EXPLORERS OF THE UNITED OF THE OFFICE OFFICE

EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN IS A SPECTACULARS SERIES THEMED AROUND SUPER SCIENCE, EXPLORATION, AND INCREDIBLE THREATS OF INHUMAN PROPORTIONS. THIS SERIES HEARKENS BACK TO SILVER AGE STORIES OF ASTRONAUT FAMILIES, INVENTORS, MAD SCIENTISTS, ALIEN INVASIONS, AND ARTIFACTS OF UNKNOWABLE SCIENCE AND INCREDIBLE POWER.

IF THIS IS THE FIRST SPECTACULARS SERIES THAT YOU AND YOUR GROUP PLAN TO PLAY THROUGH, 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 ARE READY TO BEGIN THE FIRST SCENARIO OF THIS SERIES, EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN.

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 RAMPAGING MONSTERS MINION SHEET AND THE ISSUE SHEET TITLED "THE ANOMALY." SET ASIDE THE SERIES PAD FOR NOW.
- □ READ OVER THE ISSUE.
- □ FILL OUT THE RAMPAGING MONSTERS MINION SHEET AND USE THAT SHEET FOR THE ISSUE'S MINIONS.
- □ RUN THE ISSUE!

AFTER YOU FINISH THE FIRST ISSUE, YOU CAN CONTINUE PLAYING SUBSEQUENT ISSUES, ONE AT A TIME, UNTIL YOU ENCOUNTER AN-OTHER 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 SE-RIES, OR OTHER SERIES) FOR THOSE ISSUES.

YOU CAN PLAY ISSUES FROM OTHER SERIES BETWEEN THESE IS-SUES. 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.



Your team of heroes is a family, whether tied by blood or simply by tight bonds of fellowship and love. Examples from popular comics include the Fantastic Four[®] (Marvel), the Titans[®] (DC), the First Family[™] (Astro City), and the Incredibles[®] (Disney/Pixar).

Team Name

THE B	BONDS OF FAMILY What makes your team a family?
	Related by Blood (most or all of the team are blood relatives or have married into the family)
	Endured Hardship (you banded together to support one another through hard times, which solidified you as an adopted family)
	Outsiders (you are all outcasts who found each other when no one else wanted you, becoming surrogate family to one another)
н 	Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)
TEAM	FORMATION What transformed you from a tight-knit group into a team of heroes?
	Legacy of Heroism (some of you were already heroes and inspired the rest)
	Outside Pressure (some external trial pushed you to step into the role of heroes)
	Shared Origin (you all gained your powers from the same event or source)
	□ Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)
LIVING	SITUATION Where does your team live when not dealing with villainous threats?
	High-Rise Building (you rent condos in a skyscraper in the city or own the building outright)
	□ Mansion (you live on a historic, sprawling estate in an older part of the city)
	Squatting (you have been forced to find your own accommodations under less than legal circumstances, hiding in an abandoned building or other city infrastructure)
	□ Suburbs (you have a home or homes outside the city)
	Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)
TRL	JTHS:

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		
Founding Member Active Inactive Deceased I Retired		
Founding Member Active Inactive Deceased Retired		
PUBLIC REPUTATION		
A CONTRACTION (* CONTRACTION)		
<u>-5</u> <u>-4</u> <u>-3</u> <u>-2</u> <u>-1</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u>		
GOVERNMENT REPUTATION		
<u>-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5</u>		



Your team is full of the brightest and boldest minds, heroes who showed great promise in making their mark on the world even before they gained their powers. Examples from popular comics include the Avengers® (Marvel), the Justice League of America® (DC), and the Authority™ (Wildstorm/DC).

Team Name:

TEAM FORMATION What brought the team together originally?
Crisis Response (in the midst of a crisis, someone brought you together to save
the city, or the world, from incredible peril)
Dream Team (after years of working solo, you were brought together to create a team that is both
popular and highly marketable)
Professional Colleagues (you all work in the same or similar fields)
Shared Origin (all your powers came from the same source or incident)
🗅 Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)
MISSION STATEMENT What is the team's overarching mission?
Explore the Frontiers of Science (you seek knowledge and discovery, even at great risk)
Defend Against Advanced Threats (you shield the world from devastatingly powerful foes that the average citizen might never know about)
Shepherd Superhumans (you try to act as a shining example for other heroes to follow)
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)
LIVING SITUATION Where does your team live when not dealing with villainous threats?
Campus (you live on the campus of a university or science/tech company)
High-Rise Building (you live in condos in a skyscraper in the city, or own the building outright)
Mansion (you live on a historic, sprawling estate in an older part of the city)
Sequestered Facility (you live in a remote facility such as an undersea base, an orbital space platform, or a bunker deep within a mountain range)
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)
TRUTHS:
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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		
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Founding Member Active Inactive Deceased Retired		
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Founding Member Active Inactive Deceased Retired		
PUBLIC REPUTATION		
A CONTRACTION (* CONTRACTION)		
<u>-5</u> <u>-4</u> <u>-3</u> <u>-2</u> <u>-1</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u>		
GOVERNMENT REPUTATION		
<u>-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5</u>		

HERO

CONSTRUCT

You are an artificial being, a life form that was made, not born. Though independent and sentient, some still question if you are truly alive. Examples from popular comics include the original Human Torch[®] and the Vision[®] (Marvel), Cyborg[™] and the Metal Men[®] (DC), Spartan[®] (Wildstorm/DC), and Beautie[™] (Astro City).





Real Name:

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I L L S Team:

First Appearance:

NO FRAIL CREATURE OF FLESH AND BONE

You are immune to diseases, poisons, and any other maladies that affect biology. You do not have to breathe and can withstand intense atmospheric pressures or complete vacuum without an environment suit.

IDEN

FEAM

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HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT

RESISTANCE

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POWER

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INOR

POWER

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. \diamond

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.

When you roll 4 boons (🏟 🏟 🏠) on a

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

- 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. \diamond
- 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.

ENERGY BATTERY

Your body stores a particular energy, using it to fuel your powers. This energy suffuses your every cell, and you become more than just container for that energy; you become that energy. Examples from popular comics include the Human Torch® and Iceman® (Marvel), and Captain Atom[™] and the Ray[™] (DC).







MONSTER

You are a hero, but others see you as a monster. You have been changed by your superpowers, and not entirely for the better. Examples from popular comics include Man-Thing®, Beast®, the Hulk®, and the Thing® (Marvel), Blue Devil[™], the Demon[™], and Swamp Thing[®] (DC), Maul[®] (Wildstorm/DC), and Pitt[™] (Image).







SUPER SOLDIER

You are a warrior whose physical strength, stature, and physical capability well exceed the normal human maximums. You were trained for combat and are a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. Examples from popular comics include Captain America® and Mockingbird® (Marvel), and SuperPatriot® (Image).

MILITARY HISTORY	PERSO	NALITY TRAITS
 What kind of combat training do you have? Mercenary (you were a soldier of fortune, learning how to fight ald Military Service (you served in an official military capacity and receive training during your tours of duty) Special Program (you trained to use your powers in a dedicated Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) 	ed (Chari program) (Chari Cold Com Dutif Grim	ismatic D No-Nonsense D Outgoing manding D Stoic ful D
 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) 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? Advanced Healing (you regenerate wounds too quickly to see) Danger Sense (a sixth sense warns you of incoming attacks) Training (your combat training allows you to turn lethal attacks into mere glancing blows) Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) 		
 GETTING AROUND How does this character quickly move from one place to another? 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) Vehicle (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme) Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) 		



PONNER AVERAGE PILOT You wear a suit of powered armor that turns you into a walking tank. Your superpowers are the result of the suit's technology. Examples from popular comics include Iron Man[®] and War Machine[®] (Marvel), X-O Manowar[®]

HERO



Real Name:

∻

Team:







INVENTOR

You are a creator, someone who looks at the technology of the world and uses it for the forces of good. Your superpowers are your inventions, and you are constantly tweaking them, upgrading them, and redesigning them. Examples from popular comics include Mr. Fantastic[™] and Hank Pym[™] (Marvel), and the Atom[™] and Mr. Terrific[™] (DC).





RESISTANCE

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

- Remove 1 time token (③) 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.)
- \diamond 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

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INOR

POWER

When you roll 4 boons (**A A A A**) 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.
- \diamond Halve all damage you would take.
- $\diamond~$ 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.

MINIONS RAMPAGING MONSTERS

These monstrous minions appear out of nowhere and go on a rampage. Whatever their origins, they offer only violence to the world around them. Examples include the Chitauri[™] (Marvel), Parademons[™] (DC), and the walkers (Image).

NAME:

APPEARANCE		
What do these minions look like?	-	
Alien (they are vaguely humanoid, but clearly from another planet or realm)	TRUTHS	
Demonic (they are terrifying creatures from a hellish other dimension)		
Grotesquely Mutated (although monstrous now, they were obviously once human)		
Robotic (they are robots, cyborgs, or some other kind of clearly technological beings)		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
ARRIVAL		
How do they show up on the scene?		
Burrowing (they claw their way up to the surface from underground)		
Mutating Bystanders (ordinary people suddenly transform into these creatures)		
Portals (they leap out of rifts in space or time)		
Uehicle (they emerge from strange vehicles, such as		
hovering ships, hibernation chambers, or travel cocoons)		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
DRIVE		
What drives these minions to attack?		
Endless Rage (an anger that cannot be suppressed fills them and they direct it at anyone who stands in their path)		
Mindless Devotion (they zealously follow unknown orders)		
Ravenous Hunger (they seek to satiate a devouring need to co	onsume)	
Tormented Confusion (they are clearly confused or in pain a		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
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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).

D 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.

LARGE

Physical attacks against these minions intended to hinder or debilitate add 2 challenge dice (🆇 🍫) to the roll.

□ OUR NUMBERS ARE ENDLESS

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

□ STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

While the squad's size is 2 or greater, melee attacks against these minions add 2 challenge dice (🏈 🌑) to the roll.

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.

□ 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.

l 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.

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.

U VULNERABILITY:

Choose a common element, material, form of energy, or force as these minions' weakness, and record it in the box above. If an attack against these minions makes use of that vulnerability, on a hit reduce the size of the squad by an additional 2 minions.

SCENARIO THE ANOMALY EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #1

This issue opens with an attack by monstrous creatures on the heart of the downtown area. The monsters seem to have no goal or purpose other than wreaking havoc, putting hundreds of innocent civilians in danger. The heroes need to deal with these monsters, stopping them before they can spread their violence to other parts of the city. In the opening scene, heroes face the following opposition:

- ♦ One squad of **Rampaging Monsters** minions of a size equal to the number of heroes.
- ♦ One larger-than-average monster, a minor villain with 50 resistance, 1 initiative card, and a single attack (which should match the description for the minions' attacks) that has a 75% chance of success and deals damage equal to the number rolled.

The scene ends when all these enemies have been defeated.

- ◆ Complication (□ □): Since the attack takes place during the middle of the day, crowds of innocent bystanders need to be rescued before the monsters can get to them. There are two major groups of bystanders: one taking refuge behind a tour bus, and another group huddled in a diner nearby.
- ◆ Complication (□ □): The monsters' attack inflicts large amounts of collateral damage to nearby buildings. One building's glass facade has been cracked, and the crack is growing rapidly. Additionally, the monsters' rampage in a nearby construction site ignited a fire that now spreads toward volatile chemical tanks at the site. If the fire reaches the tanks, the explosion will be catastrophic.
- Scene Details: A fuel tanker refilling the storage tanks at a corner gas station, a construction crane next to the skeleton of a new high-rise, hundreds of cars jammed together in traffic and abandoned, broken fire hydrants spraying water.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

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

THE PREVIOUS INCURSION SITES

- The first time these rampaging monsters appeared, it was in an underground transit center, which has been closed for repairs by the city. The second time, it was in the dead of night in a warehouse district.
- After both incursions, the police worked to keep knowledge of the monsters a secret under directions from the city government, to avoid a panic.
 - ✤ Government Reputation: If the team has a Government Reputation score of 3 or higher, an ally in the police force approaches the heroes of their own accord, sharing information on all the incursion sites.
- Successfully investigating these sites lets the heroes guess the time and location of the next incursion (at the city's **sports arena**, during a game) by comparing the time between the first and second incursions and the incursion the heroes dealt with, then plotting their distance and direction on a map.

RESEARCHING THE INCURSION SOURCE

- If any heroes put effort into researching the source of the incursion, they learn that they are being caused by the SE01: The Powerful Artifact. Possible avenues for this research include analyzing scientific readings taken at the scene, interviewing eyewitnesses for strange occurrences before the incursion, and examining the remains of defeated monsters. The data gathered from such research should point the heroes toward the Powerful Artifact, which is believed to be a purely pseudoscientific legend.
- The Powerful Artifact is periodically referenced in pseudoscientific journals and writings dating back to the 3rd century, when it is referenced in the same texts as the Philosopher's Stone and other alchemical marvels. References to the Powerful Artifact surface in books and documents every few hundred years thereafter.
- The Powerful Artifact is likely not capable of causing the incursions on its own; something must be manipulating the Powerful Artifact and causing the incursions.

THE RAMPAGING MONSTERS

- Any reasonable investigation or analysis of the monsters can reveal relevant information about their nature, their perks, and their weaknesses.
- One additional fact becomes clear on investigation: there is something not just unearthly about these creatures, but extradimensional. They give off energy readings consistent with research that has been done into Parallel Dimensions.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

By the time the heroes have dealt with the monsters downtown, the mysterious force behind the incursions has already put the next step of their plan into motion. The device that harnesses the power of the Powerful Artifact has been planted deep in a maintenance room underneath the city's **sports arena**, the site of the next incursion.

If you have not done so already, fill out the Setting Book sheet for **SE01: The Powerful Artifact** the first time one of the heroes can see it or otherwise comes into contact with it.

Whenever the heroes intervene in this sequence of events, they face the following opposition:

- ♦ One squad of Rampaging Monsters minions of a size equal to 4 + the number of heroes.
- Two larger-than-average monsters, minor villains with 50 resistance, 1 initiative card, and a single attack (which should match the description for the minions' attacks) that has a 75% chance of success and deals damage equal to the number rolled.

THE DEVICE STARTS POWERING UP 🗆 🗅 🗅

The device housing the Powerful Artifact begins its slow powering-up sequence. During this time, it draws power from the city's electric grid and channels it into the Powerful Artifact. The device is set to begin causing incursions at the game's start or when tampered with, whichever occurs first. If the heroes arrive and intervene at this point, they avoid any potential complications from innocent bystanders in the arena.

◆ Objective (□ □ □): The machine needs to be shut down. Otherwise, it continues to cause incursions. This objective can be accomplished by physically removing the Powerful Artifact from its housing, disrupting it with a super-science device of some kind, or overloading it with a huge surge of power.

FANS BEGIN FILING INTO THE STADIUM

At this point, fans begin arriving at the stadium, filling seats while the teams warm up.

- ◆ **Objective:** Include the objective from the "The Device Starts Powering Up" step.
- ◆ Complication (□ □ □, Critical): A crowd of bystanders (sporting event attendees) is endangered by the monsters.
 ∻ Failure: Adjust the following reputation tracks in this way: Public –1.

THE START OF THE GAME

The game begins and the device starts causing incursions. If the events reach this point before the heroes intervene, they are alerted to the attack by media broadcasts of the chaos at the stadium.

- ◆ **Objective:** Include the objective from the "The Device Starts Powering Up" step.
- ◆ Complication (□ □ □ □ □, Critical): A very large crowd of bystanders (sporting event attendees) is endangered by the monsters. Worse, because the game is about to begin, the incursion is broadcast on national television. If the heroes fail to get people to safety, it will be widely publicized.

ESCALATION: THEY JUST KEEP COMING!

After all the Rampaging Monsters are defeated, the device causes another incursion, adding one more size 5 squad of minions to the scene every other enemy turn until the Objective is complete.

