MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

GOLDEN AGE

CHRISTOPER MCGLOTHLIN · GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING

SOURCEBOOK

GOLDEN AGE

A GREEN RONIN PRODUCTION

Author's Dedication To all those who truly made it a Golden Age, including Everett "Busy" Arnold, Stan Aschmeier, Bernard Baily, C.C. Beck, Alfred Bester, John Broome, Jack Burnley, Bert Christman, Jack Cole, Reed Crandall, Ralph Daigh, Will Eisner, Lee Elias, Whitney Ellsworth, Lou Fine, Bill Finger, Ken Fitch, Creig Flessel, Ben Flinton, Gardner Fox, Max Gaines, Joe Gallagher, Chad Grothkopf, Paul Gustavson, Irwin Hasen, Jerry Iger, Carmine Infantino, Bob Kane, Bob Kanigher, Jack Kirby, Jon Chester Kozlak, Joe Kubert, Harry Lampert, William M. Marston, Sheldon Mayer, Mort Meskin, Sheldon Moldoff, Martin Naydel, Dennis Neville, Mart Nodell, Bill O'Connor, George Papp, Bill Parker, Harry G. Peter, Mac Raboy, Paul Reinman, Chuck Reizenstein, Jerry Robinson, Dorothy Roubicek, Julie Schwartz, Joe Shuster, Jerry Siegel, Joe Simon, Vince Sullivan, Alex Toth, Ted Udall, Mort Weisinger, and William Woolfolk.

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INTRODUCTION

The "Golden Age" of comic books ran from 1938 to 1955. It was also the era of the Great Depression, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and the atom bomb. Is it really any wonder people were looking for heroes? As it happened, Americans discovered in themselves an entire generation of heroes. They survived the hard times, saved the world from fascism, and redefined courage and sacrifice for the generations that followed.

The accomplishments of these real-world heroes might seem to leave little room for the comic-book variety, but in fact just the opposite was true. Americans looking for diversion from economic upheaval and global war quickly found comic books could take them as far away from their troubles as their imaginations could carry them, for the price of just one dime. It was a bargain that millions of Americans were ready and eager to take.

What they got for their ten cents was something quite extraordinary, even if it was not widely recognized as such at the time: the genesis of a uniquely American art form. With every page they wrote and every panel they drew, a dedicated group of pioneering creators showed the tremendous sense of wonder comics can inspire. A half century later their legacy has become so great that comic books remain largely what these supremely talented men and women made them.

Golden Age allows gamers and comic-book fans alike to explore this marvelous legacy, using the best-selling *Mutants & Masterminds* RPG as guide. In these pages, comic books' greatest era meets the World's Greatest Superhero RPG. While it costs a bit more than a dime nowadays, the timeless sense of wonder remains undiminished.

USING THIS BOOK

All that is required to role-play in the era of *Golden Age* is a copy of the *Mutants & Masterminds* rulebook, a twenty-sided die, some pencils and paper, and a group of players who want to make the world safe for democracy. Feel free to add miniature figures, dry-erase maps, etc. to the mixture to taste.

Golden Age is broken down into six chapters: two covering the Golden Age era from both comic book and real-world perspectives, two on Golden Age gaming (one for players and one for Gamemasters), and two on the Golden Age era of the Freedom City campaign setting: an overview, including Golden Age characters, and an introductory adventure.

CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF GOLDEN AGE COMICS

Chapter 1 provides a brief history of the many milestones that occurred during comic books' Golden Age. From the birth of costumed superheroes, super-teams, and super-heroines, nearly everything anyone's ever enjoyed about comic books first appeared during this time period. This section gives you all the reasons why this era is called the "Golden Age."

CHAPTER 2: THE GOLDEN AGE WORLD

Chapter 2 describes the many potential campaign facets—both fictional and reality-based—rooted in the world of Golden Age comic books. Whether it's the social turmoil of the Depression, the rise of imperialist dictatorships overseas, the all-engulfing Second World War, or the start of the Cold War, there's no shortage of challenges even for superpowered heroes. There's also information on how best to incorporate the actual history of the era into your games, for an added touch of verisimilitude.

CHAPTER 3: GOLDEN AGE HEROES

Chapter 3 is all about how to create authentic Golden Age superheroes. Comic books were different back in the days of ration cards and radio: in style, outlook, and conventions. This chapter provides tips to players on how to create characters suitable for the era and get them ready for some Nazi-smashing action.

CHAPTER 4: GAMEMASTERING THE GOLDEN AGE

Chapter 4 gets Gamemasters up to speed on everything they need to know to create adventures set in the Golden Age. It's a very diverse era, and it becomes all the more so when its modern interpretations are taken into account. This chapter helps Gamemasters choose the approach that's most appealing to them and their players.

In addition, Chapter 4 saves busy Gamemasters some work. It provides archetypes for all sorts of Golden Age characters, from dastardly villains to brave GIs, as well as a plethora of gadgets, vehicles, and equipment, both real and fantastic.

CHAPTER 5: THE GOLDEN AGE OF FREEDOM

Chapter 5 is for all the Freedom City fans out there as it takes a nostalgic look back to the Golden Age of *Mutants & Masterminds'* premier metropolis. This section provides the straight scoop on all the most important locations, events, and personages of 1940s Freedom City. Whether Gamemasters want to run a campaign set in Freedom during the Golden Age era, or just have their modern-day heroes time-travel back to visit their costumed forbearers, this chapter is where the city's glorious past comes to life.

CHAPTER 6: A DATE THAT WILL LIVE IN INFAMY

A complete introductory adventure scenario, "A Date That Will Live in Infamy," follows, designed to start off any Golden Age Freedom City campaign with a bang. Even if Freedom's not the campaign's home, the events are easily transposed to the urban area of the Gamemaster's choice. It provides a concrete example of what a Golden Age adventure is like.

APPENDIX: FIELD BATTLE RULES

The book concludes with an appendix of optional rules for handling conflicts between Golden Age heroes and villains and large-scale military forces on the battlefronts of the wars of the era.

CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF GOLDEN AGE COMICS

The essential elements of comic books fell into place in a relatively short span of time. As a consequence, the history of comic books' Golden Age is one of major innovations coming on seemingly a monthly basis. During this time, all the components of the modern comic book—including the medium itself—made their very first appearances.

THE NOT-SO-SECRET ORIGIN OF COMIC BOOKS

American comic books got their start when publisher Max Gaines released *Funnies on Parade* to newsstands in 1933. Like all comic books for the next several years, it was a collection of already-published daily newspaper strips (presaging the currently popular trend towards trade-paperback collections).

