❑ **Booming Voice** (the villain speaks, its voice loud and powerful enough that it is painful to hear)

❑ **Herald** (the villain does not acknowledge the heroes directly, instead commanding its herald to communicate on its behalf)

❑ **Oppressive Telepathy** (the villain can communicate telepathically, and its psychic presence is overwhelming)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

FIRST APPEARANCE

CURRENT STATUS: ✪ At Large ✪ Incarcerated ✪ Deceased ✪ Reformed ✪ Exiled

SUPERPOWER (75%): _____

LESSER POWER (65%): _____

MINOR POWER (55%): _____

When you create this villain, draw five powers from the Deck of Powers and choose up to three to be this villain's powers (you may also choose from available Basic powers). The villain can use these powers to make checks and attacks, but cannot use any of the benefits listed on the card. When the villain attacks with these powers, on a hit the villain deals damage equal to the number rolled.

This villain has 200 resistance per initiative card. Use this box to track the villain's current resistance.

When this villain is defeated, they are never captured or killed. Instead, the villain retreats to a place of safety, you check one of the boxes of the Eternal Nemesis perk, and all heroes in the scene gain the lasting repercussion "Vengeance of [this villain's name]."

VILLAIN PERKS

When you first create this villain, choose two of the perks below. After every appearance, choose one more. If a perk has multiple check boxes, you can choose it more than once; the villain gains its benefit a number of times per scene equal to the number of boxes checked. Additionally, this villain begins play with some of its perks automatically, in addition to the two you choose.

✔ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ETERNAL NEMESIS
This villain adds 4 advantage dice (🔼 🔼 🔼 🔼) to an attack it makes against a character with the lasting repercussion "Vengeance of [this villain's name]."

❏ EVER-CHANGING TACTICS
This villain adds 2 advantage dice (🔼 🔼) to the first roll it makes with each of their powers each round.

✔ FORCE OF DESTRUCTION
This villain can fly and can make melee attacks against heroes that it is near or up close to.

❏ NIGH INVULNERABLE
Until this villain has taken any damage in the scene, reduce all damage the villain would take by 50.

❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ SWEEP THE BOARD CLEAN
The villain makes a melee area attack, pushing any target hit by the attack through the air in a straight line to a place that is far away from the villain.

❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ TERRIBLE HUNGER
The villain makes a ranged area attack, pulling any target hit by the attack through the air in a straight line to a place that is up close to the villain.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

When you first create this villain, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ BLINDED BY HUNGER
The villain can make melee attacks only if any heroes are up close to it.

❏ INFLEXIBLE TACTICS
Teamwork maneuvers performed on attacks against this villain also add 2 challenge dice (◆ ◆) to the villain's next roll if the attack hits.

❏ FLAGGING STAMINA
For every 200 damage the villain takes, remove 1 of the villain's initiative cards from the initiative track for the rest of the scene.

❏ OVEREXTENSION
After this villain takes two turns in a row, flip 1 of its face-up initiative cards face-down.

When the heroes encountered the **Herald** in the previous issue, the Herald warned them that destruction was coming. At the start of this issue, it arrives. The massive beacon-monolith brought to the alien world the heroes were exploring has done its job. The force of destruction that the Herald foretold has arrived, appearing suddenly in orbit around the planet. Choose either the **Cosmic Force** or the **Eater of Worlds** major villain to be the force of destruction that the Herald serves. This villain is so massive that when it enters the planet's orbit, the heroes can see it from the ground; the villain looms in the sky like a moon, drawing ever closer.

Unfortunately for the heroes, their ship is currently disabled by the electromagnetic pulse that blasted outward from the monolith when it made landfall. The Herald mournfully tells the heroes that the time of their deaths has come. It is clear that, despite the Herald's willingness to do battle with the heroes, the Herald takes no joy in the arrival of the issue's major villain. In fact, as the issue opens, the Herald (who has recovered from the previous battle with the heroes, even if they were defeated) starts slowly ascending into space, getting clear of their master's path of destruction.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

This issue play out like a disaster movie, with the heroes trapped on a world that is slowly and methodically being torn apart. Each entry in this sequence of events represents a separate scene; the Narrator can rearrange them as best fits the issue's story. In these scenes, the heroes face specific challenges until they finally achieve enough repairs and resources to flee the planet. In each of these challenges, the heroes need to come up with a solution and succeed on one or more checks to succeed. Each time they fail a check to overcome a challenge, mark one of the boxes next to the "Blasting Off" header, and the heroes can attempt some other method of overcoming the challenge.

Though the issue's villain is certainly an antagonist for the heroes, it does not know or care about them whatsoever and makes no moves directly against them. Of course, this may not stop the heroes from trying to confront the force of destruction head-on. If the heroes directly confront the destructive force consuming the planet, they face the following opposition:

   ✧ The issue's villain, who has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene.

The scene ends when the heroes complete the objective or the villain is defeated. Though the heroes cannot truly overcome the villain in this issue, if they defeat the villain then they delay the planet's destruction for a time.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑❑): Quickly, the heroes will realize that such a titanic force cannot be dissuaded from its goal of destroying the planet, at least not with the resources at their disposal. The heroes can delay the planet's destruction by finding a way to repel, restrain, or otherwise hold back the villain, instead of trying to damage it into submission.

   ✧ *Success*: If any of the boxes next to "Blasting Off" below are checked, erase two of them. The villain retreats slightly from the planet, biding its time for a short while before resuming its attack.