WRAPPING UP

- If any heroes came into physical contact with the Powerful Artifact, the one who was in contact with it the most gains a lasting repercussion: Tainted by [the name of your Powerful Artifact].
- The heroes need to decide what to do with the Powerful Artifact, which is too dangerous and too difficult for the heroes to reasonably hold onto without endangering others. Their major options boil down to:
 - Dispose of It: The Artifact cannot be destroyed by conventional means, but the heroes might find some creative way to get rid of it such that it no longer poses a danger to humanity. Add a description of how the Powerful Artifact was disposed of to the Truths section of the Powerful Artifact's setting sheet.
 - Turn it Over to the Authorities: If the heroes turn it over to the authorities, they place it in the hands of the SE03: The Government Agency. Adjust the team's Government Reputation track by +1. Add "In the care of [the name of your Government Agency]" to the Truths section of the Powerful Artifact's setting sheet.
 - Turn it Over to a Lab for Study: If the heroes turn it over to a scientific laboratory for containment and study, they place it in the hands of the SE02: The Super Science Lab. Add "Being researched by [the name of your Super Science Lab]" to the Truths section of the Powerful Artifact's setting sheet.
 - ★ Try to Hold Onto It: If, for some reason, the heroes are determined to hold onto the Powerful Artifact, despite the
 risks associated with it, add "In possession of [the name of your Powerful Artifact]" to the Truths section of the
 team roster. Adjust the team's Government Reputation track by -2.





This villain uses their genius and their technology for selfish or malicious reasons. Though they may possess an incredible scientific mind, it has been warped by their willingness to commit evil acts. Examples include Dr. Octopus® (Marvel), Mr. Freeze® (DC), and Baxter Stockman[™] (Mirage).

NAME:

VILLAINOUS TURN	
What drove such a promising and intelligent person to villainy?	TRUTHS
Failure (a moment of triumph turned into an embarrassing failure)	TRUTHS
Professional Envy (they were constantly in the shadow of another scientist)	
Tragedy (some tragic event drove them mad)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
NATURE OF INVENTIONS	
What aesthetics and field do this villain's inventions usually adhere to?	
Biology (they tinker with the fundamental building blocks of life)	
 Guns & Gear (this villain invents personal equipment) Robotics (the villain makes extensive use of drones and other autonomous robots) 	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
VICTIM OF THEIR OWN TECHNOLOGY	
How has the villain's flawed inventions left them permanently disfigured?	
Fused Flesh (a piece of the villain's technology is permanently fused into their body)	
Mutated (the villain's body has been mutated by exposure to some aspect of their technology)	
Stasis Suit (the villain must wear a life support suit powered by their technology)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
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	not imply an endorsement of or a relationship with Scratchpad Publishing LLC.
FIRST APPEARANCE	
CURRENT STATUS: 📜 At Large 💭 Incarcerated	Deceased 💭 Reformed 💭 Exilec

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.

When this villain hits a hero with an attack, add 2 advantage dice (🍥 🍙) to the roll immediately.

CUTTING-EDGE INVENTIONS

At the start of each scene the villain participates in, draw one card from the Deck of Powers. The villain has technology that lets them use that power to make checks and attacks with a 75% chance of success; the villain cannot use any other benefits on the card. Discard the power at the end of the scene.

🗆 FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

L L L I HAVE STUDIED MY ENEMIES

At any time during an issue, choose a power possessed by one of the heroes, then describe an invention or technique the villain possesses that is capable of thwarting that power. For the rest of the issue, any hero who uses that power to attack this villain adds 2 challenge dice (

U WELL-EQUIPPED GOONS

When the villain participates in a scene while aided by minions, ignore one weakness of those minions.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

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

BLINDED BY EGO

At the start of any issue that features this villain, choose a second weakness for each type of minion serving this villain.

□ FLAWED INVENTIONS

Add 1 challenge die (📣) to all rolls made to attack with a piece of this villain's technology.

FRAGMENTED MIND

After taking damage, the villain has a 50% chance of using their action on their next turn to attack one of their allies.

D PHYSICALLY FRAIL

Melee attacks made against this villain add 2 advantage dice (🏟 🏟) to the roll instead of 1.



This group of minor villains has banded together to commit crimes, pooling their resources and strength to overpower the authorities who might stand in their way. Examples from popular comics include the Frightful Four[™] and the Sinister Six[™] (Marvel), and the Royal Flush Gang[™] and the Rogues[™] (DC).

TEAM NAME:

BONDS OF VILLAINY	
What brought these villains together as a gang?	
Family (the villains are all related by blood or marriage)	TRUTHS
Shared Origin (the villains all gained their powers from the same event, or get the technology they use from the same source)	
Villainous Team-Up (the villains all operated independently once and eventually decided to work together)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
ULTIMATE GOAL	
What do these villains strive to achieve?	
Authority (these villains seek to dominate and rule)	
Fame (they seek renown, to be known as the greatest criminal masterminds of all time)	
Urread the se villains want revenge on a hero or team)	
Wealth (the villains want to become rich)	
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 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)	
	All character names are property of their respective owners, and their use does
	not imply an endorsement of or a relationship with Scratchpad Publishing LLC.

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 a villain attacks 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.

NAME:

SUPERPOWER (75%):

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

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.



TECH GOONS

These minions serve a powerful, technologically advanced villain or group of villains. They accompany the villain or villains that sponsor them and do their master's bidding at all times. While they may not be unswervingly loyal, they are willing to take great risks for their master or masters.

NAME:

FUNDAMENTAL NATURE		
What is the nature of this crew of technologically		
enhanced goons?		
Cybernetically Enhanced Criminals (these minions willingly accepted cybernetic enhancements from the villains they serve)	TRUTHS	
Enslaved Civilians (innocent citizens pressed into service against their will)		
Gene-Spliced Hybrids (bestial and servile human-animal hybrids)		
Robots/Drones (automatons crafted by the evil scientist)		
Subhuman Clones (human genetic duplicates that have been bioengineered)		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
DEMEANOR		
How do these minions behave while they do the villain's bidding?		
Disciplined (they act with precision, following orders quickly and precisely)		
Mindless (their free will has been fully suppressed and they follow orders like automatons)		
Reckless (they go about their assigned tasks with little care for their own safety)		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
DEFEAT		
How do these minions react when beaten by the heroes?		
Disintegration (they collapse into a puddle of protoplasmic goo)		
Liberation (they break free of the villain's control, seeming to co	me to their senses)	
□ Malfunction (the technology that created them fails in a specta	cular fashion)	
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).

D 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

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.

When these minions are up close to a villain who 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.

QUICK

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 forward toward the start of the track.

MINION WEAKNESS

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

LAST MINION STANDING

Any hit against a squad of size 2 or less defeats the squad.

D 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.

SELF-PRESERVATION

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

SMALL-MINDED

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

SCENARIO SKY-HIGH AMBITIONS EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #2

This issue opens at the height of the business day as dozens of police officers and first responders rush to the **government building** defined in "The Basics" section of your Setting Book. A band of evil minions have invaded the building, taken hostages, and started setting up strange devices throughout the building's interior.

- In the opening scene, the heroes face the following opposition:
 - $\diamond\,$ One squad of **Tech Goons** minions of a size equal to 2 \times the number of heroes.
 - ♦ One tech goon leader, a minor villain with 100 resistance and a single attack (which should match the description for the minions' attacks) that has a 75% chance of success.
- ◆ Objective (□ □ □, Opposed □ □ □): The minions have spread throughout the building to set up strangelooking devices that resemble oversized turtle shells, which they clamp onto metal support beams at key structural points. These devices emit radiation, if any heroes can detect it. The heroes' objective is to disable the devices. The enemies' objective is to finish setting up the devices. The minions can advance the enemy objective each round.
- ◆ Complication (□ □): The government employees who were in the building when the minions arrived have been taken hostage and need to be rescued.
- Scene Details: Exposed steel support beams, chunks ripped out of the walls, minions wearing wristmounted Geiger counters, dozens of police cars creating a perimeter around the building, a police helicopter circling overhead.

ESCALATION: THE SOARING BUILDING

If the enemies succeed in the objective, the entire building rumbles and shakes as it rips free of its foundations and begins ascending rapidly into the sky. In seconds, the entire building hurtles toward the upper atmosphere. If this happens, the scene gains a new objective:

- ◆ Objective (□ □ □): The building continues to soar into the sky, headed for low Earth orbit. The heroes must find a way to bring it safely down to the ground. Alternatively, the heroes can choose to completely ignore this objective and abandon the building to its fate, in which case they fail this objective.
 - Failure: The building ascends to orbit and remains there until it breaks apart a few weeks from now. Adjust the team's Government Reputation track by −1.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

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

THE CONVERSION DEVICES

A scientific analysis of the devices yields the following important information:

- ◆ The devices converted the metal in the building's infrastructure to push against gravity.
- ◆ The devices use large amounts of radioactive material to initiate the conversion.
- ♦ A sufficiently large source of radiation could mass convert huge amounts of metal very rapidly.

THE TECH GOONS

- ◆ If the heroes capture any of the goons alive, they can interrogate them to extract some information. The goons know very little: the villain(s) who gave them their orders wanted them to plant the anti-grav conversion devices on the building as a final test of the devices' capabilities.
- The goons know the location of the nuclear waste disposal facility that has in recent weeks been serving as their base of operations. They can direct the heroes there if sufficiently convinced. They do not know where the villain(s) and the rest of their compatriots will strike next.

THE SUPER SCIENCE LAB

- At the end of the opening scene, the heroes are approached by two scientists from SE02: The Super Science Lab. They have secured permission to take the anti-grav converter devices back to their lab for study.
- ◆ If a hero wants to go back to their lab with them, that hero adds 2 advantage dice (▲) (▲) to any rolls made to study the anti-grav conversion devices while at the lab.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The villain plans to cause a meltdown at the city's nuclear power plant, where a new, massive version of the anti-grav converter will absorb the blast of radiation and use it to convert all the steel in the city into anti-gravity material. This will cause the entire city to rip from the Earth and ascend into the sky.

Choose one of the following options as the villains' motivation for enacting this plan:

- Domain in the Sky: The villain wants to transform the city into a floating domain from which they can threaten other civilizations.
- The Greatest Ransom: The villain plans to hold the entire population of the city hostage, ransoming individuals and small groups for huge sums of cash over the course of years or decades.
- Sanctuary for Villains: The villain plans to turn the floating city into a safe haven for other villains, a place from which wanted criminals can never be extradited.

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

- The villain or villains of the issue, either the Mad Scientist villain or the Villainous Gang minor villains. The villain or villains have 1 initiative card per hero.
- \diamond One squad of the **Tech Goons** minions of a size equal to 2 × the number of heroes.
- This climactic scene ends when all the villains are defeated or have fled.

ABANDON THE NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL SITE D

The villain has been using a condemned nuclear waste disposal site as their headquarters. The villain strips down what little is left in the facility before moving out.

TRANSPORT GOONS AND DEVICES ACROSS THE CITY 🗆 🗆

The villain loads their goons and the new anti-grav megaconverter into the back of a stolen semitruck. The villain and crew make their way across the city, headed for the power plant.

- ◆ Complication (□ □ □, Critical): The route takes the truck through downtown. When confronted, the villain cuts loose some barrels of nuclear waste, which tumble into traffic.
 - Failure: Traffic helicopters capture the footage of the entire engagement, and media pundits accuse the heroes of provoking the villain in a crowded area and acting recklessly. Adjust the team's Media Reputation track by -1.

SEIZE CONTROL OF THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT D

The villain overwhelms the plant's security and sets up a temporary base of operations.

- - Fully Resolved: As it turns out, hostage situations and potential catastrophic nuclear meltdowns make for excellent theater. Freeing the hostages makes for great television and earns the heroes a brief moment in the spotlight. Adjust the team's Media Reputation track by +1.

TRIGGER A REACTOR MELTDOWN

The final stage of the villain's plan involves triggering the reactor meltdown to fuel the converter.

- ◆ Complication: Include the complication from the "Seize Control of the Nuclear Power Plant" step.
- ◆ Objective (□ □ □, Enemy): The villain attempts to cause a meltdown at the power plant by disabling safety mechanisms and causing damage to the reactor. They smash equipment, deactivate machinery, rip open containment units, and generally wreak havoc, all so that the excess radiation will be absorbed into the massive anti-grav converter.

ESCALATION: THE MELTDOWN

If the villain succeeds in the objective at the nuclear power plant, the plant begins to melt down, When this happens, the anti-grav converter sends waves of energy out into the city, starting the conversion. Earthquakes ripple through the city, and some small pieces of metal (personal items, dumpsters, scooters, and so on) are quickly converted and soar into the sky. The heroes' only hope of saving the city is to destroy the anti-grav megaconverter (the device has 100 resistance).

WRAPPING UP

- If the heroes capture the villain, they can turn the villain over to the government (SE03: The Government Agency), adjusting the team's Government Reputation track by +1.
- ◆ If the villain of this issue was the Mad Scientist, and if any of the heroes has a science-related identity or has the inventor archetype, that hero gains a new lasting repercussion: Vengeance of [the villain's name]. If no hero meets those criteria, choose the hero who had the most impact on the final scene.



ALIEN INVADERS

They have come to Earth for reasons unknown, but one thing is for certain: they are not friendly. These aliens care little for the safety of the people of the city and possess the technology of an interstellar civilization.

NAME:

APPEARANCE	_	
What do these minions look like?		
D Not Quite Human (they mostly look like humans but have	TRUTHS	
one major distinguishing difference, such as blue skin, quills	TROTTE	
for hair, or ridged foreheads)		
Insectoid (their ancestors evolved from insects, giving them a truly alien physiology)		
Monstrously Muscular (they are bulky, strong, and physically superior to most humans)		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
TECHNOLOGY		
What form does their advanced technology take?		
Biotech (their technology is based on advanced biology,		
making each piece look like a living organism or a part of one)		
Blocky & Utilitarian (all their technology is built purely with function, not form, in mind)		
Sleek & Futuristic (their technology is aerodynamic and aesthetically appealing)		
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)		
COMMUNICATION		
How do the aliens communicate with each other?		
Alien Language (they bark and grunt at each other in a guttural alien tongue)		
Buzzes and Clicks (their language consists of noises like clicking, buzzing, and humming)		
Lilting Tones (they whistle, hoot, and communicate through sounds that sound musical to the human ear)		
Telepathy (they possess no mouths, communicating only through the second seco	ugh telepathic messages)	

• 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).

D 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.

DEATH BLOW

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

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.

SWARMING

When these minions hit a hero with an attack, move that hero's initiative card 2 spaces toward the end of the initiative 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.

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

D 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.

l 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.

For each drawback this squad rolls, reduce the squad's size by 1.

SCENARIO THE REFUGEE, PART A EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #3

The city's work day is interrupted when the media begins reporting that alien spacecraft have broken atmosphere over the city. It quickly becomes apparent that there are two factions of aliens, with one ship (heavily damaged, trailing smoke, and clearly in the process of crashing) being pursued by several ships from the opposing faction who are firing their weapons with lethal intent.

When the heroes intervene, they face the following opposition:

- ♦ One alien scout ship per hero player in the scene; each craft is a minor villain with 100 resistance, 1 initiative card, and laser cannons (ranged attack, 70% chance of success, deals damage equal to the number rolled).
- \diamond Also add 1 Hazard initiative card to the initiative deck, representing the crashing ship.

The scene ends when all the enemy ships are defeated, or when the Hazard initiative card comes up four times. See the section labeled "The Crashing Ship" below.

- ◆ Complication (□ □ □, Critical): Hopelessly outmatched fighter jets have scrambled from a nearby military base and are attempting to intercept the alien ships. The jets are no match for the alien ships and will surely be destroyed if the heroes do not intervene. Each time this Complication initiative card comes up, the alien ships shoot down one of the jets.
 - ♦ Government Reputation: If the team has a Government Reputation score of 3 or higher, any attempts to progress this complication by persuading the pilots to give up pursuit (or convince their commanders to recall the jets entirely) gain 2 advantage dice (()) on the roll.
 - \Rightarrow *Failure*: Adjust the team's **Government Reputation** track by -1.
- ◆ Complication (□ □): A news helicopter has joined the chase to get footage of the crashing ship and its pursuers. The helicopter is in danger of getting too close to the action, putting the film crew's lives in danger. The helicopter needs to be removed from the combat area and gotten to safety. The first success gets the helicopter out of the path of the crashing ship; the second gets it away from the pursuing scout craft.
 - Fully Resolved: Adjust the team's Media Reputation track by +1 as their intervention makes the news footage thrilling and puts the heroes on center stage.
 - ✤ Not Fully Resolved: The helicopter suffers some damage in the chase, but the pilot lands the helicopter safely. Unfortunately, the footage of the aerial chase and the heroes' action is blurry and useless.
- Scene Details: The acrid smell of the crashing ship's smoke trail, the crashing ship clipping tall buildings as it flies over the city, thick clouds that obscure the pursuing scout ships.