Once comic books proved a financially viable enterprise, the next logical step was to use them to showcase all-new, original feature strips. This came about with *New Fun Comics*, published in February 1935 by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's National Allied Publications.

Wheeler-Nicholson, an ex-Army officer drummed out of the service for insubordination, was simply looking for a cheaper alternative to paying the hefty licensing fees involved in republishing existing material. However, in the thirty-two (mostly black and white) pages of *New Fun Comics* #1, he did much more than that: he made history.

In its first five issues, *New Fun Comics* presented stories from a wide variety of genres, all of which had firm roots in the daily newspaper comic strips: westerns, science fiction, adventure, and humor. This broad anthology format predominated throughout the Golden Age, with particular genres becoming more or less prevalent within them as popular tastes changed.

Anyone lucky enough to pick up a copy of this comics milestone back in 1935 would've been out a dime. Today, a copy of the exact same funny book in very fine condition goes for around $46,000.

THE FIRST COMIC BOOK HEROES

New Fun Comics #6 saw the debut of a feature entitled "Doctor Occult, The Ghost Detective," created by two high-school pals—writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster. In his first appearances, Doctor Occult was one part Sam Spade mixed with one part Mandrake the Magician: a hard-boiled ghost-busting mystical detective who showed just how much early comic books owed to pulp magazines and newspaper comic strips. Doctor Occult became a moderate success, of the sort that usually invites changes in hopes of making it a major success. While the revisions made to Doctor Occult neither lasted or saved him from eventual comic-book limbo, they were (in hindsight) a fascinating preview of what was to come.

In the re-titled and renumbered *More Fun Comics* #2 (October 1936), the good Doctor shed his Dashiell Hammett-approved trench coat in favor of a much gaudier costume, complete with red cape. His new Technicolor long underwear only lasted through four issues, but it and his magical abilities make Doctor Occult the very first costumed superhero, for however brief a time it lasted.

Siegel and Shuster held on to the idea of a superpowered hero wearing a red cape for later reuse. In the meantime, they continued to create new comic book features, helping to define the medium along the way.

THE PRE-COSTUME HEROES

The success of *New Fun Comics* led its publisher (now known as National Comics) to try its hand at another anthology title in 1937 entitled *Detective Comics*. Whereas *New Fun Comics* drew inspiration from newspaper comic strips, *Detective Comics* looked to comic books' other great forebear, the pulps. With stories focusing on two-fisted characters like Speed Saunders and evil Oriental mastermind Ching Lung, *Detective Comics* clearly showed the influence of pulp mainstays such as Doc Savage and Fu Manchu on the new medium of comic books.

Slam Bradley, created for *Detective Comics* by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, was typical of the early comic-book heroes. He was a wisecracking "ace freelance sleuth, fighter, and adventurer" who battled drug smugglers and other vile criminals with nothing more than his two fists. Slam was also a master of disguise, as was his comic sidekick, "Shorty" Morgan. Despite their lack of truly superhuman abilities, Slam and Shorty's bare-knuckled exploits have much in common with those of the "union-suit heroes" to follow.

THE MAN OF TOMORROW

In 1938, National Comics was searching for the right sort of feature that would launch their new title *Action Comics* with a bang. The editor in charge of the new title, Vince Sullivan, eventually found just what he was looking for in an unpublished strip created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster named for its main character, "Superman."

Major Wheeler-Nicholson had rejected the strip when Siegel and Shuster first submitted it back in 1936. The Major had thought it was all too far-fetched to find much of an audience. In 1938, National Comics' new owner Harry Donenfeld shared those sentiments. In hindsight, it's not hard to see why.

Characters in colorful costumes were nothing new, and neither were dashing heroes who hid behind the guise of a meek alter ego. Even the idea of a character with an outlandish superhuman ability wasn't anything new. What made Superman different was the combination of all these elements, and pushing the idea of a man with extraordinary powers to the limit.

Superman wasn't just capable of amazing feats of strength, he was also bulletproof *and* could leap over skyscrapers. It was all quite unbelievable, but in the end, National Comics bought the rights to Superman from Siegel and Shuster for the princely sum of $130.

Thanks to Superman (prominently featured on the book's iconic cover), *Action Comics* #1 became a smash hit as soon as it appeared on newsstands in June 1938. Soon after, Superman's popularity followed him to other comic titles, radio shows, animated cartoons, and movie serials. Ultimately, the Man of Tomorrow became one of the most famous fictional characters ever created.

Part of the reason Superman was such a hit with readers was because he was, well, so *super*. Not only did the Man of Tomorrow have powers far above those of mortal men, he had abilities far above most other costumed characters of that time. Moreover, unlike many of his fellows, Superman showed off his amazing abilities at seemingly every opportu-

nity. When it came to delivering comic-book thrills, page for page, few could match the Man of Steel.

The success of Superman had an immediate and lasting effect on the nascent art of comic books. Save for a brief interruption in the 1950s, Superman and his many super-powered followers and imitators dominate the medium right through the present day. Though there were (and are) titles featuring other genres, comic books and super-powered characters became synonymous in the minds of most Americans. Indeed, what were then called "costumed characters," "long underwear heroes," or "union-suit heroes" are now known as "superheroes" because of the Man of Tomorrow.

CURSES! FOILED AGAIN!

Initially, early comic-book heroes battled against a succession of gangsters, killers, and other assorted mundane crooks. During his four-issue run as a costumed character, Doctor Occult ran afoul of a supernatural enemy named Koth. Like the good Doctor's brilliant-hued union suit, however, he neither lasted long nor made much of an impression. Super-powered characters spent their time chasing down the same types of lawbreakers as real-world cops and G-Men.

While everyday criminals never totally went of style during the Golden Age, their monopoly on comic-book villainy was eventually broken. It's a matter of some debate, but the most widely recognized claimant to being the very first supervillain was the Ultra-Humanite, a mad scientist who first appeared to menace Superman in *Action Comics* #13 (cover-dated July 1939). While the Ultra-Humanite may not have been the first, he was far from the last.

In time, all the most successful Golden Age comic-book heroes gained super-powered archenemies. Many among this first generation of cos-

tumed bad guys eventually faded into obscurity, but others endured and became nearly as well known as the heroes they sought to destroy.

Among the classic supervillains National Comics debuted during the Golden Age are Superman's best known foes. Of these, the most famous was Lex Luthor (the implacable mad scientist), along with the somewhat sillier menaces of the Toyman, the Prankster, and Mister Mxyzptlk. Batman's wonderfully bizarre collection of recurring foes also got its start during this era, including Catwoman, the Penguin, Two-Face, the Riddler, and (of course) the Joker.