✦ **Scene Details**: Cosmic debris raining down on the heroes from above, vibrations in the air that seem to strike with physical force, clouds of smoke pouring off of the villain as it enters and moves through the atmosphere.

REBOOTING THE SHIP

The heroes' first thoughts likely involve getting to their ship and escaping the planet. Unfortunately, the electromagnetic pulse unleashed by the Herald's beacon-monolith shut down all the electronics on their ship, making it impossible to take off. A tech-savvy hero needs to reset all the ship's electronic systems and restore some blown fuses (requiring a successful check to overcome this challenge). Once the reboot sequence begins, the ship goes through a methodical reactivation and circuit restoration system. This takes time and will leave the heroes on the planet for some hours yet.

THE ATMOSPHERE AFLAME

As the issue's villain enters the atmosphere, their great mass compresses and superheats the air, causing spontaneous firebursts that set the atmosphere aflame. The heroes witness such a burst, which becomes a roiling wave of fire traveling rapidly toward the heroes and their ship. The heroes need to find a way to protect their ship from the fire wave, which will overtake and damage, or potentially destroy, their means of getting off the planet.

A DARING RESCUE

As they wait for their ship to recover from the electromagnetic pulse, they learn about (or perhaps realize on their own) something on this world that needs to be rescued before the planet is destroyed. Choose the nature of what the heroes need to rescue, based on the nature of the alien planet that you chose in issue #8:

❑ **The Sentient Planet's Seedling**. The sentient planet senses its destruction and sends telepathic messages to the heroes beseeching them to rescue a seedling it produces, a tree the height of a human that has the potential to grow into a planet-spanning intelligence if planted on another world. Getting to the seedling requires the heroes to overcome three challenges: descending into a pit nearly 100 feet deep, lined with thorny vines and poisonous snakes; removing the seedling from the soil without damaging it and ensuring that it can stay alive during transit; and avoiding a stampede of dinosaurlike creatures fleeing the firebursts in the atmosphere.

❑ **The Ecumenopolis's AI Core**. The knowledge of an entire advanced civilization lives within the dormant computer banks of the ecumenopolis, and the densest concentration of this information is in the planet's AI core. If the heroes can recover it, it would provide humanity with knowledge that could be used to defend against cosmic threats. Recovering the AI core requires the heroes to overcome three challenges: navigating the dark, labyrinthine corridors deep underground where the core is kept; breaking into a dense, metal-walled vault to get to the AI core's housing; and extracting the alien hardware from an unfamiliar computer system without damaging it.

❑ **The Game Preserve's Tribal Survivors**. Though they know they are doomed and cannot all fit aboard the heroes' ship, the game preserve planet's tribe begs the heroes to rescue their children and take them off-world, allowing their culture to survive. When the heroes first arrived, the tribe sent the children to a remote hiding place (a winding cave system in the side of a cliff). Rescuing the children requires the heroes to overcome three challenges: digging out a collapsed tunnel near the entrance to the cave system; crossing a deep chasm where a rope bridge once hung (but which fell into the pit when the monolith made landfall); and quickly finding and gathering the six children in the warren of tunnels, after they scattered and hid upon hearing the heroes coming.

Each of the three challenges listed requires a successful check to overcome. However, unlike the other challenges in this issue, if the heroes fail three times before successfully overcoming all three of these challenges, the rescue attempt fails and the heroes cannot try again (the Narrator should describe some reason why the subject of their rescue becomes out of their reach). Each failure also results in a box being checked next to "Blasting Off."

RETURNING TO THE SHIP

As the villain begins devouring the planet, the heroes need to get back to their ship. Massive tectonic and gravity upheaval causes the ground to shake, rise, and fall, and as the heroes race back to their ship, the world crumbles and heaves underneath them. The heroes need to overcome the challenge of this upheaval to get back to their ship.

BLASTING OFF ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

This is the final challenge the heroes face before escaping the alien world's destruction. The heroes' ship is primed, but successfully getting off-world means avoiding flying debris from the alien world being shattered underneath them. The ship's pilot, with the help of the other heroes, needs to overcome the challenge of escaping the destruction of the planet as it disintegrates.

THE PLANET'S DESTRUCTION

Once the heroes are free of the planet's gravity, they have enough perspective to see the scope of the devastation. Slowly (at this scale, at least) the villain is disintegrating the planet, and either consuming it or using it as fuel for its internal fire. As the heroes watch, the devastation closes over the rest of the planet like an eclipse blocking light from the sun. With no dense core left to maintain gravity, the debris from the planet starts to drift away, leaving behind a cloud of rubble as all that remains of the planet.

WRAPPING UP

✦ As the heroes' ship blasts away from the debris of the alien world, the Herald, floating in space near the all-consuming major villain, extends one hand and fires a blast of energy that rocks the heroes' ship but doesn't appear to do any damage. When the heroes examine the point of impact, they find that the energy blast burned a star chart into the metal hull of the ship, pointing from their current location to that of another planet. Also etched into the hull is a message in an alien language, which, when translated, says, "To halt my master, seek ye the *Starslayer*."

✦ Depending on which rescue they attempted, the heroes gain some benefit if they succeeded:

◇ If the heroes rescued the sentient planet's seedling and they take it to another world and plant it, allow them to name that world (if it does not have a name already) and write "Planted the sentient planet seedling on [the planet's name]" in the Truths box of the team's roster.