THE CRASHING SHIP

- The crashing ship, which trails acrid black smoke as it passes over the city, is clearly going to crash down into the city.
- Each time the Hazard initiative card comes up, check off one of the boxes next to The Crashing Ship header, and describe how the ship's predicament becomes more dire: chunks of the ship ripping off and flying away, explosions inside the ship sending it hurtling on a different course, and smoke erupting from brand-new holes in the hull.
- When all four boxes are checked, the ship crashes into the city and the scene ends. If any of the pursuing scout ships are still in the scene, they attempt to flee out of the atmosphere. If the heroes pursue, you can continue the conflict scene, though there is little for the heroes to gain by pursuing.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

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

THE ALIEN SCOUT SHIPS

- The alien ships are small pursuit craft that accommodate a single pilot and up to four passengers (or prisoners).
 Each one is slightly larger than a garbage truck.
- The crafts are short-range only and incapable of interstellar travel, suggesting a larger mothership somewhere in the solar system.
- The controls to pilot such a ship are alien in detail but familiar in function. Though a human pilot can't just jump into the cockpit and fly it without difficulty, they might become familiar enough with it through experimentation and research to manage.

THE SHIP CRASH SITE

- ◆ When the refugee ship crashes, it remains largely intact, though damaged beyond the ability to fly.
- An inspection of the ship interior reveals that its escape pod bay is empty. Subsequent analysis of news or security camera footage could reveal where the cloaked escape pod was jettisoned.
- If the heroes take the time to secure the crash site until the SE03: The Government Agency arrives to take things under control, adjust the team's Government Reputation track by +1. If they do not, add the following to the Truths box of SE02: The Super Science Lab: "In possession of alien technology."

THE ESCAPE POD

- The escape pod jettisoned from the crashing ship and landed atop a crumbling building in the city's roughest area, SE04: The Bad Neighborhood.
- The residents of the building, distrustful of the authorities, did not rush to call it in, and instead began inspecting the escape pod's landing site themselves. Some fragments of alien tech have already made their way away from the crash site.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The heroes may have stopped or scared off the alien invaders initially, but this won't keep them away from the surface for long. Indeed, they are merely regrouping before heading back down to the planet, more stealthily this time, to find the escape pod. The following sequence of events describes the things that happen as the aliens search for the escape craft. Whenever the heroes come into conflict with the alien searchers, they face the following opposition:

- ♦ One squad of Alien Invaders minions of a size equal to 2 × the number of heroes in the scene.
- ✤ Two alien taskmaster minor villains, who each have 100 resistance, 1 initiative card, and attacks of the same general description as the Alien Invader minions in the scene, but with a 75% chance of success and dealing damage equal to the number rolled.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated.

THE ALIENS RETREAT AND REGROUP

Any aliens that survived the chase for the crashing ship retreat, leaving the atmosphere and returning to the alien mothership in their scout craft. A small number of stealth scout craft return to the surface a short while later, landing surreptitiously in the city. The invaders realize that the ship must have jettisoned an escape pod that would have landed in the city, and they attempt to stealthily scour the city without alerting the heroes.

THE ALIENS SEARCH FOR THE ESCAPE POD 🗅 🗅

The aliens begin their search through the city. Since they do not wish to be detected by the heroes, they attempt to be stealthy and avoid notice by normal citizens; their cloaked ships land and the aliens creep through alleys and skulk in the shadows to avoid notice, at least until the heroes intervene.

◆ Complication (□ □ □): Various civilians are put into danger by the searching aliens. A couple out on a date accidentally stumbles across the alien searchers; a startled pair of security guards opens fire on the alien search party, causing a panic; aliens put a car full of civilians in danger to distract the heroes. In each case, the civilians need to be gotten to safety.

THE ALIENS FORTIFY THE AREA AROUND THE ESCAPE POD .

The aliens locate the escape pod and realize that it is deeply embedded in the building, requiring some effort to free it. They begin fortifying the area with improvised defenses, preparing to defend themselves against anyone that tries to come claim the escape pod.

THE ALIENS CRACK OPEN THE POD

Having fully fortified the rooftop, the aliens begin the laborious process of dislodging the escape pod, intending to crack it open. They have enslaved the inhabitants of the building and are using them as forced labor to free the escape pod.

◆ Complication (□ □ □ □ □ □, Critical): The enslaved citizens must be freed from the clutches of the aliens that are holding them hostage. Each time this Complication initiative card comes up, crew members from invisible scout ships drag some of the enslaved citizens on board the ships, carrying them off as they retreat to the mothership.
◇ Failure: Adjust the team's Public Reputation track by -1.

WRAPPING UP

The issue should end on a cliffhanger as the escape pod opens with a hiss, but what—or rather who—is inside is a secret that must wait until the next issue to resolve.

ALIEN REFUGEE

HERO

You are not of the Earth. You were born on a distant planet and came to this world as an exile from your people. When you arrived, you discovered that among the humans you had incredible powers that you can use to be a hero. Examples from popular comics include Mar-Vell[™] and Noh-Varr[™] (Marvel), and Martian Manhunter[™] (DC).






The leader of an alien invasion, this commander is more than just a military commander-they are the mind behind an entire invasion force. They are powerful, command legions of troops, and interstellar vessels cross the vastness of space at their command. Examples include Kang the Conqueror[™] and Annihilus[™] (Marvel), and Mongul[™] (DC).

NAME:

How does the alien commander view Earth and its people? A Plague of Rodents (humans are vermin to be exterminated) Primitive and Unsophisticated (humans are savages, barely worth the effort to fight) Worthy Adversaries (humans are resourceful and tenacious, and a conflict with them is to be relished) Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) Mhat is the alien commander's greatest ambition? AMEITION What is the alien commander's greatest ambition? AACENSION to Godhood (amass enough power to undergo apotheosis) Galactic Domination (conquer the civilized plants of the galaxy and bring them under the empire's banner) Genocide (purge the galaxy of races unfit for the empire's glory) Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) Role IN THE EMPIRE What role does the alien commander fill in the space empire? Arrogant Noble (the commander leads by birthright and views their subordinates as lessers) Calculating Strategist (cold and intelligent, their successes are the result of careful planning and precise execution) Raging Warlord (driven by anger and hatred, the commander leads a crusade of conquest across the galaxy) Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	EARTH ATTITUDES	
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All character names are property of their respective owners, and their use does not imply an endorsement of or a relationship with Scratchpad Publishing LLC.		

CURRENT STATUS: 1 At Large 1 Incarcerated 1 Deceased 1 Reformed 1 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.

🗆 FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

C I I HAVE STUDIED MY ENEMIES

At any time during an issue, choose a power possessed by one of the heroes, then describe an invention or technique the villain possesses capable of thwarting that power. For the rest of the issue, any hero who uses that power to attack this villain adds 2 challenge dice (

L LAY THEM ALL LOW

As an action, the villain makes an area attack using their superpower, adding +20 to the damage of each hit.

TACTICAL FAMILIARITY

Teamwork maneuvers performed on attacks against this enemy also add 2 challenge dice (📣 📣) to the roll.

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 ARROGANCE

When this villain deals 30 or more damage in a single attack to a hero whose initiative card is face-down, move that hero's initiative card to the end of the initiative track and turn it face-up. That hero can take another turn when their initiative card comes up again.

CAUGHT UP IN A MONOLOGUE

The first action the villain takes in each round must be to deliver an intimidating monologue. This is a mental attack made against each hero who can hear the villain that has a 50% chance of success. This attack cannot reduce a hero to below 30 resistance.

C 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.

TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

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

SCENARIO THE REFUGEE, PART 2 EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #4

Before this issue begins, have one of the players create a new hero using the **Alien Refugee** archetype. This character was in the escape pod jettisoned from the crashing alien ship in *Explorers of the Unknown* #3. Work with that player to provide them with information for this issue that they can relay to the other players.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

This issue opens where issue #3 left off, with the escape pod opening and revealing the Alien Refugee inside. After a few moments of disorientation, the exile can provide the following information to the heroes.

- The exile was fleeing the aliens, who are part of a scout force for SE07: The Star Empire, for some reason (work with the player to figure out what that reason is) and is seeking to hide out on a "backwater" planet like Earth.
- Having now missed their opportunity to capture the exile, the other aliens will stop at nothing to kill the exile, even if it means leveling the city with the mothership's weapons.
- The mothership above Earth is commanded by a somewhat rogue Alien Commander; if he and the mothership can be neutralized, it is unlikely that backup will be sent.
- The mothership can sustain huge amounts of damage without being destroyed. The only sure-fire way to completely destroy it is to trigger a self-destruct, which can only be done from the bridge.

The heroes can obtain data about the mothership from both the Alien Refugee and any terrestrial methods they think to use. Each successful interlude can arm them with a piece of foreknowledge of one challenge or enemy that they are going to have to deal with in their attack on the ship, allowing them to prepare contingencies in advance. Be sure to be generous in handing out advantage dice during subsequent interludes and conflict scenes if one of the contingencies the heroes concoct is relevant.

DESTROYING THE INVADERS' MOTHERSHIP

It's up to the heroes to come up with a plan to reach the alien mothership, board it, and destroy it, and there are many ways they could go about doing so. There are four challenges listed below that the heroes need to deal with in some way. Though the specific approach to those challenges is up to the heroes, any reasonable solution should have a shot at working.

Up until the heroes reach the mothership's bridge, no challenge requires the heroes to take part in a conflict scene; the heroes are free to use stealth, subterfuge, creative uses of their powers, and any other skills they might possess to reach the bridge without fighting. If things go badly during a scene, or if the heroes decide to take a direct approach that would lead them naturally into a fight, you can create a quick conflict scene with a squad of **Alien Invaders** minions of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2.

For each of these challenges, when the heroes overcome it, reward the hero most responsible for overcoming it with an extra hero point in "The Battle on the Bridge" (see below).

GET INTO SPACE

The first obstacle that the heroes have in front of them is getting into space. Let the heroes decide how they plan to get from Earth up to the mothership; any reasonable solution should work, including repairing one of the alien ships, convincing the government to send them up into space in a rocket, creatively using their powers, or designing a spacefaring vessel of their own.

If the heroes acquire their own personal spaceworthy vehicle, you can make that vehicle a permanent asset for the team. The craft has 400 resistance and can attempt to attack with its weapons (physical or laser damage), sneak by undetected, or outrun something with a 60% chance of success.

GET PAST THE MOTHERSHIP'S DEFENSES

The mothership is armed with extremely precise sensors, advanced weaponry, and shielding systems. The heroes must find a way to get inside the ship's shields; a single successful attempt is all that is necessary. If they attempt to sneak up to the ship, they need to deal with its sensors. If they choose a more direct assault, or an attempt to sneak up on the ship fails, they need to deal with the mothership's weapons. A single successful attempt is all that is necessary to slip past the sensors. If the ship fires on the heroes, begin a conflict scene with 1 Hazard initiative card. When that initiative card comes up, the mothership attacks the heroes with a 90% chance of success. Treat this as an objective that requires three successful attempts to complete.

LAND ON THE MOTHERSHIP

Once inside the shields and past the weapons or sensors, the heroes need to breach the ship. Some possible avenues the heroes can explore include landing in one of the ship's landing bays and fighting their way past the bay's crew, attaching to the hull and carving their way in, or ramming their ship through one of the thin places in the hull. A single successful attempt is all that is necessary to land on the ship.

RESCUE THE IMPRISONED HUMANS (OPTIONAL)

If any humans were captured by the alien invaders in issue #3, they are imprisoned in cells on the mothership. The heroes must locate the prison (requiring a single successful attempt), and then rescue the prisoners. There is a single squad of **Alien Invaders** minions of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2 on duty in the prison area; defeating them allows the heroes to open the cells and rescue the prisoners inside.

LOCATE THE BRIDGE AND MAKE IT THERE

The mothership is both labyrinthine and constructed by alien architects for crews with alien minds, and finding the bridge is not as intuitive as it would be on a human ship. A single successful attempt is all that is necessary to traverse the ship and make it to the bridge.

THE BATTLE ON THE BRIDGE

On reaching the bridge, the heroes find that it is occupied not just by the bridge crew, but also the commander of the scout ship. The heroes need to trigger a self-destruct sequence, and the villain and their alien minions are not just going to sit idly by and let that happen.

Whenever the heroes reach the bridge, they face the following opposition:

- $\diamond~$ The Alien Commander villain, who has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene.
 - Lasting Repercussion: If any hero has the Tainted by [SE01: The Powerful Artifact] lasting repercussion, the villain focuses all their efforts on this hero. The villain demands to know where the Powerful Artifact is. If the villain defeats that hero, the villain attempts to flee the scene immediately, taking the hero with them.
- ♦ One squad of Alien Invaders minions of a size equal to 3 × the number of heroes in the scene.
- ☆ Additionally, add an Event initiative card to the scene. Each time it comes up in the initiative, Alien Invaders minion reinforcements arrive, increasing the squad's size by a number equal to the number of heroes in the scene (not to exceed the squad's original size).

The scene's end approaches when the following objective is completed:

◆ Objective (□ □ □ □ □): The self-destruct sequence can be triggered by using the alien's command computers on the bridge, though other creative solutions and uses of appropriate powers should also progress this objective. When this objective is complete, the self-destruct initiates.

THE MOTHERSHIP CRASHES INTO THE MOON

When the self-destruct initiates, the ship does not simply explode; as its core detonates, a huge chunk of the ship (including the bridge) breaks off and starts to crash into the Earth's moon. A single successful attempt by each hero (and the villain, if they are still in the scene) is all that is necessary to escape the crashing ship, but the explosions rocking the ship make it difficult. Each time the Event initiative card comes up from this point forward, add a cumulative 1 challenge die () to all rolls made to escape the crashing ship. Any hero who has not escaped the ship by the time the Event initiative card comes up for the fifth time perishes when the mothership crashes into the moon.

WRAPPING UP

- If the heroes rescued any of the imprisoned humans and returned them safely back to Earth, adjust the team's Public Reputation track by +2 and their Media Reputation track by +1.
- ◆ If the Alien Commander defeats a hero who is Tainted by [SE01: The Powerful Artifact] and also escapes the scene with that hero in tow, that hero gains the following lasting repercussion: Captive of the Star Empire. As long as that hero has the Captive of the Star Empire lasting repercussion, they cannot be selected as a hero to be played. Additionally, add "The Star Empire knows the Powerful Artifact is on Earth" to the Truths of SE01: The Powerful Artifact.
- After the heroes have returned to Earth, a few weeks pass before they are approached by their contact in SE03: The Government Agency. They are brought in for a meeting, where they are introduced to NC08: The Cosmic Liaison, who will be monitoring space for further signs of the Star Empire and other cosmic threats.

This issue opens in media res (after any aspiration or turmoil scenes are complete), with the heroes already engaged in a seemingly fruitless battle against a titanic foe. A giant monster has escaped from a supposedly secure facility operated by SE02: The Super Science Lab. It is now rampaging through the outskirts of the city, though it is on a path headed for the heart of the downtown area. The monster seems to be out of control and is carving a path of destruction in its wake.

CONNECTION

EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #5

The nature of the monster depends on the answer you chose for the question "What kinds of technology most often come out of the lab?" in the lab's setting element entry. Mark below the nature of the monster based on that answer: U Weapons. The giant monster attacking the city is a humanoid mecha, an autonomous robot driven by AI.

- Industrial. The giant monster is an enormous plant, with tendrils and thorns the size of jumbo jets.
- Information. The giant monster is an amorphous blob that looks like a fusion between organic matter and nanorobots gone wild.
- D Medical. The giant monster is an enormous lizard, moth, dragon, or other oversized beast.

SCENARIO

Theoretical. The giant monster is a tentacled alien monster resembling an eldritch horror from beyond the stars.