Other Golden Age companies contributed their own memorable archfoes. Fittingly, in the same issue Martin Goodman's publishing company debuted Captain America, his evil opposite the Red Skull also appeared, paving the way for many battles (and returns from seeming death) to come.

Fawcett's best-selling Marvel Family met its matches in the evil Marvel Black Adam, as well as Doctor Thaddeus Bodog Sivana and the sinister Sivana Family. Indeed, it was Dr. Sivana who became know for uttering the archetypal sentiment of so many comic-book villains to follow: "Curses! Foiled again!"

WEIRD CREATURE OF THE NIGHT

Proof positive that the costume made the character came less than a year after the Man of Tomorrow's debut. Editor Vince Sullivan already suspected as much when he encouraged an artist by the name of Bob Kane to try his hand at creating a long-underwear hero. Kane drew from a diverse group of influences, from *The Mask of Zorro* to Leonardo da Vinci's sketches, to compose a preliminary drawing of "the Bat-Man." Before submitting it to Sullivan, Kane sought advice from a writer he'd worked with previously, Bill Finger.

BY ANY OTHER NAME

Dozens of publishers entered the comic book market during the Golden Age, but few fared as well as Martin Goodman. Goodman was not only an industry pioneer, but also one of the select few whose company survives to the present day.

Consistency, however, seems not to have been one of his strong points. Despite publishing pretty much the same titles and the same characters from month to month, Goodman operated under a bewildering variety of company names during the Golden Age, including the one his company is known by today, Marvel Comics. No name lasted for more than a few months at a time, and Goodman was not above reusing them, just to make things even more confusing. For convenience's sake, most comics historians refer to all of Goodman's Golden Age publishing ventures as either "Marvel Comics" (to preserve their lineage) or "Timely Comics" (to separate them from later books).

Goodman's initial venture into comic books, 1939's *Marvel Comics* #1, was an immediate hit, spawning two characters that are still well-known today: the Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch. Shortly after their debut, the two of them made a bit of comic-book history as well.

The cover of *Marvel Mystery Comics* #8 (dated June 1940) promised readers "Something New!" and the pages within did not disappoint. In that issue, the Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch engaged in a fire-and-water battle so titanic it took the issue following to reach a conclusion. For the very first time, two characters from separate features met face to face in the same story. The comics crossover was born—as was the modern tradition of having superheroes fight each other because of a misunderstanding when they first meet.

Finger suggested several changes that Kane incorporated into his final draft, including changing the Bat-Man's costume from red to blue-gray. Sullivan liked the end result; despite the fears of some at National that the character was just too creepy, he gave the go-ahead for the Bat-Man's debut appearance in *Detective Comics* #27.

The Bat-Man was a comic book character whose pulp-magazine origins showed quite readily, with the Shadow being a noticeable influence. What instantly set the Batman (he quickly lost the hyphen) apart was the now world-famous costume, designed to make his alter ego Bruce Wayne look like a "weird creature of the night."

To be sure, the Batman also benefited from Bill Finger's scripting and art from Bob Kane (and later, Jerry Robinson). When the character became yet another smash hit for National Comics, the lesson for others was clear. If a publisher wanted a character to make it big in comic books, superhuman or not, he'd better have a rainbow union suit somewhere in his closet.

SHAZAM!

Once Superman demonstrated the greatest of his many powers was super-sales, the inevitable imitators began to appear. At that point, National Comics revealed a superpower of its own: the ability to file lawsuits at lightning speed.

Some of the targeted characters, like Fox Feature Syndicate's "Wonder Man" and Fawcett Comics' "Master Man," were pretty clear rip-offs of the Man of Steel and quickly disappeared in a sea of litigation. From that point on, Fox Feature Syndicate played it safe, and stuck to decidedly less-superhuman characters such as the Blue Beetle.

Fawcett Comics, on the other hand, pressed on, undeterred by National's litigiousness. In 1939, it busied itself with the conception of another amazing union-suit hero of their own, a Fred MacMurray look-alike called "Captain Thunder." Created by writer Bill Parker and artist C.C. Beck, Captain Thunder was to be the lead feature in Fawcett's *Flash Comics*. These plans had to be altered, however, once both "Captain Thunder" and "*Flash Comics*" were found to be already in use in the increasingly crowded comic-book field.

Finally, in late 1939, Fawcett's flagship character made his debut under the name of Captain Marvel, as the star and cover feature of *Whiz Comics* #2. National Comics once again filed a copyright infringement suit, but this time the issue was far less clear cut. The case dragged on through the courts for over a decade.

While the two are similar in their respective abilities (super-strength, invulnerability, flight), Captain Marvel's alter ego truly set him apart from Superman. Secretly, Captain Marvel was a young orphan boy named Billy Batson, who had a job as a popular radio announcer and never got treated like some dumb kid by the grown-ups. On top of that, just by saying the word "Shazam!" Billy could magically become a superpowered adult hero. It's a tough call as to whether kids envied Billy's independence or his wondrous abilities more.

In any case, Fawcett soon had a major hit on their hands—so much so that at their peak, Captain Marvel's comic books outsold even Superman's by a considerable margin. The reason was simple: Billy Batson was the embodiment of every comic-book reading kid's dream. In the 1940s, kids couldn't get enough of Captain Marvel, mirthfully nicknamed "the Big Red Cheese."

Captain Marvel's runaway success led to the appearance of an entire Marvel Family, complete with sister Mary Marvel, teenager Captain Marvel Jr., kindly Uncle Marvel, his niece Freckles Marvel, a trio of Lieutenant Marvels, and even Hoppy the Marvel Bunny. The myriad of titles featuring the whimsical and often surreal adventures of the Marvel clan sold briskly throughout the 1940s, making Fawcett the most serious challenger to National Comics' dominance during the Golden Age.

BOY WONDER

Though National Comics' lawyers continued to cry foul about Fawcett's alleged appropriations from Superman, its creative people were savvy enough to appreciate the youth element that made Captain Marvel such a success with kids. A few short months later in 1940, National added its own character based on youth appeal—in a seemingly unlikely book.

In the year since he debuted, the Batman had noticeably mellowed. Once considered almost too creepy to publish, the Batman had gone from a gun-toting vigilante who allowed criminals to die to a friend of the police who absolutely refused to kill. The changeover to a remarkably less grim Batman was partly a calculated move by his co-creator Bob Kane, and partly mandated by the higher-ups at National Comics who were concerned over the potential parental outcry. This evolution took its biggest step to date with the introduction of the Batman's youthful sidekick, Robin the Boy Wonder, in *Detective Comics* #38.