◇ If the heroes recovered the ecumenopolis's AI core, write "In possession of a planetary AI core" in the Truths box of the team's roster.

◇ If the heroes rescued the children from the game preserve planet, write "Transporting children of an extinct alien tribe" in the Truths box of the team's roster.

✦ The story concludes in *Clash Among the Stars* #10.

ANCIENT EXILES

These enemies have been banished from their original world for longer than the Earth has existed, their exile tracing back to the earliest days of galactic civilization. Examples from popular comics include the Manhunters™ and the Weaponeers of Qward™ (DC).

NAME:

APPEARANCE

What do these minions look like?

❑ **Alien** (they are vaguely humanoid but are clearly from another planet)

❑ **Grotesquely Mutated** (although monstrous now, they were once human)

❑ **Robotic** (they are robots, cyborgs, or some other kind of technological beings)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

ORIGINAL MISSION

What was the original purpose these minions served?

❑ **Defense** (they were charged with defending their people or homeworld)

❑ **Exploration** (they sought to explore the galaxy and spread their kind to other star systems)

❑ **Weaponsmiths** (they were tasked with creating weapons for their civilization)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

REASON FOR EXILE

How did they come to be banished?

❑ **Captured** (they were captured by a malicious group or force and bound into servitude)

❑ **Cast Out** (they were exiled from their people due to some transgression they committed)

❑ **Marooned** (they were stranded without any means of communication or escape and survived for eons on their own)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRANSFORMATION OF EONS

How has eons of exile transformed them from their original form?

❑ **Degenerate Minds** (a long exile and unchanging society has caused their minds to degenerate, making them almost subhuman)

❑ **Perfection** (during their eons of exile, they had time to perfect themselves or their plan for seeking vengeance on those who caused their exile in the first place)

❑ **Xenophobia** (their long isolation has caused them to hate and fear outsiders)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

PRIMARY ATTACK MODE

When you create these minions, choose one of the primary attack modes below, and describe the nature of the attack in the box.

❏ **STANDARD ATTACK (50% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10).

❏ **ACCURATE ATTACK (65% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee or ranged attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 5).

❏ **POWERFUL ATTACK (40% CHANCE OF SUCCESS)**
Melee attack. On a hit, deal damage equal to the number rolled + 20 (maximum damage equal to the squad's current size × 10 + 20).

Use this box to describe the minions' primary attack mode.

MINION PERK

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the perks below.

❏ **INDISCRIMINATE**
These minions' attacks can be area attacks.

❏ **LARGE**
Physical attacks against these minions intended to hinder or debilitate add 2 challenge dice ( ) to the roll.

❏ **RELENTLESS**
When a squad of these minions misses a hero with an attack, if the squad's initiative card is not already at the end of the initiative track, move the squad's initiative card to the end of the initiative track, leaving it face-up. These minions can take another turn when the squad's initiative card is next on the track.

❏ **UNKNOWN TECHNOLOGY**
These minions use incredible technology that is beyond current human science. Their attacks using weapons or technology add +10 to damage.

❏ **ZEALOUS XENOPHOBES**
At the start of the round, the Narrator can move this squad's initiative card to 1 space immediately in front of the initiative card belonging to any hero or villain.

MINION WEAKNESS

When you first create this type of minion, choose one of the weaknesses below.

❏ **BLIND DEVOTION**
Melee attacks against these minions add 2 advantage dice ( ) to the roll instead of 1.

❏ **FODDER**
Any time a hero hits a squad of these minions with an attack, reduce the squad's size by 1 more.

❏ **NOT VERY BRIGHT**
When a hero performs a maneuver with a hero who is attacking these minions, add 3 advantage dice ( ) to the roll instead of 2.

❏ **TOO LONG IN ISOLATION**
Add 2 challenge dice ( ) to all attack rolls these minions make.

After witnessing firsthand the destruction of an alien world by an incredible force of cosmic destruction (the major villain from the previous issue), the heroes followed the star map emblazoned onto the side of their ship by the Herald. They arrive in a nearly empty star system containing only a dying white dwarf star orbited by a single, barren, irregularly shaped planetoid. The planetoid orbits very close to the star (closer than Mercury orbits the Earth's sun), its rocky surface bathed in blue-white light. The planetoid resembles a rocky asteroid, yet it has an atmosphere breathable by humans. Storm clouds roil through its sky, with bright spots of lightning flickering in the cloud cover.

The **Ancient Exiles** minions dwell here, constructing the beacon-monoliths that the Herald uses to guide the force of destruction to its next target. It is also the keeping place of *Starslayer*, a weapon forged by the Ancient Exiles to one day destroy the force of destruction, though the heroes won't yet know that.

THE ANCIENT EXILES AND THE FORGE OF ENTROPY

The lone settlement on the stormy planetoid is the Forge of Entropy, a grimy, city-sized manufactory where black smoke belches into the air and the blue light of the dwarf star drains the color from everything. The buildings are made of cold, grime-covered iron, and a choking haze drifts at ground level. The Ancient Exiles have been charged with destroying anyone who comes to the world, and when the heroes arrive they receive a hostile welcome. Anti-starship weapons fire lances up from the ground at the heroes' ship. At long range the weapons are initially inaccurate, giving the heroes an opportunity to back off before their ship is in danger.

To reach *Starslayer*, the heroes need to overcome the following challenges, creating interlude scenes to overcome them (one challenge per interlude scene). Do not track the progress of time during these scenes.