The conflict scenes in this issue work a bit differently than those in other issues. The giant monster is not, strictly speaking, a villain; it is more of a force of nature, smashing its way through the city without any clear reason behind its actions. The monster behaves in the following way during this scene:

- ♦ The monster has a seemingly infinite amount of resistance; the most powerful attacks the heroes level at it seem to do nothing to slow it down, though it does take notice of those attacks.
- ♦ The monster has 1 initiative card for every two heroes in the scene (rounded up). On each of its turns, instead of attacking the monster can take an action that makes one of the scene's critical complications worse. This replaces the normal method of failing critical complications using a Complication initiative card. If the heroes can prevent the monster from taking this action (perhaps by provoking it to attack), they can prevent the monster from negatively impacting a complication for the turn.
- ♦ The monster is immune to any effect that would destroy it, permanently immobilize it, teleport it, banish it, or otherwise remove it from the scene or permanently neutralize it. It is simply too large for most heroes' powers to affect it.
- ♦ If a hero is up close to the giant monster when one of the giant monster's turns come up, it can attack the hero, striking out at the hero with a hand or tail or breathing a cone of fire. The monster attacks with an 80% chance of success and deals damage equal to the number rolled.

The scene ends when the heroes have completed the objective, outlined below.

- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): The giant monster's rampage has heavily damaged the tallest building in the city, and it threatens to topple over. Hundreds of people are still trapped inside, and the building needs to be stabilized before it crumbles.
 - Setting Book, write a note that the tallest building in the city was destroyed.
- Complication (DDD, Critical): The giant monster has smashed through an elevated train track, creating a break in the line. Much of the track is damaged, and the train threatens to derail even before it reaches the break. The train must be stopped, or the tracks temporarily repaired long enough for the train to cross to safety. \Rightarrow Failure: The train wreck is loud, violent, and demoralizing. Each hero loses 1 hero point (\Re).
- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): A news helicopter flew too close to the monster and was damaged, making an emergency landing on the top of a building that is now in the monster's path. The news crew needs to be gotten to safety, or the monster diverted before it smashes into the building.

♦ Failure: The news crew's grim fate is broadcast across the city. Adjust the team's Media Reputation track by -1.

- Objective (DDDDD): Since the heroes cannot defeat the giant monster, they need to steer it away from the city and into an unpopulated area, such as the outskirts of the city or out into the deep water of the bay. Any action that could reasonably direct the giant monster's progress can, on a successful check, progress this objective.
- Scene Details: The deafening noises made by the monster, damaged steel beams half-ripped out of buildings, huge chunks of concrete scattered on the street, blaring alarm sirens, half-collapsed power lines.
- ◆ Lasting Repercussions: If any of the heroes have the Tainted by [SE01: The Powerful Artifact] lasting repercussion, they feel an immediate kinship or resonance with the giant monster.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

With the heroes having directed the giant monster away from where it will cause the most damage, they have a moment of respite. Left to its own devices, the monster will almost certainly carve its path of destruction through civilization in due time, so the heroes need to find some way to neutralize it permanently.

INVESTIGATING THE MONSTER'S ORIGIN

- The heroes can learn that the giant monster is the result of experiments being conducted on SE01: The Powerful Artifact by SE02: The Super Science Lab. If the lab is not in possession of the Powerful Artifact, the experiments are based on energy readings from the Powerful Artifact's original appearance. The heroes can gain access to additional technology based on the lab's experiments (including weapons, defense systems, and almost anything else that would fit the heroes' plans).
- One of the scientists working at the auxiliary lab approaches any science-minded heroes and offers them research data on another experiment they have been doing: using the energy from the Powerful Artifact to open a passageway to SE11: The Parallel Dimension. The scientist offers up this information in the hopes that the heroes can find a way to use it to deal with the giant monster.

ANALYZING THE MONSTER ITSELF

- The monster radiates an energy signature similar to SE01: The Powerful Artifact, but that energy seems unstable. The heroes can deduce that this means the monster is vulnerable to technology derived from the Powerful Artifact, or the Powerful Artifact itself.
- The monster is growing stronger and seems to be drawing energy from an unknown source. Further analysis can reveal that it is somehow drawing energy directly from SE11: The Parallel Dimension, which grants its invulnerability and boundless energy.

CONCOCTING A PLAN

- It's up to the heroes to come up with a plan to deal with the monster, but any reasonable plan could work, provided it accounts for the monster's invulnerability, its titanic size and mass, its resistance to effects that teleport it, and the constant influx of energy from another dimension.
- ◆ If the players are struggling to come up with a plan, a Narrator controlled character (such as another hero not appearing in this issue, or a minor character associated with SE02: The Super Science Lab) could suggest a plan that involves opening a portal to SE11: The Parallel Dimension and forcing the giant monster through, exiling it to another dimension.

ENACTING THE HEROES' PLAN

Whenever the heroes set their plans into motion, they need to account for the following aspects necessary to safely neutralize the monster in the ensuing conflict scene.

- ◆ **Objective** (□□□□□): To enact their plan, the heroes will need to fully progress this objective.
 - ☆ Introduce one additional 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.
 - ☆ The monster's growing power has caused it to spontaneously generate swarms of flying drones that it spawns to defend itself (describe these drones to reflect the nature of the giant monster). In this scene, in addition to the giant monster (which retains its traits from the opening scene), heroes face 3 squads of drone minions, each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. These minions have a 65% chance of success on attacks, dealing damage equal to the number rolled (to a maximum of the squad's current size × 5).

The scene ends when the heroes complete the objective, or if all the heroes are defeated.

WRAPPING UP

- ✦ If the heroes failed to save the news crew in the opening scene, that night NC01: The Media Personality produces a scathing piece of reporting on the heroes' shortcomings. If the Media Personality has "Denounced heroes in reporting" in their Truths box, adjust the team's Public Reputation by -2. Otherwise, write it in the Media Personality's Truths box.
- ◆ If the heroes failed to stop the tallest building in the city from being destroyed, NCO3: The Hateful Authority issues public statements denouncing the team and blaming them for failing to save the building. If the heroes' Public Reputation track is at -5 or lower, they also call on the government to take legal action against the team; write "Promoted government intervention in powered heroes" in the Hateful Authority's Truths box.
- If all the heroes are defeated in the final scene, when they recover they learn that shortly after their defeat the giant monster mysteriously disappeared. If SE07: The Star Empire knows that the Powerful Artifact is on Earth, write "In possession of the giant monster" in that setting element's Truths box; otherwise, write that in the Truths box of SE18: The Terrorist Group.



In possession of incredible power and a cult of personality, the conqueror is a villain who takes what they want with force, caring little for anything or anyone crushed under their boot heels. Examples from popular comics include Dr. Doom[®] and Magneto[®] (Marvel), and Ra's al Ghul[™] and Mordru[™] (DC).

NAME:

From what does this villain draw their power?	
Cult/Religion (they lead a religion, either mainstream or occult)	TRUTHS
Despotic Rule (they tyrannically rule an entire nation)	
Military Leader (they command a powerful military force)	
Technology (they command legions of robots, hackers, or electronic duplicates)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
GRAND VISION	
What does this villain hope to achieve?	
World Conquest (the villain seeks to rule the world, becoming the undisputed leader of all civilization)	
Downfall of Society (the villain wants to overturn the status	
quo, bring down nations, and establish a new world order)	
Supreme Power (the villain seeks to become so intrinsically powerful that they could challenge the gods)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
How is the villain vulnerable to having their plans fail?	
Ego (the villain is vastly overconfident and cannot believe that their enemies would even dare to oppose them)	
Past Trauma (the villain experienced traumatic events or persecution and behaves irrationally when reminded of them)	
Disloyal Followers (the villain's control over their followers is occasionally tenuous, leaving their followers unreliable)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
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FIRST APPEARANCE	

CURRENT STATUS: 1 At Large 1 Incarcerated 1 Deceased 1 Reformed 1 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.

C 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.

D

When the villain hits a hero with an attack, that hero loses 2 hero points (🚑 🚑).

FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

INIGH INVULNERABLE

Until this villain has taken any damage in the scene, reduce all damage the villain would take by 50.

D D D 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.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

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

BLINDED BY ARROGANCE

When this villain deals 30 or more damage in a single attack to a hero whose initiative card is face-down, move that hero's initiative card to the end of the initiative track and turn it face-up. That hero can take another turn when their initiative card comes up again.

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.

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.

OVEREXTENSION

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



This villain's most powerful weapon is an incredibly keen intellect. The mastermind is a villain whose plans are complex and thorough, and every move they make is a calculated step in executing a master plan of incredible strategic cunning. Examples from popular comics include Lex Luthor® and Ozymandias[™] (DC).

NAME:

PROFESSIONAL LIFE	
How does this villain parley their incredible intellect into power and wealth?	
CEO (the villain runs a large corporation, using their intellect to reap massive profits)	TRUTHS
Politician (the villain plays power games in the government)	
Crime Lord (the villain runs an organized crime ring)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
APPEARANCE	
How does this villain present themselves?	
Professional (the villain dresses crisply, though not ostentatiously, and cuts an intimidating figure)	
Gregarious (the villain dresses and acts in a way that makes them seem approachable and friendly, though this is only a facade)	
Anachronistic (the villain's clothing and demeanor is	
reminiscent of those worn by powerful figures in other eras)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
DIZZYING INTELLECT	
How does the villain's intellect manifest?	
Contingency Plans (the villain always has a backup plan)	
Deduction (the villain seems to know far more than they should, having divined secrets using their powers of observation)	
Distraction (the villain's plans are complex and difficult to anticipate, using diversions to draw attention away from their true goals)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
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FIRST APPEARANCE	

CURRENT STATUS: 1 At Large 1 Incarcerated 1 Deceased 1 Reformed 1 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.

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

EFFORTLESS VILLAINY

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

D D PLANS OF A MASTERMIND

At the start of the round, before the first turn is taken, draw three cards from the Deck of Complications. Choose one to add to the scene, describing it as an unforeseen element of the villain's plan.

When a hero rolls any number of drawbacks on a roll, at the end of that hero's turn the villain can make 1 attack against that hero if they are able to do so. For each drawback the hero rolled, add +10 to the damage of the attack.

TACTICAL FAMILIARITY

Teamwork maneuvers performed on attacks against this enemy add 2 challenge dice (📣 📣) to the roll.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

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

BLINDED BY EGO

At the start of any issue that features this villain, choose a second weakness for each type of minion serving this villain.

□ IMPATIENT COMMANDER

When this villain is in the same scene as minions that serve this villain, each time those minions fail a roll the villain must use its next action to attack those minions.

D PHYSICALLY FRAIL

Melee attacks made against this villain add 2 advantage dice (🏟 🏟) to the roll instead of 1.

□ TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

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

THE ARCHVILLAIN'S FOLLOWERS

The servants of a powerful, intelligent villain are among the most well-trained, well-equipped, and loyal followers. Examples include Doombots™ (Marvel) and the members of the League of Assassins™ (DC).

NAME:

FORM

What form do these minions take?

- □ Agents (these minions are well-dressed in clean business attire that makes them look like corporate agents)
- Constructs (these minions are robots, cyborgs, golems, or some other kind of artificial creature)
- Disciples (the minions are dressed like religious disciples in garb meant to reflect their devotion to their leader)
- Rabble-rousers (these minions are bruisers and brawlers, pure muscle that look comfortable with unsavory work)
- □ Soldiers (the minions are part of the archvillain's military forces, and they are outfitted with combat gear)
- Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

MOTIVATION

Why do these minions serve their villainous master?

- Enslavement (the minions have been pressed into the archvillain's service against their will and cannot escape)
- Financial Reward (the minions have been promised significant compensation, and they stay loyal for pay)
- Ideological Fulfillment (the archvillain has an ideological hold on their followers, using a political or religious movement to draw followers into the fold)
- Intimidation (the villain may pay their followers, but these minions also fear what would happen if they tried to quit)
- Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

OUTSTANDING FEATURE

What unique feature stands out about these minions?

- Clones (the minions are all clones, drawn from the genetic stock of one or two individuals)
- **Enhanced** (these minions have been biologically or cybernetically enhanced in some very visible way)
- □ **Hi-Tech Gear** (these minions use technology that seems to be decades ahead of that possessed by the rest of the world)
- Decision Medieval (the minions are anachronistic in their garb or gear, looking like they came from some medieval land)
- Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)

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1	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).

D 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

C 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.

□ STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

While the squad's size is 2 or greater, melee attacks against these minions add 2 challenge dice (I a a a a straight of the roll.

SUPPORT FIRE

When these minions hit with an attack, move any 1 initiative card belonging to a villain to the spot immediately after these minions' initiative card.

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.

MELEE-FOCUSED

Ranged attacks against these minions add 1 advantage die (🍈) to the roll.

SELF-PRESERVATION

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

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.

TIGHT FORMATIONS

Area attacks that hit these minions reduce the squad size by 4, instead of by 3 as normal.

WARS, PAR EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #6

Chaos erupts when mysterious, malicious forces tap into the city's electronic infrastructure and wreak havoc. This issue does not feature an opening scene, instead launching into a sequence of events that represents the growing chaos.

Before starting play, first create the archvillain who serves as the primary antagonist for this story arc. Choose either the Conqueror or the Mastermind and create that villain, along with the minions that serve as the archvillain's followers. They are responsible for the chaos of this issue, which is a cover for an attack against the heroes' base of operations.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

SCENARIO

The following events represent the spreading malicious influence of the widespread tampering with the city's electronic infrastructure. As each step in the sequence occurs, it introduces new dangers and challenges that might demand the heroes' attention. The heroes can use interlude scenes to deal with these challenges should they so choose. Additionally, the heroes will need to make hard choices about which crises to deal and which ones to ignore, or risk spending so much time dealing with problems in the city that the culprits will get away with their true plan.

If the heroes spend interludes trying to discover who is responsible for the chaos in the city, here is some information they can uncover through interludes that could point them back to their own base:

- The power outages and traffic light tampering are being caused by small electronic devices attached to control panels at critical junctures. The devices seem to be automated, since no one is operating them.
- Not far from each site where tampering occurred, the heroes can find city utility vehicles seemingly abandoned, as though someone stole the vehicle to use it as cover for their illicit activities. Inside one vehicle, they find a map showing where all the tampering took place. At the center of the tampering is the heroes' base.
- The tampering with air traffic control and emergency services was done remotely, by jamming the frequencies those services use. The goal seems to be to prevent first responders from fulfilling their duties.
- All the chaos seems to be aimed at one thing: forcing the heroes to respond to one crisis after another, keeping them out in the city and away from their own base of operations.

When the heroes discover the truth behind the tampering, they can confront those responsible. See "The Culprits" below.

SPORADIC BLACKOUTS

The chaos begins when parts of the city experience random, unexpected blackouts. The utility companies are baffled, but things take a turn for the worse after two days when blackouts strike an area in SEO4: The Bad Neighborhood that causes the minor inconvenience of temporary power loss to become much more dangerous.

HOSPITALS WITHOUT POWER

An underfunded hospital in the Bad Neighborhood, whose backup power generators are too unreliable to maintain power during the blackout, starts to descend into panic as critical machinery (such as life support systems, diagnostic tools, and surgery theaters) cease to function. To resolve this challenge, the heroes need to come up with a solution to get the hospital's machines up and running, and also transport patients in critical condition to other city hospitals where power has not failed.

GROCERY STORE RIOTS

Without power, grocery stores in the Bad Neighborhood cannot process transactions, so most stores have shuttered their entrances to prevent theft and looting. Unable to get food, the citizens of the neighborhood have gathered outside these stores and are threatening to riot and loot the food they need to survive. To resolve this challenge, the heroes need to find a way to disperse the crowd peacefully, and also see to it that the people of the neighborhood get the food they need. If the heroes' **Public Reputation** track is 5 or higher, they gain 2 advantage dice (\widehat{m} \widehat{m}) on rolls to resolve this challenge.

INTERFERENCE WITH CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

More tampering quickly becomes evident, as those responsible for the blackouts move on to causing havoc with the city's communications and control infrastructure. Traffic lights flicker through their colors rapidly, water mains burst, and even parts of the city that retain power struggle to handle the chaos.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS GONE HAYWIRE

The city's streets have become completely jammed, as power outages and haywire traffic control causes accidents and disrupts traffic patterns. Traffic comes to a complete stop with several cars, buses, and trucks trapped on the tracks of a commuter train that runs through the city. The train's operators are unaware of the obstruction on the tracks, and their signals have been tampered with. To resolve this challenge, the heroes need to find a way to prevent the collision between the commuter train and the stopped vehicles.

FLOODING

The systems that control the pressure of water mains goes out of control, causing water pipes to explode across the city and flooding the lower floors of many buildings. In the **historic building**, the subterranean floors are flooding rapidly, with people trapped inside and unable to get upstairs.