Robin's impact was tremendous, both on the character of the Batman and comic books as a whole. The Batman suddenly became a father figure and mentor to the young wisecracking "laughing daredevil." Stories featuring the Dynamic Duo became much lighter in tone than the Batman's prior solo adventures.

The changes were an immediate hit with young readers, who identified with Robin in much the same way they did Captain Marvel. Here again was a wish-fulfillment character—and this time it was a kid who had the Batman as his surrogate dad and crime-fighting partner. Robin

also made National Comics' wishes come true as well, as *Detective Comics* became an even bigger seller than before.

Soon after, a plethora of costumed characters (both new and established) found themselves serving as parental figures to minors in matching costumes. Among the Golden Age's other best known crime-fighting duos were National Comics' the Green Arrow & Speedy, the Sandman & Sandy, and the Guardian & the Newsboy Legion; Martin Goodman's Captain America & Bucky and the Human Torch & Toro; Quality's Uncle Sam & Buddy; and Fawcett's Mister Scarlet & Pinky.

SENTINEL OF OUR SHORES

Despite the United States government's avowed policy of neutrality prior to the Pearl Harbor attack, the American public still keenly felt ripples from the wars raging in Asia and Europe. The average American had no desire to fight in another overseas war, but the heinous actions of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy nonetheless triggered America's patriotic reflex.

The Axis powers seemed like international bullies, and bullies were something a lot of comic-book reading kids understood quite well. What they and many others wanted was someone tough enough to stand up to the dictator powers once and for all. While America remained hesitant to assume the role itself, comic-book publishers moved to fill the void with super-patriotic red, white and blue-costumed heroes.

Captain America was not the first such hero (MLJ Publications' the Shield and Quality Comics' Uncle Sam debuted earlier in 1940). Of the many who appeared during the Golden Age, however, he proved by far the best seller and the longest lived. The character (originally called "Super American") was created by the legendary duo of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, who successfully pitched their idea to publisher Martin Goodman.

Goodman rushed out *Captain America Comics* #1 in December 1940, partly because he instantly fell in love with the character and partly because of the book's striking cover. On it, Captain America, "Sentinel of Our Shores," was depicted quite unsubtly belting Adolf Hitler square in the face. Goodman worried the book would lose its sales appeal if *der Führer* got himself killed before the book came off the presses. As it turned out, there was no cause for worry (and not just because Hitler sadly had a few more years of life ahead). With or without the vicarious thrill of turning the dictator's lights out on the cover of his debut, Captain America's unbeatable pedigree practically guaranteed success.

First, Captain America succeeded due to a feature that cannily combined two burgeoning comic-book trends of the day: the patriotic hero and the kid sidekick, the latter manifested in Captain America's young companion Bucky. Second, the pure artistry of the Kirby and Simon team was in clear evidence from the beginning. Though few then knew them by name, readers took an immediate liking to their exciting stories and dynamic art.

This fondness extended to the character himself. Even when Kirby and Simon left Goodman's employ to work for National Comics after completing only ten issues of Cap's adventures, the book remained a top seller. In fact, Captain America was one of the few characters who gave the likes of Superman, Captain Marvel, and the Batman a run for their money sales-wise.

Captain America's popularity coupled with the U.S.'s burgeoning patriotic sentiments gave rise to a host of similar characters. National Comics alone dressed out Wonder Woman, the Star-Spangled Kid & Stripesy, Mister America, and Liberty Belle in Old Glory-derived garb. Fawcett Comics followed suit with Commando Yank and Minute Man, while Quality Comics (already publishing Uncle Sam's exploits) responded femininely with Miss America and USA. Even Martin Goodman sought

to replicate his own success with the Patriot and his own Miss America, but none embodied the American fighting spirit on the comic page more definitively than Cap, right through to his present-day adventures.

ALL STARS

At the dawn of the 1940s, the reading public's appetite for costumed heroes seemed insatiable. In meeting this demand, companies were turning out new titles and features every month. Comic-book creators, unhindered by any previous dogmas, were giving rise to new characters by the dozens.

Even disregarding the many also-rans, the end result was a very crowded comic-book hero field. In 1940 alone, National Comics (along with its sister company, Max Gaines' All-American Publications) premiered such long-lived characters as the Flash, Hawkman, the Spectre, Hourman, Doctor Fate, the Green Lantern, and the Atom. It was only a matter of time before men in capes finally started bumping into each another.

Fittingly enough, it was Max Gaines, publisher of the very first comic book, who originally conceived of combining the stars of various successful solo features into a single gathering of costumed heroes. At his behest, legendary editor Sheldon Mayer and ultra-prolific writer Gardner Fox went to work on fleshing out the idea.

Fox and Mayer selected eight characters—two from each anthology book published by National and All-American (the seven mentioned above, plus the Sandman)—for membership in the group, which they dubbed the Justice Society of America. Like King Arthur and his knights, the JSA first appeared seated at a round table on the cover of *All Star Comics* #3, the Winter 1940 issue.

As revolutionary as it was, the Justice Society's debut appearance hedged a lot of bets. Conspicuously absent from the group were National Comics' most popular characters, Superman and Batman (though they were listed as "honorary members"), as it was felt neither needed the additional exposure. Also, the Society's full-fledged members met only in a framing sequence, with the rest of the pages featuring their individual exploits. As such, its structure was virtually identical to any other comic book of the day.

The impact of All Star Comics #3 cannot be minimized or overstated. For the first time, the idea was put forth that a company's costumed heroes existed in a shared fictional world, giving comic-book writers a most wonderful storytelling tool. From that point on, teams of costumed heroes like the Justice Society could combine their amazing powers in order to take on seemingly insurmountable challenges, enthralling scores of readers in the process.

The Justice Society experiment was an instant success, and at its peak was National Comics' second-best seller. Despite this, it took a surprisingly long time for its influence to show in other comics. A second costumed hero team did not appear until late 1942, when National Comics launched Leading Comics featuring the Seven Soldiers of Victory. Its more modest sales seemed to dissuade any further group efforts on National's part. Even the can't-miss teaming of Superman and Batman had to wait until 1952's Superman #76.

National's competitors waited even longer to try their hands at creating costumed hero teams. Fawcett Comics, for one, did not take the rather obvious step of regularly uniting Captain Marvel and his extended kin until late-1945's Marvel Family #1. The next and final team of the Golden Age came from Martin Goodman's publishing company in 1946, when its seven most popular characters joined together as the All Winners Squad. Despite its name and A-list lineup, the team survived just two issues of All Winners Comics before disappearing.