- ✧ The heroes need to enter the factory city, either by stealth or by blasting their way in.
- ✧ The heroes need to locate *Starslayer*, which is kept in a natural cavern deep inside the planetoid. This information can be gleaned by interrogating Ancient Exiles, accessing the Forge of Entropy's computer system (controlled by a malevolent artificial intelligence known as the Overseer), or by creative uses of powers.
- ✧ The heroes need to break into the sealed vault that houses the deep tunnel access elevator, which takes them down into the subterranean caverns where *Starslayer* can be found. The vault is located in one of the smelting factories and lies behind thick metal doors.

If the Ancient Exiles become aware of the heroes due to overt actions, they will attack. If a conflict scene breaks out, usually the heroes encounter 1 to 3 squads of **Ancient Exiles** minions (Narrator's discretion), each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The issue's villain is a familiar face to the heroes. Choose a villain against whom the heroes have fought in a previous issue. If the **Rogue Lawbringer** has "Searching for allies to overthrow the Star Empire" written in their Truths box, consider using that villain. Otherwise, if **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** has "Watching for signs of a shapeshifter invasion" in their Truths box, or if any hero has the **Possible Impostor** lasting repercussion, consider using the **Supreme Shapeshifter** villain. If neither of those options work, use the **Zealot** from issue #1 as the villain.

The villain has been pursuing the heroes for some time, having chased them all the way from Earth. While following their trail, the villain encountered and teamed up with the villains from issue #7 (or, if all those villains were killed, similar villains who were awakened from cryosleep on other ships when the dragon-ship broadcast its awakening message), either the **Shapeshifter Drones** or the **Twisted Guardians**.

The villain realizes that the heroes have been led to the home of the legendary *Starslayer* weapon and plans to claim it. Depending on how quickly the heroes escaped from the alien world in the last issue, these enemies may be hot on the heroes' heels. For every 2 boxes that were checked off next to the "Blasting Off" header in the previous issue, check off 1 of the boxes tracking the progress of time on the next page.

When the heroes reach *Starslayer*, they engage in a three-way battle between themselves, the issue's villains, and the **Ancient Exiles**, who protect *Starslayer*. In this conflict scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

- ✧ The issue's villain, who has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene.
- ✧ The minor villains chosen for this issue, each of which has 1 initiative card. There is 1 such minor villain in the scene for every 2 heroes in the scene.
- ✧ Two squads of **Ancient Exiles** minions, each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 3.

The scene ends when all enemies have been defeated, or when the heroes successfully complete both objectives.

✦ **Objective (❑❑❑, ❑❑❑ Opposed):** *Starslayer* is buried blade-first into a stone pedestal and protected by a web of lasers surrounding the protruding parts. Drawing it out requires strength and dexterity in equal measures.
  ◇ *Success*: The heroes retrieve *Starslayer* and can begin progressing the second objective, below.
  ◇ *Enemy Success*: The heroes must defeat the villains to retrieve *Starslayer* from them.
✦ **Objective (❑❑❑❑❑):** Once the heroes have *Starslayer* in hand, they can attempt to escape the tunnels and return to their ship. Before the start of the scene, mark off progress boxes for this objective so that only a number of empty boxes equal to the number of heroes remain.
✦ **Lasting Repercussion:** If a hero has the **Possible Impostor** lasting repercussion and you chose the **Supreme Shapeshifter**, the heroes should not be aware that the villain is involved (do not add the villain's initiative cards at the start of the scene). At the start of that hero's first turn, the hero reveals themselves to have been the **Supreme Shapeshifter** all along; remove the hero's initiative card and add the villain's initiative cards to the initiative track. For the rest of this issue, allow that hero's player to control the villain.
✦ **Lasting Repercussion:** If a hero has the **Saved by the Herald** lasting repercussion, the Ancient Exiles are reluctant to attack that hero or their allies. If such a hero attempts to convince the Ancient Exiles to allow them to take *Starslayer* (succeeding on a relevant check to do so), the Ancient Exiles attack only the villains.
✦ **Starslayer**: The weapon is a huge sword (a strong human needs two hands to wield it) with a crystal blade. The weapon can be used to make physical melee attacks with a 60% chance of success (a hero with the **Wielder of Starslayer** lasting repercussion attacks with a 90% chance of success), dealing damage equal to the number rolled. When wielded against powerful cosmic entities, it can slay even creatures that are otherwise immortal.

THE VILLAINS ARE FAR BEHIND YET ❑

The heroes arrive before any pursuit, and the villains catch up to the heroes in the chamber containing *Starslayer*.

THE VILLAINS ARE DRAWING CLOSE ❑ ❑

The heroes emerge from their hyperjump before enemy pursuit. Once they are inside the planetoid's atmosphere, however, their sensors light up, showing the dragon-ship entering the system. Though the villains are closing in, the heroes have a head start. Each time the heroes fail a check to overcome one of the challenges, the Narrator can insert one of the minor villains into the scene, either creating a conflict scene or simply having that villain serve as a detriment to whatever the heroes are attempting, adding challenge dice to their rolls.

THE VILLAINS ARE HERE

As the heroes emerge from their hyperjump, the villains' dragon-ship emerges from a similar hyperjump only seconds later. Throughout the issue, the heroes race against the villains to reach *Starslayer* first; in any scene, the Narrator can insert one of the minor villains, either creating a conflict scene or simply having that villain serve as a detriment to whatever the heroes are attempting, adding challenge dice to their rolls.