OPPORTUNISTIC CRIMINALS

Amid the chaos, opportunistic criminals leap into action and attempt a daring robbery that they would not otherwise contemplate under normal circumstances: robbing a museum of priceless art objects and jewels. Choose or create a group of minor villains, such as the **Villainous Gang** presented earlier in this series. For this conflict scene, use minor villains equal to the number of heroes, drawn from the group of minor villains you chose. Each minor villain has 1 initiative card.

The scene ends when all the minor villains are defeated, or when the villains accomplish the objective.

◆ Objective (□□□, Enemy): The villains are trying to load their ill-gotten gains in a vehicle they brought with them to the robbery, and then escape before the power comes back on and reenables the alarms.

ATC AND EMERGENCY SERVICES TAMPERING

As the city falls deeper into crisis, the perpetrators take steps to stop emergency services from responding to the most urgent problem spots. They also make it difficult for the city to receive outside assistance by interfering with air traffic control, thereby shutting down the airport. Radio frequencies used by both emergency services and air traffic controlled are filled with nothing but a screeching jamming noise.

DANGEROUS SKIES

When air traffic control's frequencies are jammed, airplanes approaching the city must scramble to reroute. Unfortunately, a cargo jet and a passenger jet clip one another, causing both to start crashing to Earth. The heroes can resolve this challenge by safely dealing with the crashing planes.

SPREADING FIRES

Fires rage out of control at a cluster of warehouses, threatening to spread to commercial areas if they are not contained, and the fire department has been unable to effectively respond. The heroes can resolve this challenge by containing and extinguishing the fires, which cover multiple city blocks.

THE CHAOS ENDS

If the sequence of events reaches this point, the heroes fail to stop the villain behind the chaos from achieving their true goal. The attacks on the city's infrastructure abruptly end. When the heroes return to their base of operations, they discover that it has been broken into and that any technological secrets they possess have been plundered, including any knowledge they have about **SE01: The Powerful Artifact**; write "Robbed of all research" in the team roster's Truths box. If the team was in possession of the Powerful Artifact, it could be stolen if it was left at the base while the heroes were out; erase "In possession of [the Powerful Artifact" from the team roster's Truths box, and write it in the chosen archvillain's Truths box.

The only evidence left behind is a taunting message from the villain responsible: a line of text, displayed on a computer screen, that says, "Every art possessed by man comes from Prometheus."

THE CULPRITS

The perpetrators of this chaos are the **Archvillain's Followers** minions. These minions break into the heroes' base and steal their technology, research, experiments, and other inventions. If the heroes discover the culprits before time reaches "The Chaos Ends," they can track the minions to the heroes' own base, where they find the minions in the process of looting it. In the ensuing conflict scene, the heroes face two squads of the **Archvillain's Followers** minions, each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2, who fight only to escape. However, after 2 rounds (or whenever the last minion is defeated), the archvillain remotely triggers implants in the minions that fries their minds, killing them. The heroes have no chance to extract information from the defeated minions, and they can tell that other groups of minions must have already made an escape with some of the heroes' belongings.

WRAPPING UP

The story continues in the next issue, Explorers of the Unknown #7.

VILLAIN THE HARDWARE PIRA ſ 5

This villain is a scientific and technological genius, but instead of inventing their own technology they make use of the same weapons, devices, and gadgets used by science-focused heroes, some of which is stolen from those heroes. Examples include Crimson Dynamo[™], Iron Monger[®], and Spymaster[™] (Marvel).

NAME:

What kind of technology does the villain make the most use of?	TRUTHS
Gadgets (the villain uses a wide variety of highly specialized inventions with many purposes)	TRUTHS
Power Suit (the villain operates a suit of powered armor)	
Weapons (the villain uses advanced and deadly weaponry)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
RELATIONSHIP TO A HERO	
What relationship does this villain have to a tech hero?	
Usurper (the villain is someone who seeks to supplant the hero whose technology they use)	
Rival (the villain is a professional rival who has stooped to theft)	
Ruined Partner (the villain once worked alongside a hero, but	
fell on hard times after the hero cut them out of the partnership)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
How did the technology used by this villain come to be?	
Stolen Tech (the villain stole working examples of a hero's tech and made modifications)	
Espionage (the villain obtained research, plans, or blueprints of a hero's tech and engineered their own version)	
Parallel Design (the villain invented the technology independently, while using the same concepts as a hero's tech)	
• Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
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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 D

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.

CUTTING-EDGE INVENTIONS

At the start of each scene the villain participates in, draw one card from the Deck of Powers. The villain has technology that lets them use that power to make checks and attacks with a 75% chance of success; the villain cannot use any other benefits on the card. Discard the power at the end of the scene.

🗆 FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

L LAY THEM ALL LOW

The villain makes an area attack using their superpower, adding +20 to the damage of each successful attack.

D D D D TURN THE TABLES

When a hero rolls a physical attack against the villain, after the attack is fully resolved the villain can make an attack against that hero, if possible, adding +20 to the damage if the attack is successful.

D PERFECT DEFENSES

At the start of the conflict scene, choose one hero. For the duration of the scene, that hero adds 4 challenge dice ($\langle \diamond \rangle \langle \diamond \rangle \langle \diamond \rangle$) to any attack rolls against this villain, due to preparations the villain has made to handle that hero. However, the villain also adds 4 challenge dice ($\langle \diamond \rangle \langle \diamond \rangle \langle \diamond \rangle \rangle$) to attack rolls they make against that same hero, since all their preparations were intended to be defensive in nature.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

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

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.

□ FLAWED INVENTIONS

Add 1 challenge die (🆚) to all rolls made to attack with a piece of this villain's technology.

□ IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

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

□ 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.





These minor villains are a dark reflection of a team of heroes, with each member being either a mirror image or an opposite version of a counterpart on the hero team. Examples from popular comics include the Dark Avengers[™] and the Frightful Four[™] (Marvel), and the Crime Syndicate of America[™] and the Legion of Super-Villains[™] (DC).

TEAM NAME:

REASON FOR REFLECTION	
How did these villains come to be a mirror of a team of heroes?	
Homage (they reflect the heroes' aesthetics intentionally, a spiteful homage designed to unnerve the heroes)	TRUTHS
Supplanters (the villains fashioned themselves as replacements for the heroes they reflect)	
Theft (the villains stole their powers and tech from heroes)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES	
How closely do these villains mirror heroes?	
A Darker Shade (these villains look very similar to their hero counterparts, if just a bit darker in aesthetics)	
Twisted Reflection (these villains are twisted, monstrous versions of their hero counterparts)	
□ Inversion (these villains are inversions of their hero	
counterparts, possibly perfect opposites in powers & costumes)	
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)	
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EIRST 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 a villain attacks 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.

NAME:

SUPERPOWER (75%):

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

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.

SCIENCE WARS, PART 2 EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #7

Some months have passed since the conclusion of the previous issue, with the heroes having no luck in tracking down the villain whose minions robbed their base of operation. These events rear their ugly head once more when the heroes have a public relations disaster on their hands. A news report alleges that technology that was previously in the custody of the heroes (and perhaps even invented by them) is causing an armed conflict in **SEO8: The War-Torn Nation** to escalate into a horrific bloodbath; the weapons being used by both sides are far more advanced than conventional weapons. The nature of this report's delivery is determined by which of the team's reputation tracks is the lowest (if there is a tie, choose the one that the heroes will feel the strongest connection to):

- Public: In a prime-time interview on one of the nation's most-watched political news programs, NC02: The Celebrity Bigot makes an appearance to allege that the heroes are involved in a conspiracy to force their country to intervene in a bloody foreign war.
- Media: On the nightly news, NC01: The Media Personality makes an appearance to debut a lengthy expose, claiming that the heroes have shown gross irresponsibility in letting their technology fall into the hands of desperate people who will use it to slaughter other desperate people.
- ☆ Government: In a nationally broadcast speech before a government assembly, NC03: The Hateful Authority delivers a speech claiming that the mere existence of the heroes has made the world a more dangerous place, citing the foreign conflict as proof that they cause more harm than good.

Give the hero players a few moments to allow their heroes to react to the report and determine a course of action. They are eventually contacted by an agent from **SE03: The Government Agency** (an agent they have previously interacted with), who invites the heroes to a briefing at the agency's headquarters (as described in its setting entry). Their contact tells them that the only way to get the government off their back is to travel to the War-Torn Nation and track down the source of the weapons.

Before the heroes travel to the War-Torn Nation, you should also choose the villain or villains overseeing the distribution of the weapons to foreign troops. Choose either the **Hardware Pirate** villain or the **Knock-Offs** minor villain group; or, if you have another villain with a strong affinity for technology who could be cooperating with the archvillain you chose in the previous issue, you can use that villain instead. The villain(s) you choose are using technology recognizably derived from the technology stolen from the heroes.

ARRIVAL IN THE WAR-TORN NATION

When the heroes first arrive in the War-Torn Nation, give them a chance to see the impact that the weapons derived from their technology have had. In lieu of an opening conflict scene, run the heroes through several short interlude scenes (during which the heroes can provide assistance) showing the ravages of the war before turning them loose on their investigation. Suggestions for the nature of these scenes include:

- ♦ A caravan of refugees who lost their homes struggles to cross a hostile landscape, with many falling behind.
- ♦ A debris-strewn town or small city toils to dig trapped citizens out of the rubble following a major battle.
- ♦ Soldiers-turned-brigands hold a family hostage by the side of the road as they rifle through the family vehicle.
- ☆ A military helicopter carrying wounded soldiers away from a battlefield crashes after being shot down by cutting-edge weapons fire, leaving some of the passengers dead but several survivors struggling to escape.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

The heroes need to find a way to locate and trace the weapons derived from the technology that was stolen from them. They will need to first seek out the weapons in action, then discover who the supplier is, and then locate the supply depot from which they are being distributed. If the team's **Government Reputation** track is at 3 or higher, their agency contact provides them with coordinates of an active skirmish, and they automatically succeed in seeking out the weapons in action without needing to spend an interlude scene to do so.

SEEK OUT THE WEAPONS IN ACTION

- The weapons leave behind telltale signs of their use, which you can describe according to the kinds of technologies used by the heroes. Scouting recent battlefields indicates the general regions of active conflict.
- Researching targets of strategic value can point the heroes toward the sites of likely skirmishes.
- Hospitals throughout the nation care for soldiers wounded by these weapons; interviewing wounded soldiers could
 point the heroes toward an active skirmish where these weapons are in use by one faction or the other.

TRACKING THE WEAPONS BACK TO THE SUPPLIER

- Once they locate an active skirmish, the heroes can locate supply vehicles and troop transports carrying the weapons in question by successfully scouting the battle. The weapons not currently being wielded by soldiers are being kept in shielded cargo transports, disguised as medical supply vehicles.
- ◆ A tactical analysis of the battlefield reveals the direction from which each faction came leading up to the battle. From there, the heroes can follow tracks and roads back to where the supply depot can be found.
- If the heroes isolate a few individual soldiers, they could intimidate, coerce, or otherwise convince the soldiers to tell them who supplies them with the weapons (the villain or villains you chose for this issue), and learn information about their foes in advance.
- If the heroes stop the battle and force both sides into retreat (any reasonable plan could work, succeeding on three rolls to stop the battle before rolling three failures), increase the team's Public Reputation track by +1.
- ◆ If the heroes destroy the weapons they find, increase the team's **Government Reputation** track by +2.

LOCATING THE SUPPLY DEPOT

- The supply depot moves to a different location every few weeks, making it difficult to track. Its current location is known to the military commanders who purchase the weapons for their troops.
- ◆ The depot is camouflaged from the air by a mesh tarp that baffles satellite imaging.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The villain or villains of this issue have come to the War-Torn Nation in the service of the archvillain you chose for this arc. Under the archvillain's command, the villains have sold weapons to both sides of the conflict ravaging the nation, reaping huge financial gains. A supply depot has been their base of operations, and they have dealt directly with the military commanders on both sides on behalf of the archvillain.

When the heroes finally confront the issue's villains, they face the following opposition:

- ♦ A squad of the Archvillain's Followers minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. The heroes should recognize these minions as belonging to the same group as the ones who broke into their base.
- The villain you chose for this issue, who has 1 initiative card for each hero in the scene. If you chose a group of minor villains, there is one minor villain in the scene per hero, each with 1 initiative card.

The scene ends when the villains are defeated or escape.

Scene Details: Empty shipping containers, barrels of fuel and chemicals, a rickety temporary warehouse, a halfdozen all-terrain vehicles, a radar dish and communications array the size of a van, a hastily built guard tower.

THE VILLAINS LEARN OF THE HEROES' PRESENCE 🗅 🗅

Given the war-ravaged nature of the region, it takes some time for news of the heroes' presence to reach the villains. If the heroes find the villains at this point, they can catch the villains completely off-guard and launch an ambush.

THE WEAPONS ARE LOADED ONTO HELICOPTERS 🗅 🗅

Once the villains know that the heroes are in the region, they cancel all sales and load as many of the remaining weapons as they can aboard cargo helicopters, with the intent of returning them to their source (factories in **SE10: The Evil Dictatorship**). Representatives from one of the factions load into a convoy of military vehicles and race away from the depot.

◆ Complication (□□□): The pilots of the three cargo helicopters appear to be civilians being forced into service, and they are held at gunpoint until the helicopters depart. The pilots need to be gotten to safety.

THE VILLAINS ATTEMPT TO COVER THEIR TRACKS

Once the helicopters are away, the villains set explosives on chemical barrels around the depot and start the countdown timer. If the heroes intervene at this point, they arrive just as the timers have started, and the villains attempt to flee.

- Complication (DDDD, Critical): The explosives are on a short timer, and if the heroes don't deal with them quickly they run the risk of being caught in the ensuing chemical explosion.

WRAPPING UP

- From captured villains, or from examining intel left behind if the depot was not destroyed by an explosion, the heroes
 can learn that these villains were operating under orders from the archvillain.
- The story concludes in the next issue, Explorers of the Unknown #8.

SECOND-GEN HERO

HERO

You follow the example set by another hero, fashioning yourself after them and fighting evil using similar powers and technology. You may have been mentored by that hero, have a similar origin, or were simply inspired by them. Examples from popular comics include She-Hulk[®] and War Machine[®] (Marvel), and Batwoman[®] and Supergirl[®] (DC).

- NATURE OF INVENTION	PERSONALITY TRAITS
 Write the name of the hero you are inspired by in your Truths box. How did you gain a heroic identity inspired by this other hero? Ally or Apprentice (the hero you were inspired by was once your mentor, and your heroic mantle is a result of that relationship) Inspiration (your heroic identity is an homage to a hero who inspire Similar Origin (you share a heroic origin with the hero who inspire Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) 	ed you)
	TRUTHS
 RESISTANCE What does resistance mean for this character? Advanced Healing (you regenerate wounds too quickly to see) Invulnerability (you shrug off attacks like they are nothing) 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? 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) Vehicle (you have a custom vehicle designed to match your heroic motif/theme) Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box) 	

Hero	Name:

Real Name:

Team:

First Appearance:



SCIENCE WARS, PART 3 SCIENCE WARS OF THE UNKNOWN #8

The heroes have learned that the weapons were being manufactured in another country: **SE10: The Evil Dictatorship**. Before this issue begins, you can offer your players the chance for one of them to create a new hero using the **Second-Gen Hero** archetype. This character can be introduced as a hero who uses some of the weapons confiscated from the villains in the previous issue, blended with technology provided by one of the heroes (who serves as the inspiration hero for the new character). This new hero could be the team's contact from **SE03: The Government Agency**, who finally steps into the role of a hero, or it could be one of the villains from the previous issue who takes a heroic turn, using the tech they are already familiar with.

Given the nature of the Evil Dictatorship, the Government Agency recommends that the heroes use subtlety, stealth, or deception to enter the country in their civilian identities. In lieu of aspiration and turmoil scenes at the start of the issue, give each hero a chance to create an interlude scene related to their clandestine arrival in the Evil Dictatorship. Encourage the players to think about how they might enter the country, what challenges they might face along the way, how close they come to being discovered, and how these situations give them a chance to illustrate something about their identity or personality. These scenes count as aspiration and turmoil interludes for the purposes of gaining story progress and earning continuity tokens for the session.