Just as costumed heroes had given rise to costumed villains, so did teams of heroes lead to teams of villains. The first of these was a collection of Marvel Family foes known as the Monster Society of Evil, who debuted in Captain Marvel Adventures #22 (cover-dated April 1943) and continued to bedevil Fawcett's premier heroes straight through to #46 (May 1945), making it the longest continuing story of the Golden Age (and, arguably, the very first comic-book crossover). Somewhat surprisingly, the Justice Society, the team that started it all, didn't encounter a comparable villain group until the first appearance of the Injustice Society of the World in All Star Comics #36 (November 1947).

LOVELY AS APHRODITE, WISE AS ATHENA

Male costumed characters were a well-entrenched feature of comic books by 1940, but the medium had yet to produce a costumed heroine who was a breakout hit. It was not, however, for lack of trying.

As early as Jungle Comics #2 (cover dated February 1940, published by Fiction House Magazines), Fantomah was using her magical abilities to track down evil-doers. A month later, the aptly named Woman in Red, though not super-powered, became the first of her gender to don a flashy costume in a comic book (in Thrilling Comics #2, published by Standard Comics).

Later in 1940, Martin Goodman's company tried combining both superhuman abilities and a colorful costume, and for Mystic Comics #4 (cover dated August 1940) came up with the Black Widow, who literally sent criminals to Hell. However, the Widow, like the other early heroines, did not match the popularity of her male union-suited counterparts.

This lack of well-known comic-book heroines came to the attention of psychologist Dr. William Moulton Marston, an essayist in popular psychology and inventor of one of the first lie detectors. Marston

approached All-American publisher Max Gaines (for whom he had worked as an educational consultant since 1940) about creating a female character who could serve as a positive role model for young girls. Intrigued, Gaines gave the go-ahead, and Wonder Woman, the most popular female character of the Golden Age, was the result.

Throughout most of the Golden Age, Wonder Woman's adventures were written by Marston (under the pen name of Charles Moulton) and illustrated by Harry G. Peter. Her early adventures therefore show a consistency of style and tone not seen in many other Golden Age features.

In addition to encouraging women of all ages to be strong and reach their full potential in life, Golden Age Wonder Woman stories also notoriously feature the title character getting tied up. A lot. Not that the kids reading at the time noticed all the bondage, but others would later on, and draw sinister conclusions about what Moulton (a secret devotee of alternative sexual practices) was really advocating in his stories.

Wonder Woman succeeded where her predecessors failed because she incorporated proven elements from other popular comic-book characters. First, she was a character whose powers were magical and rooted in mythology like Captain Marvel. Much as Marvel's shouts of "Shazam!" called upon the likes of Atlas and Achilles, Wonder Woman was "as lovely as Aphrodite, as wise as Athena, with the speed of Mercury and the strength of Hercules."

Second, she debuted wearing a costume inspired by the Stars & Stripes, just like Captain America (only skimpier), and did so at the height of America's patriotic fervor in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. In addition, Wonder Woman made her first appearance in an already popular title, All Star Comics #8, and in the issue following, became the Justice Society's secretary, making her part of the best-selling comic-book team.

Ultimately, Wonder Woman proved greater than the sum of her influences. She became one of only a handful of characters (including Superman and Batman) whose stories remained in continuous publication from near the start of the Golden Age right up through the end of the Silver Age following, a period of nearly 50 years.

WE WILL FIGHT TO MAKE MEN FREE

America's entry into the Second World War affected the comic book industry in many ways. Wartime paper rationing cut page-counts, prematurely ending the adventures of several supporting characters. At the same time, comic books gained a whole new audience amongst the millions of men in uniform who, like Depression-era kids before them, found comics a cheap, legal, and widely available means of escaping the everyday struggle to survive.

It was only a matter of time before comic books began running stories of men in uniform who were the epitome of determination and courage. In addition to purely war comics, the Golden Age gave rise to a hybrid genre combining costumed characters with death-defying airmen locked in the grim struggle of war.

In addition to current events, costumed airmen were rooted in noncostumed comic-book predecessors like All-American Publications' Hop Harrigan, and the popular radio show Captain Midnight. With these elements in mind, writer Will Eisner and artist Chuck Cuidera created a character named Blackhawk for Quality Comics in 1941.

Blackhawk was a mysterious Polish (and later, American) aviator who was the leader of an elite squadron known as the Blackhawks. The Blackhawks were all top-flight airmen, predominately hailing from places occupied by the Axis powers such as the Netherlands, France, and China. The squadron was based on its own secret island, owing allegiance to no country but with its members firmly united in opposition to the forces of tyranny.

THE MARK OF QUALITY

Most of the companies who entered the comic book market in the wake of National Comics' successes with Superman and Batman were just looking to cash in. They either made a few bucks before quietly and quickly getting out of the business, or didn't make any bucks and got out even sooner. One of the few who managed to carve out a worthy legacy all its own was Everett "Busy" Arnold's Quality Comics.

After inheriting the characters and titles of the defunct Centaur Publications, Quality Comics published its very first story starring a costumed character in 1939's *Feature Comics* #27: a half-foot-high crime-fighter known as Doll Man. Despite his less than intimidating size and handle, Doll Man captured the imaginations of many also-diminutive readers. The miniature hero went on to become one of Quality's most successful and long-running features.

In 1941, Quality scored an even bigger hit with *Police Comics* #1's lead feature Plastic Man, thanks largely to the brilliant work of writer and artist Jack Cole. Cole's Plastic Man stories are a marvelous sort of insanity, wherein the character's seemingly limitless pliability gives full rein to Cole's fertile imagination. Imbued by Cole with a witty sense of anarchic fun, Plastic Man became one of the best-loved characters of the Golden Age.

Quality also did well with its adaptations of prevailing and successful trends in other comic books of the day. For instance, Kid Eternity was a youngster empowered by shouting out a magic word who could have easily (and eventually did) fit in as a part of Fawcett's Marvel Family. Likewise, Uncle Sam (Thomas Nast's cartoon come to heroic life) would have been right at home fighting side by side with Captain America, published by Martin Goodman.

Today, Quality Comics is best remembered for two things. First, Quality's books were graced by the work of some of the best comic-book artists ever to work in the industry, including Will Eisner, Lou Fine, and Jack Cole. Their output remains just as important and influential today as it was in the Golden Age.