CONFRONTING THE FORCE OF DESTRUCTION

With *Starslayer* in hand, the heroes might choose to simply bring the weapon back to Earth (keeping it on hand in case the force or destruction ever shows up), or they might instead choose to immediately seek out the force and attempt to destroy it. They can seek out this major villain and pick a fight. If they do so and use *Starslayer* to defeat the force of destruction, they seemingly succeed in destroying the villain. However, there is no way of knowing where the Herald will lead the force of destruction next (nor, indeed, any indication of how the next planet is chosen), so the heroes might weigh the importance of getting back to Earth quickly against the need to destroy this villain. When the heroes do finally engage this villain (which could be at the end of this issue, or in another issue entirely), create a conflict scene using the major villain as presented in issue #9.

WRAPPING UP

✦ If the heroes are all defeated during their attempt to obtain *Starslayer*, the issue's villain retrieves it. Write "Wielder of *Starslayer*" in the Truths box of that villain. If the heroes obtain *Starslayer*, choose the hero who carries or wields the weapon the most during this issue. That hero gains the following lasting repercussion: **Wielder of Starslayer**.
✦ If the heroes confront the force of destruction and succeed, the Herald is freed from their servitude. A player who wishes to do so can create a new hero using the **Cosmic Magus** archetype, using the Herald as the basis for the character.
✦ If they so choose, a hero could load the beacon portion of one of the under-construction monolith-beacons as cargo aboard their ship and bring it with them as they make the jump back to Earth. Should they do so, write "In possession of the summoning beacon" in the Truths box of their team roster.

COSMIC MAGUS

You wield technology so great that it appears indistinguishable from magic to most citizens of the galaxy. You have incredible and broad-ranging powers at your disposal, all of which make you seem godlike compared to the other denizens of the galaxy. Examples from popular comics include the New Gods™ (DC), and Adam Warlock™ and Silver Surfer® (Marvel).

AESTHETIC

What best describes your hero's aesthetic?

❑ **God** (you resemble the gods of the ancient Earth, but with cosmic trappings)

❑ **Space Wizard** (you embrace the pseudo-magic of your powers and dress more like a sorcerer than a member of a highly advanced species)

❑ **Strange Alien** (you have a strange physical form that unnerves and frightens the average human)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Choose two of the following personality traits that best describe your hero.

❑ Aloof   ❑ Confident

❑ Arrogant   ❑ Short-Tempered

❑ Awkward   ❑ Warm

❑ Caring   ❑ Wary

❑ Cautious   ❑ _____

❑ Cold   ❑ _____

VULNERABILITY

What weakness or obligation can your enemies exploit?

❑ **Deprivation** (you must regularly be exposed to some substance or energy)

❑ **Elemental Vulnerability** (you are severely harmed by a specific elemental force)

❑ **Limited Power** (there is some limitation or flaw in your powers)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

TRUTHS

RESISTANCE

What does resistance mean for this character?

❑ **Invulnerability** (you shrug off attacks like they are nothing)

❑ **Mobility** (you move fast and dodge out of the way of attacks)

❑ **Shield** (you are protected by a layer of energy that shields you from harm)

❑ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

GETTING AROUND

How does this character quickly move from one place to another?

❑ **Bolt of Energy** (you zip to another place as pure energy)

❑ **Powers** (one of your powers allows you to travel long distances)

❑ **Vehicle** (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme)

❑ **Other** (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

Hero Name: _____ **Team:** _____

Real Name: _____ **First Appearance:** _____

IDENTITY

SKILLS

TEAM ROLE

COSMIC SORCERY

At the start of a conflict scene, draw three cards from the Deck of Powers and place any of them you choose on top of any power cards you already possess. While these power cards are on top of your normal power cards, you can use those powers as though they were the powers you normally have in those slots. At the start of your turn, you can return one of these power cards to the Deck of Powers, and return any time tokens that were on top of it to the supply.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

_____

RESISTANCE

_____ / 100

SUPERPOWER 80%

LESSER POWER 70%

MINOR POWER 60%

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

✧ Remove 1 time token (⏱) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.)

✧ Move and take one action, in any order.

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (⚡) in the following ways:

✧ **Heroic Effort**: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll for each point spent.

✧ **Teamwork Maneuver**: You can spend 1 hero point (⚡) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (♦♦) to their roll.

✧ **Team Role**: Use your team role's benefit.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

When you roll 4 boons (👣 👣 👣 👣) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene:

✧ Your minimum damage on a hit is 50.

✧ If you start your turn with 0 hero points, you gain 2 hero points (⚡⚡).

✧ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

✧ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (♦) to all melee attack rolls.

✧ **Near**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.

✧ **Far Away**: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (◈) to the roll.

Having been stranded in unknown space since passing through an errant wormhole in issue #7, the heroes finally have the clue they need to get home. Between the star map emblazoned on the side of their ship by the Herald in issue #9, and the presence of a few familiar stars in the skies above the Ancient Exiles' planet (from issue #10), the heroes' hyperjump computer calculates a trajectory that will lead them back to Earth. At last, they can head back to Earth, racing against an armada sent by **SE07: The Star Empire** to wipe the planet out as retribution for defying the Empire (in *Explorers of the Unknown* #4).