The heroes need to locate the source of the weapons being built based on their technology, find the archvillain, and shut down their capability to build more weapons in the future. This issue does not have an opening conflict scene; instead, proceed directly to "The Villain's Plan," allowing the heroes to create interlude scenes as normal to find the factory and the archvillain.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

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

THE ARCHVILLAIN'S PLACE IN THE DICTATORSHIP

- When the heroes investigate the archvillain, they discover the villain's role inside the Evil Dictatorship. Choose one of the following options as best fits the villain, and also write your choice in the villain's Truths box:
- **Ruler**. The archvillain is the ruler of the Evil Dictatorship.
- Foreign Business Partner. The archvillain is from the heroes' own nation but has a strong business relationship with the dictator who rules the country, or operates a subsidiary or branch of their own business (possibly SE15: The Megacorporation) in that nation.
 Mob Boss. The villain runs an organized crime ring tied to corrupt officials in the dictatorship's government.

THE STOLEN TECHNOLOGY

- The stolen technology does not seem to be spreading throughout other sectors in the dictatorship. The heroes find no evidence that the stolen tech is being shared beyond the people producing the weapons.
- Rumors claim that many scientists have been kidnapped and forced to work on some secret research project.
- ◆ Media Reputation: If the team's Media Reputation track is 5 or higher, they are contacted by an international reporter who is doing undercover work inside the dictatorship for a story on the new weapons. The reporter turns over the research they have collected for their story, which includes an important note: the reporter's sources claim that the technology stolen by the heroes was taken to the weapons factory and studied in a research lab attached to the factory. No one outside that research lab and the factory has had a chance to study the technology. This also means all research that could be used to produce more weapons is kept in the research lab and is vulnerable to being wiped out.

THE WEAPONS FACTORY

- The factory is built on the site of a decrepit, decaying cosmodrome, abandoned when a newer facility was built in another region. The factories stand out as new and pristine against the crumbling towers and launch facilities around the rest of the cosmodrome. Physically scouting the region reveals them.
- ◆ Local civilians have spotted convoys of supplies traveling in the direction of the supposedly abandoned cosmodrome, but anyone who got too close was deterred by armed men.
- Civilians have been complaining about a surge in air traffic in the area around the cosmodrome, specifically large cargo helicopters that fly over the region under the cover of night.
- Many neighborhoods in the region have been subjected to brownouts with no explanation. These are the
 result of power being routed to the factory during production runs.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The heroes confront the villain when they arrive at the factory producing the advanced weapons. The factory is massive, the size of several football stadiums, and filled with cutting-edge robotic manufacturing technology whirling about in a chaotic but precise dance. There are no human workers at all; the whole factory is one large, distributed robot, cranking out hundreds of weapons every hour.

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

- ♦ Two squads of the Archvillain's Followers minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2.
- The archvillain you chose for this story arc (either the **Conqueror** or the **Mastermind**). The archvillain has 1 initiative card per hero in the scene. If the villain is the Conqueror, they fight the heroes using their own powers and abilities. If the villain is the Mastermind, they fight the heroes using a platform of advanced weaponry fitting designs derived from the heroes' technology: a power suit covered in deadly weapons, an atomic rocket pack and radiation cannons, or a robotic exoskeleton made of the toughest metal on Earth.

Throughout the scene, the archvillain delivers monologues, claiming that they stole the technology from the selfish heroes like Prometheus stole fire from the gods. They needlessly explain how proliferating advanced weapons technology will advance their goals. They did not expect the heroes to find the manufacturing facility after their plan to steal tech from the heroes went off as well as it did.

The scene ends when the heroes have completed the objective, or all enemies are defeated or escaped.

- ◆ Objective (□□□□□): The heroes need to halt the factory's manufacturing capabilities by destroying the assembly line, which requires them to deal extensive damage to the robots inside.
- ◆ Complication (□□): Attached to the factory is a research lab, where data on the heroes' technology and the weapons derived from it can be found in file cabinets and on computers in the lab. The heroes need to destroy this data to keep the villain from manufacturing more of the weapons in the future.

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

- Hazard: When the conflict begins, the villain activates a failsafe in the factory's robotic assembly lines, causing the robotic manufacturing machines to attack the heroes with cutting tools, welding tools, and other deadly devices. Add 2 Hazard initiative cards to the initiative track. When a Hazard initiative card comes up, the robots attack one hero, making a physical attack with a 50% chance of success that deals damage equal to the number rolled. Remove 1 of these initiative cards when the heroes have progressed the objective 3 times.
- Scene Details: Stacked containers of raw materials, barrels of volatile chemicals used in the production process, forklifts and cranes, coolant-spraying robotic arms, thick bundles of power cables.

The Arms factory begins a manufacturing run 🗆 🗅 🗅

Manufacturing begins, and the assembly line churns out weapons by the hundreds. The actual manufacturing process is quite lengthy, and the heroes may be able to reach the facility before the production run is complete.

WEAPON TESTING BEGINS 🗆

A sample of the weapons are taken up to the research lab for testing and evaluation, to ensure that the production run is ready to go out to buyers.

◆ Complication (□□): The researchers performing the weapons tests in the lab have been kidnapped and pressed into service against their will; they are innocent bystanders who need to be gotten to safety.

WEAPONS ARE PACKED AND SHIPPED 🗅 🗅

The weapons are loaded into cargo containers and, as night falls, packed into cargo helicopters for delivery to buyers around the globe.

- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): In their rush, the minions loading the helicopters did not balance the load in one of the cargo bays. On takeoff, the pilot loses control, causing the helicopter to spin dangerously toward the ground and cargo containers to spill out. The overloaded helicopter needs to be righted before it crashes.

THE EVIDENCE IS ERASED

If the heroes do not intervene before this point, the archvillain orders the research data removed from the laboratory and moved to a remote location. The laboratory is destroyed by the villain's minions, and the heroes cannot destroy the weapons development data during the conflict scene.

WRAPPING UP

- If a hero was particularly pivotal in the heroes defeat, they gain the following lasting repercussion: Vengeance of
 [the villain's name].
 - If SE01: The Powerful Artifact was stolen in issue #6, the heroes recover it from the archvillain, who did not have time to learn how to use it.

THE ANCIENT EVIL

This villain is an evil that has survived far beyond their original era. Their experience spans centuries, and their perspective on the world is that of an immortal. They have survived for this long due to supernatural protection and extreme cunning. Examples include Apocalypse[™] and Dracula[™] (Marvel), and Vandal Savage[®] (DC).

NAME:

IMMORTALITY	
How has this villain remained alive since the ancient past?	TRUTHE
Alchemical Transformation (they used alchemical methods to prolong their own life far beyond its natural span)	TRUTHS
Curse (they were cursed to never die by a supernatural force)	
Innate Agelessness (they simply do not age, a result of their unique birth, bloodline, or powers)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
ORIGINAL TIME	
During what era did this villain first rise to power?	
□ Ancient Empires (they originated in the empires of the Bronze Age or similar eras)	
Classical Antiquity (this villain hails from the time of ancient Greece or the Roman Empire)	
Middle Ages (the villain was born in the era of the European Dark Ages or Renaissance)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
EFFECTS OF TIMELESSNESS	
How has the villain's extended lifespan warped their perspective?	
Callousness (to an immortal, humans live and die too quickly to be concerned about the value of their lives)	
Chosen (the villain believes they were gifted immortality through providence, and they are instruments of divine will)	
Megalomania (the villain believes that their immortality gives them the right to absolute power over humanity)	
Other (fill in your answer in the Truths box)	
	All character names are property of their respective owners, and their use does
	not imply an endorsement of or a relationship with Scratchpad Publishing LLC.
FIRST APPEARANCE	

CURRENT STATUS: 1 At Large 1 Incarcerated 1 Deceased 1 Reformed 1 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.

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

When the villain rolls 2 or more boons, flip 1 of their face-down initiative cards face-up.

D D D SURPRISING STRENGTH

When the villain hits with an attack using their minor power, add +30 to the damage.

□ SWEEPING BLOWS

The villain can use their action to make 1 melee attack against each hero who is up close to the villain.

□ 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.

U 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.

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.

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.

OVEREXTENSION

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



These minor villains are the devoted servants of an ancient evil, and like their master, have either transcended time or are the latest in a long line of servants who do that villain's bidding. Examples from popular comics include the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse[™] (Marvel) and the children and grandchildren of Ra's al Ghul[™] (DC).

TEAM NAME:



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 a villain attacks 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.

NAME:

SUPERPOWER (75%):

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

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.

SCENARIO WHAT ONCE WAS LOST EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #9

This issue opens when the heroes pick up distress calls coming from a part of the world they do not expect, either while returning to their home city from their recent adventure, or while they are in their base of operations. The distress calls come from **SEO9: The Lost Civilization**, which has come under attack by powered villains. Strangely, the distress call is sent out through channels not normally used for communication; it seems likely to the heroes that no one else has heard the distress calls, and only the methods the heroes use to monitor for villainous trouble would be capable of receiving them.

When the heroes respond, they follow the distress signal to the Lost Civilization, specifically to a town, village, or other relatively small community appropriate to the nature of the civilization. The community has come under serious attack, and when the heroes arrive they find the **Ancient Servants** minor villains gathered in the heart of the community. The villains have rounded up the survivors of the attack, who are clearly shell-shocked and unable to resist. The villains are preaching the glories of **the Ancient Evil** villain, beseeching the people to put aside their loyalty to their existing leaders and prepare to kneel before the Ancient Evil, who will soon be coming to attack the civilization's center of power and claim the Lost Civilization as their new throne.

Additionally, the heroes can see that the attack has not yet reached its conclusion, and some of the minor villains may yet be engaged in putting down resistance. Any guardians this community had lie dead in the rubble of destroyed buildings, and the heroes are the only hope these civilians have against the villains.

In the opening scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

♦ The Ancient Servants minor villains, equal to the number of heroes. Each villain has 1 initiative card. When the heroes arrive and intervene, all the villains begin working toward their Fleeing the Scene objective.

The scene ends when all the villains are defeated or have fled, and all critical complications have been progressed fully.

- Complication (DDDD, Critical): Fires (or some similar, spreading hazard) expand out of control in all directions, a result of the villains' attack on the community. Worse, the fires are spreading toward a hospital or some other similar peaceful structure, and there are hundreds of people trapped inside who need to be rescued.
 Failure: Mark one of the boxes next to the "Devastation in the Lost Civilization" entry, under "Wrapping Up."
- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): A structure that once housed hundreds of inhabitants threatens to crumble entirely. The building was attacked as a warning against hiding dissidents, and if the building comes down then dozens will die.

◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): A bridge, tunnel, or other connective structure leading out of the community was damaged in the initial assault; if it collapses, the community will be isolated, and getting aid from the civilization's government will be all but impossible. The heroes need to keep the structure from collapsing.

 Scene Details: Large chunks of rubble, overturned vehicles, large shards of broken glass where entire building's windows shattered, choking smoke or fumes.

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 ANCIENT EVIL

- ◆ If the heroes captured any of the minor villains from the opening scene, they can interrogate the villain(s) to find out more about the Ancient Evil's origins, goals, philosophies, and capabilities. As loyal servants of the Ancient Evil, the villains are likely to provide information from a heavily biased perspective.
- If the heroes have means of doing historical research, they could likewise discover more about the villain's origins, and what the villain was like during their original rise to power.

EXPLORING THE LOST CIVILIZATION

◆ If you filled out the Lost Civilization's setting element sheet for the first time during this issue, your players may wish to explore the civilization more deeply. Give them opportunities to meet minor characters native to this civilization during any interlude scenes they undertake and use those characters to reinforce the civilization's details.

PREPARING FOR THE SIEGE

- After their intervention in the opening scene, the heroes are approached by the civilization's leaders, who welcome
 the heroes and ask for their help in preparing for the villain's attack.
- ◆ For each of the following steps or similar preparations the heroes take to prepare for the attack on the Lost Civilization's seat of power, award one of the heroes 1 hero point (2000).
 - $\diamond\,$ Civilians can be evacuated from the center of power, preventing eventual casualties.
 - ♦ The civilization's leadership can be moved to secure bunkers or safe houses to ensure their safety.
 - $\diamond~$ The civilization's military, police, warriors, or other armed forces can be trained to fight powered villains.
 - ♦ Defense technology possessed by the civilization can be bolstered, upgraded, or moved to a better tactical position for fighting against the villain and the villain's servants.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The villain's objective (the conquest of the Lost Civilization) focuses on capturing its center of power, its throne, or its central government building. The villain's heralds have already terrorized smaller communities throughout the civilization with a series of surprise attacks, but instead of a total conquest of the civilization the villain seeks to simply chop of the head of the current power structure and install themselves as the new ruler. The villain's primary goal is to seize power to become a player on the world political/military stage.

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

- ♦ The Ancient Evil villain, who has initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.
- ♦ The Ancient Servants minor villains, equal to the number of heroes. Each villain has 1 initiative card.

The scene ends when all the villains have been defeated or have fled.

- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): The Ancient Servants kidnapped three large groups of citizens from the smaller communities they previously attacked, using them as human shields during the battle. These groups of hostages need to be gotten away from the battlefield before they become casualties.

READYING FOR THE SIEGE 🗅 🗅 🗅

For a while, all is quiet in the Lost Civilization, save for the work undertaken by the heroes. If the heroes finish their preparations before the villain arrives, they have time to fortify themselves both physically and mentally before the attack. They are ready when the villain arrives to conquer the Lost Civilization's seat of power.

THE VILLAIN ARRIVES

If the heroes are still in the midst of engaging in preparations when the plan reaches this point, they are caught off-guard as the villain launches their attack. As such, some of the people in the center of power are likewise not prepared for the attack, and the heroes start out by scrambling to respond to the attack.

Complication (
 Circle): During the attack, a vehicle carrying one of the Lost Civilization's most beloved leaders to safety comes under fire. The leader is wounded, trapped in the vehicle, and will die if not rescued.

WRAPPING UP

- ★ At the conclusion of this issue, the **Outsider Champion** hero archetype becomes available for use. A hero from the Lost Civilization could use this archetype.
- ◆ If the heroes are all defeated in the final conflict scene, check all empty boxes in the "Devastation in the Lost Civilization" section below. The heroes are carried back to their home nation by survivors among the Lost Civilization's leadership who fled when their seat of power fell. Write "Ruled by [the Ancient Evil's name] in the Truths box of SE09: The Lost Civilization and adjust the team's Government Reputation track by -2.

DEVASTATION IN THE LOST CIVILIZATION .

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

- ✦ If none of the boxes are checked at the end of the issue, the leaders of the Lost Civilization agree to establish diplomatic relations with other nations. Write "Embassy of [the name of your Lost Civilization]" in the Truths box of "The Basics" pages of your Setting Book, and adjust the team's Government Reputation track by +1.
- If some, but not all, of the boxes are checked, the Lost Civilization's government thanks the heroes for their efforts, but
 can offer little in reward as they work to rebuild their infrastructure and tend to their wounded.
- ◆ If all the boxes are checked, write "Devastated by [the Ancient Evil's name]" in the Truths box of SE09: The Lost Civilization, which is forced to request humanitarian aid from the other nations of the world. Additionally, NC01: The Media Personality produces an in-depth report of the heroes' failures in the Lost Civilization. If the Media Personality has "Denounced heroes in reporting" in their Truths box, adjust the team's Public Reputation by -2. Otherwise, write it in the Media Personality's Truths box.



OUTLANDER

You are a hero of Earth, but not from one of the nations recognized by history or modern politics. You hail from a forgotten civilization, one that has remained hidden and only recently revealed its existence to the world. Examples from popular comics include Black Panther[®], Ka-Zar[®], and Namor[®] (Marvel), and Aquaman[®] (DC).





- 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. \diamond

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 (衝) 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.



MALEVOLENT ROBOT

This villain is a robot, cyborg, or other sentient mechanical entity that turns against humanity to pursue its evil goals. It is often a creation of a hero or otherwise intended for good, making its evil turn all the more painful. Examples include Master Mold[™], Ultimo[™], and Ultron[®] (Marvel), and Brainiac[™], Cyborg Superman[®], and Metallo[™] (DC).

NAME:



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.

FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

I KNOW WHAT YOU WILL DO BEFORE YOU DO

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

C I I HAVE STUDIED MY ENEMIES

At any time during an issue, choose a power possessed by one of the heroes, then describe an invention or technique the villain possesses capable of thwarting that power. For the rest of the issue, any hero who uses that power to attack this villain adds 2 challenge dice (

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

SWEEPING BLOWS

The villain can use their action to make 1 melee attack against each hero who is up close to the villain.