Second, seen through six decades of hindsight, Quality published some of the most wonderfully bizarre comic book characters ever created, including:

- The Spider Widow, a young woman who dresses up as an old lady to battle injustice with her trained arachnids;

- Madame Fatal, a young man who dresses up as an old lady to battle injustice (making him the first transvestite comic-book hero);

- The Red Bee, who fought crime with a belt-buckle container of trained bees;

- Magno, who was accidentally killed by a ten thousand volt AC shock, then quickly resurrected (with superpowers) by a pal who correctly guessed a ten thousand volt DC shock would do the trick;

- The Human Bomb, who caused everything his hands touched to explode. His sidekick Hustace Throckmorton had the exact same problematic power, only in his feet;

- The Black Condor, taught to fly by the condors that adopted him as an orphaned baby. He returned to civilization just in time to assume the life of his murdered doppelganger, a U.S. senator. The late senator's fiancée somehow never noticed the switch.

Youngsters everywhere who dreamed of being fly-boys flocked to buy the Blackhawks' debut in *Military Comics* #1. As an ongoing title, it went on to become the best-selling book ever published by Quality. This is in no small part to the creative team who worked on the book during the bulk of its run: writer William Woolfolk and the sublime artist Reed Crandall.

Along with Blackhawk's creators, they put into place all the elements that made the series so irresistible to would-be junior pilots. The camaraderie between the Blackhawks made them seem like the neatest club a kid could ever join; with their secret island base, they surely had the best clubhouse ever. Many an aspiring young aviator echoed the Blackhawks' signature battle cry, "HAWKAH!" back in the day, and their most ardent fans knew their theme song by heart:

> "Hawkah—We're the Blackhawks,
> Hawkah—We're on the wing,
> Over land over sea
> We will fight to make men free
> And to every nation
> Liberty will bring.
> Hawkah—Follow The Blackhawks,
> Hawkah—Shatter your chains,
> Seven fearless men are we, give us death or liberty.
> We are the Blackhawks,
> *remember our names.*"

In short order, Blackhawk inspired other companies to create their own heroic airmen, such as All-American's Captain X and Fawcett's Phantom Eagle. The original, of course, met with the most success and is best remembered today.

THE GOLDEN AGE TARNISHES

The conclusion of World War II marked the beginning of the end for the Golden Age of comic books. In the postwar era, sales steadily declined, long-running titles and features were discontinued, and genres other than costumed characters began to predominate, leading to a long fallow period for the medium that lasted well into the 1950s.

In hindsight, comic books were victims of their own success. So many were published in such a relatively short time that even in a period as innovative as the Golden Age, repetition became inevitable. Though some creators never stopped producing outstanding work, it wasn't enough to stop bored readers from looking elsewhere for entertainment.

Comic books also seemed old hat in part because, with the dawn of the Atomic Age, the world itself had changed. It called all the more attention to the fact that comic books hadn't. Atom bombs had made America as strong as any costumed character had ever fictionally been, and atomic power promised a new age of leisure and plenty for all. All of a sudden, comics could no longer outdo the sense of wonder on the front page of the newspaper.

FROM GOLDEN AGE TO ATOMIC AGE

The drought of imagination struck comic books just when previously successful features were in desperate need of a postwar re-invention. Some did manage to make the transition to peacetime. For instance, the fascist-smashing Blackhawks in *Military Comics* began fighting communists in the re-titled *Modern Comics*. All-American Publications had previously dubbed a character "the Atom" because of his lack of height, but after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, his name referred to his newly developed atomic super-strength. The new radiation-powered Atom proved substantially more popular than ever before.

Most characters did not fare as well. Fawcett's once-popular Spy Smasher tried to make a go of it as "Crime Smasher" once the supply of Axis saboteurs dried up, but to no avail. Likewise, Quality's Human Bomb just couldn't measure up to the atom bomb and disappeared from newsstands in 1946, seemingly from envy and embarrassment.

TWILIGHT OF THE SUPERHEROES

As the comic-book market shrank, publishers grew even more conservative, launching fewer new titles and finding very few winners among them. The entire postwar period yielded only two new, notable characters: Superboy (a genuine success because of his youth appeal and connection to the still-popular Superman) and Black Canary (a sexy blonde in fishnet stockings, obviously designed to make an impact on growing boys). At a time when new ideas were desperately needed to turn matters around, companies increasingly relied on what had worked before.

Over time, however, what had worked before no longer did, and costumed heroes were gradually supplanted by other, more popular genres. The Green Lantern, once popular enough to merit his very own title, lost his spot in *All-American Comics* to Streak the Wonder Dog, becoming one of several costumed characters dropped during the postwar period in favor of "funny animal" features.

For many comic-book fans, the final straw came with the demise of the Justice Society of America in 1951, as its former meeting place *All Star Comics* became *All-Star Western* as of issue #58. When the Justice Society rode off into the sunset to make room for the more-popular cowboys, for most the Golden Age was truly over.

THE END OF AN AGE

One by one, the premier companies of the Golden Age met their fates. Max Gaines' All-American Comics abruptly ended its partnership with National Comics in 1944 and tried to make a go of it as a completely separate entity. The venture was short lived, as Gaines' heart was never really into the costumed-character genre. After only a few months he sold All-American and all its assets to National Comics.

Gaines, who had published the very first comic book, did not abandon the medium he'd given rise to, however. Soon after, he founded Educational Comics. There Gaines printed comic books featuring famous historical figures, Bible stories, and the like until his untimely death in a 1947 boating accident. Max's son William then inherited the company, which he renamed Entertaining Comics ("EC" for short). The new EC went on to popularize crime and horror comics, becoming a tremendous success in the process and driving one more nail in the costumed hero's coffin.

Despite Captain Marvel's continued popularity, Fawcett Publications' comic-book division closed its doors in the autumn of 1953, its demise coming about as a result of National finally prevailing in its copyright infringement lawsuit against the Big Red Cheese. Rather than appeal the court's decision, Fawcett got out of the floundering industry, giving up all its comic properties and $400,000 in damages to National.

Quality Comics continued to experiment in a variety of new genres throughout the early 1950s, including crime, horror, and war, but without much to show for its efforts. Its once-diverse stable of costumed characters dwindled to just Plastic Man and Blackhawk, who remained popular to the very end—an end that finally came in December 1956. As Fawcett had done earlier, Quality sold off its assets to National, who then discontinued most of Quality's titles (Blackhawk being a notable exception).

LAST GLEAMING

Martin Goodman ceased publishing his various costumed heroes in the late 1940s, then briefly attempted a comeback in the early 1950s using his most popular characters: Captain America, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner. When that effort failed, Goodman continued publishing horror comics under the company name Atlas Comics. Atlas survived a brush with death when its distributor went under in 1957, and survived to see the dawn of the Silver Age, by which time it was popularly known by its present name, Marvel Comics.

After merging with its former partner All-American, National Comics underwent a slight name change to the more verbose National Periodical Publications. The company endured the industry's postwar hard times, largely on the continued popularity of what became its core characters: Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. As a result of this enduring popular affection, Superman and Batman were among the few Golden Age characters created by any company to survive in continuous publication right through the present day.