If any hero was revealed to be the **Supreme Shapeshifter** villain in disguise in the previous issue, that hero loses the **Potential Impostor** lasting repercussion. A player can choose to play this hero in this issue, though they won't participate in the opening scene; that hero has been on Earth all along and was imprisoned by the Supreme Shapeshifter while the villain took that hero's place. They were freed from imprisonment by the students of **SE17: The Hero Academy**, but by then the team had already left Earth. That hero immediately gains enough progress marks on their story progress track to earn their next story reward, which they should select and describe in a way that reflects what happened to them on Earth since the rest of their team has been gone.

When the long hyperjump back to Earth ends, the heroes' ship emerges into realspace earlier than they expected, well out beyond the orbit of Jupiter. There, the **Star Empire**'s fleet has created a blockade for just this purpose, and the heroes emerge in the middle of a fight as they try to punch their way through and reach Earth.

In the opening scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

◇ A squad of Imperial starfighter minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. They attack with laser cannons and have a 50% chance of success on all rolls, with maximum damage equal to the size of the squad × 10. Each minion is one of the single-pilot fighter craft deployed by the larger fleet vessels.

◇ A number of Imperial gunship minor villains equal to half the number of heroes (round up). Each has 1 initiative card, 100 resistance, and a capital ship deck gun attack with a 65% chance of success (damage equal to the number rolled), with a 50% chance for anything else. Each gunship is large enough to carry a crew of dozens, though it is more maneuverable than the much-larger carriers and destroyers.

The scene ends when the heroes complete the objective.

✦ **Fighting from Inside the Ship**: When enemies attack the ship, they make area attacks against every hero inside the ship. If all the heroes inside the ship are defeated, the ship is destroyed. Heroes who can fly, teleport, or otherwise move around and survive in space do not have to fight from within the ship and become separate targets for the enemies. The ship's pilot can operate the ship's forward-firing weapons, making ranged physical attacks with a 60% chance of success, dealing damage equal to the number rolled. If the team roster's Truths box has "[The heroes' ship] is outfitted with advanced alien weapons" in it, a second hero can make attacks using the ship's alien weapons with a 70% chance of success, dealing damage equal to the number rolled.

✦ **Event**: The ships pursuing the heroes on their exit to realspace happened to be close by and were the first to respond to bring the heroes down. Add an Event card to the initiative track. Each time the Event card comes up, roll 4 advantage dice (🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠). For each boon rolled, increase the size of the squad of Imperial starfighter minions by 1. If you roll 4 boons (🚀 🚀 🚀 🚀), instead add another Imperial gunship to the scene. These reinforcements are other ships from the blockade, responding to stop the heroes from breaking through.

✦ **Objective** (❑❑❑❑❑): The heroes' goal is not to take out the armada (an impossible task, given the number and size of the Imperial fleet's vessels), but to run the blockade and make it to Earth. The armada has orders to maintain its blockade for now. If the heroes can outrun their pursuers and make it to the asteroid belt, they can return to Earth safely, with time to help prepare to fend off the Star Empire's attack.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑❑, Critical): Introduce this complication after the heroes' ship is hit by an attack for the first time. Damage to the ship causes internal problems, including fire in the engines, electrical shorts in the weapons systems, and clouds of smoke filling the cabin. Each time this Complication initiative card comes up, one of the internal systems (engines, weapons, or shields) suffers further damage.

◇ *Failure*: A critical system of the Narrator's choice is completely destroyed; the heroes must find a way to compensate for this loss for the remainder of the conflict, using at least one action each round to do so.

✦ **Scene Details**: Barrages of red and green laser fire, concussion missiles streaking by and leaving trails of vapor and ash, spinning debris from destroyed ships, carriers and destroyers blocking out the light of the sun.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

Upon their return to Earth, the heroes are briefed on the situation by **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison**. The Earth has received an ultimatum: surrender to the rule of the Star Empire or be destroyed. The governments of Earth have been defiant thus far, and the Cosmic Liaison is preparing to defend the planet against the overwhelming force of the Star Empire. The heroes need to bolster the Earth's defenses or find a way to overpower the armada.

USING THE BEACON TO SUMMON THE FORCE OF DESTRUCTION

✦ If the team's roster has "In possession of the summoning beacon" written in its Truths box, they can plant the beacon on one of Jupiter's moons to summon the force of destruction they encountered in issue #9. Add that major villain to the final scene; this villain attacks only the armada's capital ships until they are all destroyed.

✦ If the heroes possess *Starslayer*, they can use it against the force of destruction once the Star Empire armada has been wiped out, preventing the major villain from turning its destructive force against the Earth.

USING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE A WEAPON

✦ If **SE02: The Super Science lab** has "In possession of alien technology" in its Truths box, or if the Truths box of the team's roster has "In possession of a planetary AI core" written in it, the heroes can work with the Super Science Lab to create defensive weapons that can stand up to the Imperial armada. Add 2 to the number written next to "Cosmic Defenses" in the Truths box of "The Basics" section of your Setting Book.

CALLING FOR HELP

✦ If any of the heroes is a member of **SE20: The Space Police Force**, they can send a request for aid. In the final scene, four members of the Space Police force join the battle on Earth's side; each one counts as a hero and has 100 resistance and an appropriate superpower (draw a power from the Deck of Powers if the Space Police Force does not have a specific power associated with their group) with an 80% chance of success to use that power.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The clock is running out on the Star Empire's ultimatum, and eventually the heroes need to take action to stop the Earth from being destroyed. Only one thing will stop it: the armada's destruction. In addition to the suggestions listed above for ways the heroes to gain assistance in the battle, the heroes must decide if they are going to engage the armada while it is still out in Jupiter's orbit, or wait for the Empire to launch its attack on Earth. If the **Alien Commander** is alive and free, they send taunting messages from the bridge of the command ship.