□ TACTICAL FAMILIARITY

Teamwork maneuvers performed on attacks against this villain also add 2 challenge dice (📣 📣) to the roll.

D D D 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.

VILLAIN WEAKNESS

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

INFLEXIBLE TACTICS

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

FLAWED INVENTIONS

Add 1 challenge die (🆚) to all rolls made to attack with a piece of this villain's technology.

FRAGMENTED MIND

After taking damage, the villain has a 50% chance of using their action on their next turn to attack one of their allies.

OVEREXTENSION

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

SCENARIO BY MY CREATION BETRAYED EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #10

Before starting this issue, create the **Malevolent Robot** villain, who will serve as the villain for this issue. If possible, choose a type of technology used by one of the heroes as a basis for the villain's origin. If a hero has an aspiration or turmoil involving invention, research, or the development of technology, prepare an origin story for the villain that involves one of the heroes accidentally creating the villain, possibly without the hero's knowledge. If no such origin is possible, you can also describe the villain as being created by **SE02: The Super Science Lab**, programmed with data taken from analysis of the heroes' battles with powered villains. In either case, the villain is intimately familiar with the heroes and their methods, secrets, and history.

The villain's main goal in the opening scene is a sucker punch, a surprise attack meant to knock the heroes offbalance enough that they can't interfere in the villain's plans. The site of the attack is the heroes' base of operations. If any of the heroes' aspiration or turmoil interludes at the start of the session involved those heroes being away from their base of operations, they are still away from the base at the start of the opening scene; the villain launches the surprise attack on the heroes when the fewest heroes are in the same place. Heroes can join in at the start of the next round after they learn about the attack.

In the opening scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

The issue's villain, the Malevolent Robot, who has a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes. The scene ends when the villain is defeated or has fled. If the villain is defeated, their body self-destructs, but not before taunting the heroes with the knowledge that the villain's consciousness lives on in a backup body elsewhere in the city. Regardless of whether the villain is defeated, succeeds, or escapes, the villain leaves the heroes with a parting taunt: "Soon I shall be as human as you!"

- ◆ Objective (□□□□, Enemy): In launching the attack, the villain seeks to completely destroy the heroes' base, which should include all their records and research. To do so, the villain has brought a tactical nuclear weapon with them, which they intend to plant in the base. If the villain succeeds in this objective, introduce the following complication. The villain then spends all their effort attempting to flee the scene.
 - Complication (, Critical): The tactical nuclear device has been planted, and the heroes need to find a way to disarm or otherwise neutralize it before it can destroy the heroes' base and everything around it.
 - ★ Failure: The heroes' base is destroyed. The scene immediately ends, and though the heroes escape with their lives the detonation unleashes untold destruction. If the heroes' base is located inside of their home city, and you have not yet filled out the setting element for SE27: The Catastrophe, do so now, using this detonation as the catastrophe in question.
- Scene Details: If the heroes' base was attacked in issue #6, there is construction equipment, scaffolding, and stacks of raw materials from the in-progress repairs to the base.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

The villain's cryptic parting taunt should be enough to clue the heroes in that this attack on their base was a part of a larger plan, and they should investigate further.

WHERE DID THAT THING COME FROM?

- It takes only a short time (a single interlude scene) for the heroes to uncover the technological origins of the villain, which can be gathered from an analysis of sensor readings from the conflict (or an analysis of the body the villain left behind, if they were defeated).
- If a hero is responsible for the creation of the villain, they could develop a method for detecting the location of the villain using sensors calibrated to find the energy signature of their robotic body.

HOW COULD THE VILLAIN BECOME HUMAN

- If the villain is defeated, an analysis of the body left behind indicates that its robot brain is capable of interfacing with a human nervous system. This should lead the heroes to the conclusion that the villain wants to take over the body of a human.
- Recently, surgical equipment used in transplant surgeries was stolen from one of the city's hospitals. This is the same kind of equipment that would be necessary to put a robotic brain into a human.
- The power requirements of such surgical equipment is high, and there are few places where such energy draw would go unnoticed, such as inside the Super Science Lab or at the city's largest tourist attraction.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

The villain knows that the heroes have had dealings with **SE03: The Government Agency** and plans to turn the head of the agency into a pawn that can be used to strike at the heroes. The villain intends to kidnap **NC06: The Agency Chief** and replace their brain with a computer system linked to the villain's artificial intelligence, allowing the villain to inhabit two bodies (their own, and that of the Agency Chief) at once.

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

- ♦ The issue's villain, the Malevolent Robot, who has a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.
- ♦ A squad of robotic drone minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. These drones are primitive copies of the main villain, acting like robotic zombies. They attempt to grab the heroes physically, and have a 50% chance of success on all rolls, with maximum damage equal to the size of the squad × 10.

The scene ends when the villain is defeated or has fled.

The agency chief is kidnapped 🗅 🗅

The Agency Chief is attending a security conference. At the conclusion of the night, the Agency Chief enters their towncar and orders the driver to head back to their hotel. On the way, the vehicle is attacked by the villain. If the heroes intervene at this point, they encounter the villain abducting the Agency Chief in the tight confines of a tunnel.

◆ Complication (□□): The Agency Chief needs to be gotten to safety, since they are not capable of holding their own in a fight between powered heroes and villains.

TRAVEL TO THE TOURIST ATTRACTION 🗅

With the Agency Chief in their possession, the villain travels through the city, headed for the **tourist attraction** defined in "The Basics" section of your Setting Book. The villain has constructed a lair in the subterranean hollows of the city beneath the **tourist attraction**. Confronting the villain at this point means battling with the villain on the crowded streets of the city.

- + **Complication**: Include the complication from the "The Agency Chief is kidnapped" step.
- Complication (III): Even though it is nighttime, there are dozens of vehicles in the area, filled with civilians who need to be gotten to safety.
- Government Reputation: If the heroes' Government Reputation track is 5 or higher, the heroes are contacted by their usual contact in the Government Agency and informed that the Agency Chief has gone missing. Their agency contact informs the heroes of the route the Agency Chief would have taken.

BEGIN THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS 🗅 🗅

The villain's lair beneath the **tourist attraction** is more of a nest than a home. It resembles a tangled spider web of cables, electronics, and computers, filling the underground with humming computers and flickering screens. The villain straps the Agency Chief to a surgical table and uses a machine that seems to be designed expressly for this purpose to start removing the Agency Chief's brain and replacing it with a computer.

- ◆ **Complication**: Include the complication from the "The Agency Chief is kidnapped" step.
- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): The villain's lair is rigged with powerful explosives, which will damage the tourist attraction and cause civilian casualties if detonated. As soon as the heroes arrive, the villain activates the explosives. The heroes need to defuse the explosives before they can go off.

THE TRANSFORMATION IS COMPLETE

If the heroes intervene at this point, it's already too late. The Agency Chief's brain has already been replaced with a computer. The heroes should not know that the villain succeeded in their plan; the Agency Chief appears to merely be a hostage that the heroes can rescue. In this event, the villain fights to the death, allowing their obviously villainous body to be destroyed since their mind now also occupies the body of the Agency Chief.

◆ Complication (Critical): Include the critical complication from the "Begin the Transformation Process" step.

WRAPPING UP

- ✤ If the Agency Chief's brain was replaced by a computer, write "Something seems off about the Agency Chief" in the Truths box of NCO6: The Agency Chief.
- ◆ If either the heroes' base was destroyed in the opening scene, or the tourist attraction was damaged in the final scene, NC03: The Hateful Authority issues public statements denouncing the team and blaming them for endangering the city by helping to create a villain. If the heroes' Public Reputation track is at -5 or lower, they also call on the government to take legal action against the team; write "Promoted government intervention in powered heroes" in the Hateful Authority's Truths box or, if it is already written there, instead adjust the team's

Government Reputation track by -2.



a hero who used their powers for evil, or a villain who became all-powerful. Examples from popular comics include Apocalypse" from the "Age of Apocalypse" and Ultron® from "Age of Ultron®" storylines (Marvel), Ultraman[™] from Earth-2 (DC), and the Plutonian[™] (Boom! Studios).

NAME:



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 their perks automatically, in addition to the two you choose.

🗸 🗆 🗅 🗋 Eternal Nemesis

This villain adds 4 advantage dice (🛞 🏟 🏟) to an attack they make 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 they make with each of their powers each round.

FLIGHT

This villain can fly when they move.

When this villain hits a hero with a melee attack, the attack pushes that hero until they are far away from the villain. If there is another hero in that path, the villain makes a physical ranged attack against that hero (using the hero who is being pushed as a weapon) with a 50% chance of success, dealing damage to both heroes equal to the number rolled.

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.

U 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.

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.

SCENARIO SCENARIO A PERILOUS PARADOX, PART I EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #11

Before starting this issue, create the **Other-Earth Overlord** villain, basing that villain on a hero or villain who has previously appeared in the series. This issue opens with a message, one sent by a familiar face through unexpected means. Without warning, **SEO1: The Powerful Artifact** begins outputting huge amounts of energy; if the Powerful Artifact is not in the heroes' possession, they are summoned by its keepers when the anomalous readings begin.

Once the heroes are gathered around the Powerful Artifact, its energy output surges once more, and a person materializes out of thin air, falling to the ground. They are wounded and clutching an electronic tablet. The heroes recognize their visitor; choose a minor villain who appeared in a previous issue to be this visitor. However, the visitor does not look anything like they did when the heroes last encountered them; the visitor doesn't look like a villain at all.

Mere seconds after their arrival, the visitor chokes out, "They...are...coming..." before collapsing into unconsciousness. That's when the monsters start to appear. Any heroes who were involved in issue #1 recognize these as the same monsters that appeared when the Powerful Artifact first came to the heroes' attention.

In the opening scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

Two squads of **Rampaging Monsters** minions, each of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2. Their goal seems to be to kill the visitor that appeared moments before they did.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated.

- ◆ Complication (□□□, Critical): The visitor who came through clutching the electronic tablet is bleeding out on the ground, right in the midst of the conflict, and needs to receive medical attention.
 - ✤ Failure: The visitor succumbs to their wounds, dying before they can provide more information.
- Lasting Repercussions: If any heroes have the Tainted by [the Powerful Artifact] lasting repercussion, the minions try to avoid attacking that hero at all costs, crying out in revulsion when attacked by that hero.

THE ELECTRONIC TABLET

On examination, the heroes learn that the electronic tablet the visitor was clutching contains a video message from one of the members of their own team, recognizable but also notably different in some way. The person on the video goes on to explain that they are sending this recording from **SE16**: **The Alternate Reality**, and provides information about how their world is different from the heroes' world. The messenger delivers a dire warning: the heroes' reality is in danger. The messenger explains that they are part of a team that undertook a suicide mission, breaking into the Other-Earth Overlord's citadel to steal the Powerful Artifact that exists in their reality. The video warns that the overlord has recently discovered the prime reality and plans to use the Powerful Artifact to destroy it, unraveling the prime reality in its entirety. Unfortunately, the person in the video does not have time to explain the villain's plan, as they are interrupted mid-sentence by an attack; the heroes glimpse the person's death before the recording ends.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

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

INTERROGATING THE VISITOR

- If the visitor survives the opening scene, after receiving medical attention they can provide information to the heroes about the Alternate Reality and the overlord.
- The overlord is a powerful figure in the Alternate Reality; based on how you have defined this Alternate Reality, they might be the ruler of the entire world, or perhaps has simply carved out a small empire and sits in tyrannical opposition to the other nations of the world. Part of their power comes from their possession of the Powerful Artifact, whose secrets the overlord has unlocked and which fuels much of the technology used by the overlord and those who follow them.
- The visitor was a part of the suicide mission striking at the overlord's citadel. Their goal was to find the Powerful Artifact and steal it; this plan collapsed when too many of their number died during the assault. The backup plan, crafted by the hero they saw die on the video, was to send the visitor through to the prime reality with a warning.
- The visitor was transported directly from the Alternate Reality to the prime reality using some of the technology that the overlord plans to use to unravel the prime reality. The visitor does not know how it works and was sent by other, more tech-savvy members of the strike team.
- The monsters that came through after the visitor are the servants of the overlord in the Alternate Reality. The
 overlord used the Powerful Artifact to bend their will.

DISCOVERING A WAY TO REACH THE ALTERNATE REALITY

- Even if the visitor from the Alternate Reality lives, they know nothing of the nature of the overlord's plans to unravel the
 prime reality. The heroes will need to travel to the Alternate Reality to discover it themselves.
- Lacking the overlord's technology, the heroes' best chance of reaching the Alternate Reality is to travel through a buffer dimension, a dimension that connects the realities of the multiverse together. Two examples of such dimensions are SE11: The Parallel Dimension and SE06: The Nether Realm.
- The heroes may already know about it, but SE02: The Super Science Lab had previously been conducting experiments to find a way to use the energy emitted by the Powerful Artifact to open a passageway to the Parallel Dimension. If the heroes did not already use such technology in the past, the lab has completed it now.
- The Powerful Artifact must remain in the prime reality; it cannot pass through portals that it makes.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Though the heroes need to make haste in traveling to the Alternate Reality to learn more about the overlord's plan and hopefully stop it, there is no actual pressing event they need to stop. As such, allow them the time they need to create interlude scenes to devise a method of reaching the Alternate Reality and learn other information.

TRAVELING THROUGH THE PARALLEL DIMENSION

When the portal closes behind the heroes, they can see a vague dimple in reality where the fabric of space warps, corresponding to the place where they left the Powerful Artifact. To reach the Alternate Reality by traveling through the Parallel Dimension, they must travel to reach the point where the Powerful Artifact in the Alternate Reality creates a similar dimple in the fabric of space, following sensor data leading them to the dimple. Describe this journey as long, tedious, and exhausting, but filled with little of note other than the heroes getting on each others' nerves. When they find the dimple, they can simply reach out and push through, entering the Alternate Reality.

If the giant monster was sent to the Parallel Dimension in issue #5, the heroes encounter it standing sentinel over their destination. As they approach, it surprisingly speaks; it seems to have gained intelligence in its time trapped in this dimension. It warns the heroes that the time of its return to their world is nigh, but for now, it will let them pass.

TRAVELING THROUGH THE NETHER REALM

If **SE06: The Nether Realm** has already been defined and a hero knows of its existence, they could use the Powerful Artifact to open a portal to the Nether Realm and use that as the route to the Alternate Reality. Like the Parallel Dimension, the Nether Realm acts as a buffer between realities. If they choose this route, they must seek out the Forsaken Keep, the home of the Nether Realm's master (described in more detail in *Eldritch Mysteries* #5).

◆ If any hero has the lasting repercussion Scarred by [the Nether Realm], they can lead the other heroes directly to the Forsaken Keep. They also gain one additional check mark on their story progress track for doing so.

BARGAINING WITH THE NETHER REALM'S MASTER

Traveling into the Nether Realm can only get them so far. They will need to seek out and bargain with the master of the Nether Realm (either the **Demigod** or **Lord of Hell** major villain from the *Eldritch Mysteries* series pad), who can open up a passage to the alternate reality they seek. The price of the bargain should be steep.

ARRIVAL IN THE ALTERNATE REALITY

Whenever the heroes finally arrive in the Alternate Reality, they emerge in the shadow of the overlord's citadel, which is surrounded by a city-sized sprawl of slums, devastation, and the occasional still-gleaming, heavily defended tower. The citadel can be located either in this reality's version of the heroes' home city or somewhere else in the world, as fits the overlord's origins. A "welcoming party," dispatched to watch for signs of dimensional intrusion, strikes before the heroes have a chance to get their bearings. In this conflict scene, the heroes face the following opposition:

Choose a group of minor villains who have previously appeared in the series, or create a new group of minor villains that are a mix of Alternate Reality versions of heroes and villains known to the heroes. There is one minor villain in the scene per hero, each with 1 initiative card.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated. If the heroes are defeated, all but one of the heroes escapes to safety. One of the heroes is captured and taken to the citadel as the overlord's prisoner, and they gain the following lasting repercussion: **Prisoner of [the Other-Earth Overlord]**. That hero's player should create a new hero, representing a character from the Alternate Reality, to play from this point on.