In testament to this longevity, National Periodical Publications eventually adopted the name Detective Comics, after the title wherein Batman first appeared. Today, of course, the company uses only the initials: DC Comics.

SEDUCING THE INNOCENT

DC Comics even weathered the last great tribulation of the Golden Age, the publication of Dr. Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*, which blamed comic books for turning America's youth into juvenile delinquents. In that notorious book, Wertham proved to have an imagination equal to that of any comic-book writer, as he saw Batman and Robin's partnership promoting homosexuality and Wonder Woman's assertiveness promoting lesbianism (He also accused her stories of promoting erotic bondage, a charge with a bit more credibility about it).

Wertham's academic credentials were enough to make his outlandish charges seem plausible to many, leading to Congressional hearings concerning the potential harm done by comic books. While the industry as a whole was ultimately exonerated, it was nudged into the self-censoring Comics Code, which ultimately doomed grisly-horror maven EC as a comic-book publisher.

If any doubt remained about the end of the Golden Age, the demise of EC's groundbreaking (and still fondly remembered) horror and crime titles along with the rise of the creativity-stifling Comics Code surely removed them. Thankfully, though it was the end of one age, its conclusion was only a pause before the start of another, and the Silver Age that followed proved to have glories all its own.

CHAPTER 2: THE GOLDEN AGE WORLD

The years 1938 through 1955 were witness to some of the greatest triumphs and catastrophes in all of human history. It was truly an era in which, as the ancient Chinese curse goes, people lived in interesting times.

Interesting times are of course a natural draw for anyone creating works of fiction, so it's little wonder why Golden Age comic-book stories often touched upon the momentous events unfolding during that era.

It's also not surprising that contemporary comic-book creators frequently revisit the time period.

This chapter serves as a guidebook to this amazing era for *M&M* Gamemasters and players. It details the ins and outs of being a hero during this period, and provides some suggestions on how to bring the Golden Age to life without having to go as far as actually handing out ration coupons and draft cards.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AMERICA AT WAR

What sets the world of the Golden Age apart from that of any other comic-book era is the terrible specter of war on a global scale. Whether it was the Second World War, its bloody preludes such as in Spain or China, the Korean War, or the Cold War, the period from 1938 to 1955 was one of constant strife—either actual armed conflict or preparation for it. This chapter begins with a summary of the major events of America's two great military struggles of the period.

WORLD WAR II

Neutral, isolationist America was a latecomer to the global conflagration in 1941. War had raged in Europe since September 1, 1939, when the British Commonwealth and the French government, tired of appeasing Nazi expansionism under Adolf Hitler, responded to the German invasion of Poland with declarations of war.

By 1941, Hitler's forces had overrun parts of North Africa and nearly all of Europe, from the Pyrenees Mountains to the Russian steppes. They were opposed only by the exhausted British Commonwealth and the hard-pressed Soviet Union. Fascism was at a high tide, and only American could hope to stem it.

The war in Asia had raged even longer, dating back to Imperial Japan's invasion of China in 1937. It was the myriad atrocities committed by Japanese forces against Chinese civilians that ultimately drew the United States into the conflict, as the resulting American embargos of vital war materiel forced Japan into choosing between war with America or capitulation in China. For the Japanese imperialists, there could be only one choice. As the Japanese military prepared to seize the oil reserves of the Dutch East Indies in late 1941, it took steps to eliminate the one force capable of stopping them: the U.S. Pacific Fleet based at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

On December 7, 1941, Japan struck, devastating the American fleet and becoming the unchallenged masters of the Pacific, at least for the time being. At President Franklin D. Roosevelt's request, Congress responded with a declaration of war a day later, which led Nazi Germany to declare war upon America in turn. America was then fighting on two fronts, and the entire globe was engulfed in the flames of war.

FIGHTING IN THE ETO

U.S. ground troops got their first taste of action in Europe in 1942 during the amphibious invasions of Axis-held North Africa. The rough terrain and a crafty foe in the German *Afrikakorps*, led by "the Desert Fox" Erwin Rommel, led to an initial humiliating defeat for the GIs. In time, however, American forces regrouped and drove the Axis forces out of Africa for good.

That same year also saw the beginning of the U.S. Army Air Force's daylight strategic bombing campaign against German industry. Despite horrendous aircrew casualty rates, the bombing raids continued throughout the war, leveling cities, destroying the *Luftwaffe*, and ultimately crippling Germany's ability to make war.

In 1943, American forces pursued the retreating Axis troops from Africa to the island of Sicily, which fell to a combined U.S.–Commonwealth offensive. At the behest of the British, this was followed up by an invasion of the Italian mainland, the purported "soft underbelly" of Europe. It proved to be anything but. Despite triggering the collapse of Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime, it led only to a slow, bitter drive through mountainous terrain against fierce German resistance. Even after the German military had collapsed everywhere else, the able Field Marshal Albert Kesselring and his men held out in the Italian Alps until the very end.

Also in 1943, the menace of the German submarine wolf packs finally ended as the U.S. Navy-bolstered convoy system and Allied air power turned the U-boats from hunter to hunted. Thereafter, the free flow of materiel to the British and Soviets was unimpeded and the tide of war began to turn against the Nazis.

THE ROAD TO V–E DAY

By 1944, Soviet demands and American impetus could no longer be denied; the Allies prepared for the cross-Channel invasion of occupied France. After much planning, deception, marshaling of forces, and delays for weather, Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower launched "the Great Crusade" on the sixth of June. Despite furious German resistance and thousands of casualties, the invasion was a success. Time was running out for Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich.

The drive across France picked up steam as Commonwealth armies under Bernard Law Montgomery and American armies under Omar Bradley and George Patton began to isolate and destroy mass formations of German troops. An attempt to win the war before 1945 by dropping Allied airborne forces into the occupied Netherlands ("Operation Market Garden") ended in disaster, but as Christmas 1944 drew near, American and Commonwealth forces remained confident the end was near.

That confidence was shaken when the Nazis threw everything they had left into a surprise offensive known as the Battle of the Bulge, a desperate gamble to split the Allied forces and cut off their supply lines. Though the Germans came much closer to succeeding than anyone could've anticipated, their fate was sealed once the bad winter weather cleared and Allied air superiority once again took its toll on the Nazi formations.

After the Bulge, the war finally moved onto German soil. The fighting became all the more bitter. Though they could not hope to win, the Germans were defending their homeland. Urged on by Adolf Hitler, they fought until there were only old men and boys left to commit to the battle.