Whenever the heroes engage the Imperial armada, they face the following opposition:

◇ Two squads of Imperial starfighters (identical to those in the opening scene).

◇ A number of Imperial gunships (identical to those in the opening scene) equal to number of heroes.

◇ The armada's capital ships (destroyers and carriers). These ships collectively count as a major villain, with a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes in the scene. For every 100 damage the heroes deal to these capital ships, remove 1 of the capital ships' initiative cards from the initiative track. The capital ships are considered defeated when all their initiative cards have been removed.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated. See the "Fighting from Inside the Ship" section of the opening scene. Include the complication involving their ship taking damage, if heroes use the team's ship in the battle.

FIGHTING BEYOND THE ASTEROID BELT

If the heroes summon the force of destruction using a summoning beacon, or if they choose to launch an offensive against the armada, the battle takes place at the site of the blockade near Jupiter. The Earth is under no direct threat during the battle if this is the case, but the heroes also cannot avail themselves of the Earth's defenses.

FIGHTING IN EARTH'S ORBIT

If the heroes allow the armada to close with the Earth, the battle in the sky above Earth puts the planet in danger. However, they also benefit from the Earth's defenses: anti-starship ground-based cannons, space flight-enabled fighter craft, and surface-to-space missiles. At the start of each round, for a number of rounds equal to the number written next to "Cosmic Defenses" in the Truths box of "The Basics" section of your Setting Book, these defenses destroy one of the armada's capital ships, removing 1 of their initiative cards from the initiative track.

✦ **Complication** (❑❑❑❑, Critical): After the first ship is destroyed, flaming debris rains into the atmosphere, some of it too large to burn up on entry. The heroes need to stop the planet from being bombarded by debris.

◇ *Failure*: Adjust the team's **Government Reputation** track by –1.

WRAPPING UP

✦ If the heroes are all defeated in the final conflict scene, write "Failed in the defense of Earth" in the Truths box of the team's roster.

✦ The series concludes in *Clash Among the Stars* #12.

HOMECOMING, PART 2

The armada of warships belonging to **SE07: The Star Empire** is gone, but not without firing a parting shot that will spell doom for the Earth. Shortly before the conclusion of the battle in the previous issue, a dagger-shaped missile launches from the Empire's command ship, cloaked and silent, a massive arrow soaring through space. It slipped past the Earth's defenses, impacting in the heart of the heroes' home city. Fortunately, casualties were minimal, as it buried itself nose-down in a broad, open park in the downtown area. The landing sent shockwaves throughout the city and caused massive property damage. Now, an obelisk the size of a skyscraper rises up from the middle of the city. Made of gleaming black metal, the ship looks like a black blade planted in the ground.

If the Truths box of the team roster sheet has "Failed in the defense of Earth" in it, the heroes reassemble in the aftermath of the impact, awakening in hospital beds or climbing out of craters after they fell back to Earth. After firing this strange missile into the Earth, the armada disengaged with the fight and retreated, making hyperjumps away from the system. Otherwise, the heroes were victorious in the previous issue, and the black ship is a vengeful parting shot, fired by the commander of the fleet (possibly the **Alien Commander**, if they were aboard the command ship) and intended to punish the Earth for the heroes' victory over the mighty Star Empire.

Describe the black ship's appearance before the heroes create their aspiration and turmoil scenes. Encourage them to weave their return to Earth, the battle against the armada, or the arrival of the black ship into their scenes. Once those scenes are complete, the ship awakens and the danger begins. Glowing red lines in strange patterns appear all over the ship, then support struts shoot out toward the ground in all directions, burying their ends in the soil. The ground begins to rumble, and soon the whole city can feel a constant, minor earthquake.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The ship is a superweapon that drills down into the surface of the planet and then fires pulses of gravity wave energy at its core, eventually causing the planet to shake apart from the inside. At first, the ship doesn't appear to be doing anything, and the heroes will be called on by **NC06: The Agency Chief** to deal with other disasters in the city triggered by the ship's arrival (these disasters are each described under the steps in the sequence of events during which they occur). The heroes can create interlude scenes to deal with these disasters or to seek aid or resources from their allies in the city, tracking the passage of time as normal, but soon the heroes will realize that this ship is a malicious attack on the Earth.

This superweapon has defenses in the form of flying robotic drones that resemble robotic wasps. Additionally, if the **Alien Commander** villain was present in the previous issue, they are also the villain of this issue.

Whenever the heroes decide to deal with the ship, they face the following opposition:

◇ Two squads of defense drone minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 3. They fire lasers from their stingers with a 50% chance of success on all rolls, with maximum damage equal to the size of the squad × 10.

◇ The issue's villain, either the **Alien Commander**, or a megadrone (a titanic robot made up of thousands of the smaller drones that transform and combine together). The villain has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene; if the megadrone is the villain, it has 100 resistance per initiative card, and a death ray attack with a 75% chance of success (damage equal to the number rolled), with a 50% chance for anything else.

Select two complications from the Deck of Complications to add to the scene; if the complication's severity depends on a number of drawbacks rolled, treat the complications as though 4 drawbacks (✹✹✹✹) were rolled.