WRAPPING UP

At the conclusion of the issue, a hooded figure steps out of the shadows. The heroes can see that this person has numerous scars and obvious cybernetic replacement parts. "I was hoping someone would come," says the figure, pulling back their hood to reveal a villain the heroes have faced before, but obviously a version of that villain from this reality. "Come with me, if you want to save your reality from destruction." The issue ends on a cliffhanger following this statement.

SCENARIO SCENARIO A PERILOUS PARADOX, PART 2 EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN #12

At the conclusion of the previous issue, the heroes arrived in **SE16: The Alternate Reality** and were approached by someone who is a villain in their own reality, but who has come to aid them upon their arrival in this reality. The hooded figure, who acts as the heroes' "guide" in this world, leads the heroes to a safe house in a run-down, abandoned building.

Once they are ensconced in the safe house, their guide shares some of the knowledge that the heroes who engaged in the suicide mission had pertaining to the overlord's master plan. **SE01: The Powerful Artifact** is the key to the overlord's plans. There are not copies of the Powerful Artifact in every reality, but rather a single Powerful Artifact that exists simultaneously in all realities. Its physical forms seem wholly separate and independent in each reality, but they are connected to each other through a cosmic connection that defies physics. The villain's plan is to have one of the villain's lieutenants travel to the prime reality and destroy the prime reality's version of the Powerful Artifact, using a special weapon (a device of cosmic origin that the villain obtained somehow). The Powerful Artifact's destruction will be like yanking a bottom block from a tower; the whole of reality will come tumbling down.

The people who sent the message through to the prime reality to warn the heroes originally had a different goal for their attack on the citadel. They had planned to steal the Powerful Artifact from the Artifact Vault (a sealed chamber where the overlord keeps it) and use it to bring help to them from other realities, then enlist that help to overthrow the overlord. Their plan involved a frontal assault, using brute force and overwhelming power to fight their way to victory. That plan obviously failed, so the guide informs the heroes that they will need a more subtle plan to infiltrate the citadel and stop the overlord from unraveling their reality.

INFILTRATING THE OVERLORD'S CITADEL

Their guide details five major challenges that they will need to overcome to infiltrate the citadel:

- Access to the citadel is strictly controlled. The gates to the citadel only open for the overlord and the overlord's direct lieutenants. Anti-aircraft batteries make approaching by air impossible.
- The citadel is heavily guarded, not only by Rampaging Monsters minions, but also by human troops that have been lured or forced into service. The defense forces of the citadel form a small army and will capture or kill the heroes easily unless the heroes' plan accounts for them.
- The citadel has a state-of-the-art computer-controlled electronic security system, consisting of a widespread network of video, audio, infrared, and seismic sensors spread throughout the citadel. When triggered, the security system will raise an alarm that will lock down the citadel.
- The citadel is labyrinthine. The heroes could spend days wandering around aimlessly and would surely be caught. Knowing where the overlord keeps the Powerful Artifact, and mapping a route to get there quickly, is necessary.
- The overlord is both cunning and sadistic, and has placed traps throughout the citadel with the intention of gruesomely killing anyone who ventures into off-limits areas. These traps are separate from the security system and need to be identified ahead of time so that they can be avoided.

WHAT THE HEROES CAN LEARN OR DO

The entirety of this issue involves the heroes creating a plan to infiltrate the citadel and making preparations to do so. Below are some suggestions for information you can provide to the heroes if they seek it out. Each scene the heroes create as they pursue these goals should also be an opportunity to experience the Alternate Reality more fully; as you flesh out the Alternate Reality during these scenes, write any important details you create in **SE16: The Alternate Reality**'s Truths box.

RENDEZVOUS WITH THE UNDERGROUND

- Though most of those who live in the overlord's domain are suitably cowed, small human resistance group violently defies the overlord's occupation. This resistance lives in the ruins and subterranean tunnels surrounding the overlord's citadel. Finding them is a matter of talking to the right person and getting an introduction rather than physically seeking them out.
- This resistance is led by this reality's version of NC03: The Hateful Authority, who is still hateful but also could be an ally against the overlord.
- If properly convinced, the resistance could stage an attack on the citadel, drawing defenders away from the areas where the heroes are going to be making their way to the Artifact Vault.

REPLACE ONE OF THE OVERLORD'S LIEUTENANTS

- One of the overlord's lieutenants is the alternate-reality counterpart of one of the heroes. Given that they are essentially the same person (at least physically), the heroes could gain access to the citadel by luring the lieutenant out of the citadel, subduing them, and having the hero play the role of the lieutenant.
- Every day, that lieutenant travels out alone into the surrounding area, on some regular errand (if the lieutenant's hero counterpart has some known vice or weakness, this errand could reflect that).
- ◆ If they can interrogate this lieutenant, they can also learn the location of the traps that litter the citadel's corridors.
- The lieutenant is a minor villain who has 1 initiative card, 100 resistance, a 70% chance of success with a power fitting that character (damage equal to the number rolled) and a 50% chance for anything else.

GET HELP FROM THE INSIDE

- The heroes' guide can tell them about someone known in this world as "the Architect," who helped the overlord design and build the massive citadel. As a reward for doing so, the overlord paid the Architect handsomely and gave them one of the few towers still standing in the city. The Architect lives in opulence and seclusion and is considered to be a traitor by most of the freedom-fighting resistance.
- Choose a scientifically minded character or hero from the prime reality to be the identity of the Architect.
- ✤ If the heroes can convince the sullen, half-mad Architect to assist them, the architect can provide them with information on how to navigate the citadel and provide a computer virus that will shut down the facility's security.

EVENTS OUTSIDE OF THE HEROES' CONTROL

To keep up tension and reinforce the dangerous nature of the overlord's domain, sprinkle in the following scenes as you deem necessary to keep the pacing of the issue interesting.

HUNTER SQUADS

Not content to sit still and let the heroes plot freely, the overlord dispatches several squads of hunters to comb through the slums surrounding the citadel, searching for the heroes. If the heroes run afoul of one of these hunter squads, they face the following opposition in a conflict scene:

- ♦ A squad of **Rampaging Monsters** minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes × 2.
- Two larger-than-average monsters, minor villains with 50 resistance and a single attack (which should match the description for the minions' attacks) that has a 75% chance of success.

The scene ends when all the enemies are defeated or have fled. If the heroes are defeated, all but one of the heroes escapes to safety. One of the heroes is captured and taken to the citadel as the overlord's prisoner, and they gain the following lasting repercussion: **Prisoner of [the Other-Earth Overlord]**. That hero's player should create a new hero, representing a character from the Alternate Reality, to play from this point on.

 Complication (□□): Bedraggled inhabitants of the overlord's domain, huddled in fear behind makeshift cover, need to be gotten to safety before the monsters turn on them.

PROPAGANDA BROADCASTS

Usually dark massive video screens, located in a public place frequented by the oppressed citizens, spring to life unexpectedly. The overlord delivers a bombastic warning that anyone caught colluding with "hostile invaders" will be summarily executed. The propaganda broadcast repeats loudly for hours.

PUBLIC EXECUTION

As a means of heading off any rebellion the heroes might inspire, the overlord rounds up three suspected rebels and stages a public execution at a rubble-strewn intersection in the crumbling slums. The execution involves tying the three rebels to metal poles and incinerating them with a massive particle cannon.

If the heroes decide to intervene, they face the following opposition:

- One of the overlord's lieutenants (pick a minor villain or hero from the prime reality as the basis of this character), a minor villain who has 1 initiative card, 100 resistance, a 70% chance of success with a power fitting that character (damage equal to the number rolled) and a 50% chance for anything else.
- \Rightarrow A squad of **Rampaging Monsters** minions, of a size equal to the number of heroes \times 2.
- ◆ Objective (□□□, Opposed □□□): The heroes need to free the three prisoners before the enemies can charge up the particle cannon and complete the execution.

The scene ends when either side completes the objective, or when all heroes or enemies have been defeated. If the heroes are defeated, they are simply forced to retreat back to safety.

WRAPPING UP

- +
- When the heroes have completed their preparations for infiltrating the overlord's citadel, the issue ends. The series concludes in *Explorers of the Unknown Annual* #1!

This issue opens as the heroes put their plan from the previous issue into motion, infiltrating the citadel of the Other-Earth Overlord in SE16: The Alternate Reality. If the heroes found solutions to all five of the challenges put before them, they can make their way to the Artifact Vault, where the overlord keeps this reality's version of SE01: The **Powerful Artifact.**

EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN ANNUAL #1

PARADOX, PART

The issue begins at the start of the infiltration of the citadel. For each of the five challenges from the previous issue, create a scene that gives the heroes the opportunity to use their preparations to overcome that challenge. Suggestions include the following scenes:

- ♦ The heroes must convince the citadel's gatekeepers to open the gates and let the heroes in.
- \diamond The heroes come upon a security checkpoint filled with the citadel's defenders.
- ♦ The heroes must cross a corridor filled with hyper-sensitive sensor systems.

SCENARIO

- ♦ The heroes come to a room, off of which over a dozen hallways branch out across two levels.
- ♦ The heroes enter a room that seems unusually inviting, but something is clearly off; the room contains a trap involving binding the room's occupants in fast-hardening liquid netting, then incinerating them.

In these scenes, encourage one hero to take the lead on explaining how their preparations help them overcome this challenge. If they do, they succeed in bypassing the challenge. If they do not, you can give them a chance to improvise a solution, but they must succeed on some check to do so (be liberal with handing out challenge dice in these situations). If any of these rolls fail, their cover is blown, and the defense forces of the citadel fall upon them. The scene then becomes a moving battle through the halls of the citadel to reach the Artifact Vault. If the heroes bypass all the challenges, they make it all the way to the Artifact Vault without issue...only to find the overlord there, in the process of enacting their plan to unravel the prime reality.

Once the heroes reach the Artifact Vault, the remainder of the issue is one long conflict scene that will span multiple realities (possibly with heroes and enemies engaging in the conflict in both realities simultaneously). Once the conflict scene begins, the heroes face the following opposition:

- The Other-Earth Overlord major villain, who has a number of initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.
- ✤ If the heroes' plan did not account for all the challenges enumerated by their guide in the previous issue, the conflict begins when two squads of Rampaging Monsters minions, each of a size equal to the number of heroes \times 2, ambushes the heroes.
- ♦ One of the overlord's lieutenants (whose identity should be recognizable as a hero or villain from the prime reality), a minor villain who has 1 initiative card, 100 resistance, a 70% chance of success with a power fitting that character (damage equal to the number rolled) and a 50% chance for anything else.

The scene changes significantly when the heroes have reduced the overlord to less than half of the overlord's total resistance. See "Battle on the Prime Earth" below.

- Complication (DDD): If there are any heroes who gained the Prisoner of [the Other-Earth Overlord] lasting repercussion in the previous two issues, those heroes are being held in the Artifact Vault. They are being kept unconscious and immobilized by machinery that looks more like a torture device than anything medical. The heroes can rescue one prisoner each time they progress this complication twice. Any prisoners not rescued before the heroes return to the prime reality remain stranded in the citadel; those who are rescued lose this lasting repercussion.
- **Objective** (DD, Enemy): The villain's plan is to send their lieutenant through to the prime reality with this reality's Starslayer, a sword forged in the heart of a dying star meant to slay a powerful cosmic force (see Clash Among the Stars #10).
 - bringing Starslayer with them. That villain can then start progressing the enemy objective listed in the "Battle on the Prime Earth" section below.
 - ♦ If the heroes defeat the lieutenant and somehow get their hands on Starslayer before the villain does, they might be tempted to use Starslayer to destroy this reality's Powerful Artifact. If they do, use the following objective to determine their success:
 - Objective (DDDD): The Powerful Artifact resists being destroyed by Starslayer, and its wielder must force the blade into the Powerful Artifact's heart. When this objective is completed, add a Hazard card to the initiative track at the start of the next round. Anyone who has not traveled back to the prime earth before the Hazard initiative card comes up is destroyed when this reality collapses.

- ◆ Lasting Repercussions: Any heroes who have the Wielder of Starslayer lasting repercussion recognize the weapon immediately. Attacks against this hero using Starslayer automatically add 4 challenge dice (♦ ♦ ♦ ♦) to the roll. Additionally, in the prime reality, such a hero adds 2 advantage dice (() to any roll made to progress the objective to prevent the villains from using Starslayer to destroy the Powerful Artifact.
- ◆ Lasting Repercussions: Any heroes who have the Tainted by [the Powerful Artifact] lasting repercussion feel this reality's version of the Powerful Artifact calling to them. Should they approach, they feel the energy that has lingered within them since their first encounter with the Powerful Artifact change. Now, in the presence of the Alternate Reality version of the Powerful Artifact, they see the Powerful Artifact from a totally new perspective. With a sufficient effort of will, they can command the Powerful Artifact to transport all the heroes back to the prime Earth using their action on their turn. That hero erases the Tainted by [the Powerful Artifact] lasting repercussion and replaces it with the following lasting repercussion: Mastery Over [the Powerful Artifact].
- If no heroes have enough resonance with the Powerful Artifact to transport them back to their Earth, heroes can attempt the following objective to make their way home:
 - Objective (DD): The villain's technology, which manipulates the Powerful Artifact, can be used to transport the heroes back to the prime Earth if they can find some way to interface with it and activate it. Once this objective is complete, any hero can use their action to travel to the prime reality.

BATTLE ON THE PRIME EARTH

When the battle moves to the prime reality, its epicenter is the Powerful Artifact. Wherever the Powerful Artifact was when the heroes traveled to the Alternate Reality in issue #10 is where the battle takes place in the prime reality. This scene ends when all the villains are defeated.

- When the overlord is reduced to less than half of their total resistance, they decide to flee from this reality and see their plan through to completion personally. If the villain's lieutenant has not yet completed the enemy objective, they use their actions to do so now, bringing *Starslayer* to the prime reality with them. If the lieutenant is still alive, the overlord orders the lieutenant to stay behind and deal with the heroes.
- Objective (DDDD, Enemy): The Powerful Artifact resists being destroyed by Starslayer, and its wielder must force the blade into the Powerful Artifact's heart.
 - Failure: When the enemy completes this objective, they force Starslayer into the Powerful Artifact. Instead of being destroyed and unraveling reality, the Powerful Artifact shatters into thirteen shards. Reality ripples, unleashing devastation in a localized area. Everything within a 1-mile radius is completely destroyed, as though a nuclear blast had leveled the area. The shards of the Powerful Artifact fly outward with incredible speed, scattering themselves to the corners of the planet and the galaxy alike. Write "Shattered into 13 shards" in the Truths box of SE01: The Powerful Artifact. Starslayer is completely atomized in the process; apparently, since this Starslayer was from a different reality, some of its potency was lost.
- ◆ Complication (□□□): The sudden arrival of villains in this reality catches many innocent bystanders unawares. While there are dozens of small groups of bystanders in the area, three small groups are in the most danger of being harmed and need to be gotten to safety before they are hurt or killed.

WRAPPING UP

- ◆ If the heroes shatter the Alternate Reality's Powerful Artifact, that reality is completely destroyed. Erase all your answers and everything in the Truths box of SE16: The Alternate Reality. That setting element can be redefined in the future as a completely different reality the next time something needs to reference it.
- ◆ If the enemies succeed in their objective and shatter the Powerful Artifact, adjust the team's Government Reputation track by -3. 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 heroes' Government Reputation track is at -5 or less and NCO3: The Hateful Authority has "Promoted government intervention in powered heroes" in their Truths box, in the wake of the danger to the city the Hateful Authority convinces the government to enact SE26: The Superhuman Edict. Otherwise, the Hateful Authority gives a speech before the government decrying the heroes; write "Promoted government intervention in powered heroes" in the Hateful Authority the Hateful Authority is Truths box if it is not already there.
- ◆ If Starslayer somehow survives to the end of the issue, choose one hero who came into contact with it to gain the following lasting repercussion: Wielder of Starslayer. As for the weapon itself, NCO8: The Cosmic Liaison requests that the heroes turn the weapon over. If they do, the liaison says they plan to keep it safe but away from Earth. If any heroes have the Captive of the Star Empire lasting repercussion, the liaison also offers to trade the weapon for that hero's safe release. Write "Possesses an Alternate Reality version of Starslayer" in the Truths box of whichever group, team, or Narrator character the heroes decide to entrust the weapon to (including keeping it for themselves).