The scene ends when the heroes complete the third objective.

✦ **Objective** (❏❏❏): The heroes need to get inside the ship, though its external armor is so thick and shielded as to be nearly impenetrable, and it projects a field that disrupts attempts at teleportation directly into the interior.

◇ *Success*: The heroes can begin progressing the next objective.

✦ **Objective** (❏❏❏❏, Opposed ❏❏❏❏): Once inside, the heroes find that the ship is a massive laser drill. Since its activation, it has been carving out a cylindrical shaft straight down from the point where it is buried into the ground. The tunnel is slowly widening and will eventually allow the entire ship to drill deep into the planet's crust. The heroes need to stop the drilling system to keep the ship from digging into the ground. Add an Event card to the initiative track; each time this card comes up, progress the objective for the opposed side.

◇ *Success*: The heroes can begin progressing the next objective. Remove the Event card from the initiative track.

◇ *Failure*: The scene changes as described under "The Ship Plunges into the Earths Crust" below. The heroes can begin progressing the next objective. Remove the Event card from the initiative track.

- ✦ **Objective** (☐☐☐☐☐, Opposed ☐☐☐☐☐): Either because it has plunged deep into the Earth's crust, or because the heroes disabled its drilling lasers and the ship realizes that its last chance to maximize its damage has come, the ship activates the superweapon at the heart of the ship's interior. A metal shaft that runs the length of the ship's cavernous interior transforms, opening compartments, extending antennae, and generally making itself look like a rifle aimed at the Earth's core. Pulsing purple light glows from the opened compartments, and every 10 seconds the shaft charges up and fires a pulse of gravity-wave energy toward the Earth's core. Add a Hazard card to the initiative track; each time this card comes up, progress the objective for the opposed side, and each character in the scene takes 20 damage from the gravity pulse.
  - ✧ *Success*: The scene ends, with the heroes successful.
  - ✧ *Failure*: The heroes fail, and the gravity pulse generator wreaks massive destruction.

THE CITY-WIDE BLACKOUT ☐ ☐ ☐
When the ship makes landfall, the shockwave of its arrival knocks down power lines and overloads transformer stations, causing the entire city to lose power. Emergency services struggle to keep the people of the city safe.

CHAOS AT THE AIRPORT
When the power goes out in the city, dozens of aircraft are in the air or making their approaches to the city. Hundreds of passengers and the crews of those aircraft struggle to navigate the skies over the city with no ground support.

FIRE-RAVAGED NEIGHBORHOODS
Downed power lines set several abandoned buildings in **SE04: The Bad Neighborhood** ablaze. With traffic jammed, the fire department fights to contain the fire, which spans several city blocks and threatens dozens more.

THE EARTHQUAKES INTENSIFY ☐ ☐
The pervasive rumble grows slowly more intense, until the city shakes with an intensity that causes major structural damage to buildings, cracks roadways, topples lamp posts and traffic lights, snaps railway lines, and puts the people of the city in constant danger.

THE FLOODING RAIL CAR
Hundreds of people are trapped inside a train car (either a subway train, or a surface train that was passing through a tunnel in the city) after the city lost power. The intense earthquakes broke water mains and cracked reservoirs, and the tunnel containing the train car is filling with water.

THE SHIP PLUNGES INTO THE EARTH'S CRUST
The black ship shudders and then plunges down into the Earth's crust, traveling through a vertical passageway that it drilled for itself. A wave of rocks and debris radiates out from the park where the ship was planted, and the ship enacts the final phase of its instructions to destroy the Earth.

  If the final conflict scene occurs at this point, skip the second objective of the conflict scene; once the heroes get inside, they see the gravity pulse generator is active and can attempt to shut it down.

WRAPPING UP
- ✦ If the heroes are all defeated or fail the third objective in the final scene, adjust **all of the team's reputation tracks** by −2. Additionally, if you have not already filled out the setting element for **SE27: The Catastrophe**, do so now, using this issue's events as the catastrophe in question.
  - ✧ If the ship plunged into the Earth's crust, the damage the heroes did to the ship before it did so is enough to keep it from destroying the Earth as planned. However, due to its deeper placement, the ship caused earthquakes on a global scale and the devastation is widespread. **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** is removed from their post as a result of this failure. Erase all answers to that setting entry's questions, as well as everything in its Truths box, and create a new Cosmic Liaison. If possible, choose a fitting villain or antagonistic minor character to be the new Cosmic Liaison.
- ✦ If any enemy has "Wielder of Starslayer" in their Truths box and the heroes have "Failed in the defense of Earth" in their team roster's Truths box, at the conclusion of this issue the heroes learn through **NC08: The Cosmic Liaison** that, with the Star Empire's primary armada defeated, the Empire's seat of power was relatively defenseless. That villain arrived at the Empire's throne world, and with their allies they attacked the leader(s) of the Empire and slew them, appointing that villain as the new Emperor. Change the answer to the question "Who Rules the Empire?" in **SE07: The Star Empire** to "Other" and write "Ruled by [the name of the villain]" in that entry's Truths box.
- ✦ If the team roster's Truths box contains "Transporting children of an extinct alien tribe" and the heroes' **Government Reputation** is at 3 or higher, those children are accepted as refugees by the city, though not without resentment from the people of the city. If you have not already filled out **SE19: The Pariahs**, consider doing so using these children as the basis for that setting element. Otherwise, allow the heroes to describe where they relocate the children.