Americans also found renewed reason to fight, as the advancing GIs began liberating the Nazi death camps. Such horrors could scarcely be believed, but they served to strengthen American resolve to see the war through to a righteous victory over what was now provably an insensate evil.

The end came as the Soviet advance from the east captured Berlin and found *der Führer*, who had plunged the world into madness and vowed to fight to the last, dead by his own hand. What was left of Hitler's regime surrendered officially on May 7, 1945, bringing to an end more than five and a half years of war.

FIGHTING IN THE PTO

As predicted by its greatest military leader, Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, Japan went from victory to victory in the first six months of war against America and the British Commonwealth. American and British holdings in the Pacific quickly fell to the advancing Japanese, including the

Philippine Islands, whose valiant but abandoned defenders were forced to surrender in May 1942 and endure the infamous Bataan Death March.

This left the Allied forces in the Pacific under Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur holed up in Australia, hard-pressed to defend even that last redoubt in the event of a Japanese invasion. The resilient U.S. Navy turned the tide, however, checking the Japanese advance at the Battle of the Coral Sea, and then handing them a decisive defeat at the Battle of Midway from which they would not recover.

After Midway, the United States pursued a four-part strategy to bring Japan to its knees. First, the U.S. Army under MacArthur began a drive through New Guinea aimed at liberating the Philippines and repaying what he viewed as a national debt of honor to the Filipino people. Second, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps began an "island hopping" campaign, seizing enemy-held atolls and bringing the Japanese homeland ever closer to the range of American bombers.

The strategic bombing campaign was the third component. Beginning in 1944 with raids launched from mainland China, the campaign was of limited effectiveness until the U.S. seizure of the Mariana Islands, which finally put the Japanese mainland within the B-29's effective range. These campaigns reached their deadly apex starting in February 1945, when American bombers switched from conventional bombs to incendiaries, burning nearly all of Japan's cities into wastelands.

Fourth—and perhaps most decisive of all—was the submarine interdiction of Japanese merchant shipping, which increasingly left Japan and its distant Pacific holdings cut off from food, fuel, ammunition, and other vital materiel. Japan's military and civilian populations suffered accordingly, but still they fought on.

THEY SAVED HITLER'S BRAIN!

The thought that rumors of Hitler's death might be greatly exaggerated have been around since he was erroneously declared *kaput* after a failed assassination attempt in 1944. For decades after the war, the Soviets periodically trotted out Hitler's mortal remains for further scientific testing, just to make absolutely sure the ex-dictator wasn't alive and working as a short-order cook in Des Moines or the like.

Despite the scientific evidence to the contrary, "Hitler is alive" hysteria was fed over the years by the periodic discovery of ex-Nazis living out their golden years in hiding in South America. It didn't take much of an imaginative leap to hypothesize that maybe "Mr. H" was among them somewhere, especially in the imaginations of comic-book writers. Gamemasters may therefore want their *Golden Age* campaigns to make that leap as well.

Maybe Nazi mad scientists have perfected brain transplanting or cloning, and Herr Hitler is still kicking around in a succession of host bodies, as a legion of duplicate dictators, or as the ever-popular disembodied brain in a tank. Perhaps Axis electronic wizards have developed *der Führerputer*, an artificial intelligence with all of Hitler's madness programmed right in. Or maybe the Nazis' interest in the occult paid off for them and created a mystically immortal Hitler, who commands potent and unholy magical powers.

However it's done, *der Führer* remains a threat to the entire postwar world and the player characters in particular. The heroes must then periodically smoke Herr Hitler and his minions out of hiding, and find a way to defeat them before their latest mad-science or mad-sorcery weapon can be brought to bear. If the heroes are squaring off against a magically immortal or clone Hitler, they may come to appreciate that the war against hatred is truly never-ending, as *der Führer* returns from seeming death to plague them again, and again, and again....

THE ROAD TO V-J DAY

The Japanese *bushido* code meant no quarter was given or accepted. As the war turned increasingly against them, the fanaticism with which they fought grew. Most famously, the Japanese turned to suicide attacks by *kamikaze* pilots, who deliberately crashed their bomb-laden planes into American warships. Its soldiers on the ground were no less dedicated, as island after island in the Pacific, from Guadalcanal to the Solomons, Gilberts, and Marshalls, ran red with the blood of the modern-day samurai and those they fought.

Fighting in 1944 seemed to presage the war's end. In August the Marianas fell, bringing Army Air Force bombers within reach of Japan itself. Later, in October, American forces under MacArthur returned to the Philippines, eventually freeing the survivors of Bataan Death March from three long brutal years of captivity. In the course of these invasions, Japan's once-proud Imperial Navy was destroyed as an effective fighting force at the Battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf.

1945 showed just how much more brutal the war was to become, however, as proven by the bloody campaigns for Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The latter was particularly unsettling for the Americans, as Japanese civilians eagerly chose suicide over surrender—boding ill for the planned amphibious invasion of the Japanese home islands.

If Japan was to lose the war, its leadership intended that America would pay an unspeakable price in blood to win it. Had the invasions of the home islands occurred, the Japanese were prepared to shower the beaches with radioactive dust to poison invading Americans and charge the survivors with lines of spear-carrying schoolchildren. Meanwhile, thousands of *kamikaze* planes hidden in mountain redoubts would attack the supporting fleets, with a special emphasis on sinking hospital ships full of American wounded.

PEACE

It was not to be, however, as President Harry S. Truman made good on a threat to unleash "a terrible new weapon" on Japan if they did not surrender immediately and unconditionally. On August 6, 1945, the city of Hiroshima became the first ever destroyed by atomic weaponry. When that did not trigger a Japanese capitulation, Nagasaki shared the same fate three days later. In the interim, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and the Russian steamroller began to crush the bulk of Japan's forces still in China.

Despite a last-minute attempted coup to prevent it, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito sued for peace on August 15, V-J Day, Japan's ancient warrior tradition unable to resist the coming of the Atomic Age. The official surrender was signed on the deck of the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, six years and a day since the global war began.

THE KOREAN WAR

Peace lasted a little less than five years, when the ongoing Cold War between the free and communist worlds suddenly turned hot in a place unknown to most Americans. On June 25, 1950, the Soviet-backed North Korean communist state ruled by Kim Il-Sung launched an invasion across the 38th parallel, which separated it from South Korea. South Korea's military swiftly collapsed in the face of the better-armed and -prepared communist forces.

Two days later, the United Nations Security Council (absent the boycotting Soviet ambassador) voted to send troops to halt the North Korean aggression, a burden ultimately assumed by fifteen member nations, but primarily by the United States. U.N. intervention did little initially to change the course of events, however, as the ill-equipped American forces hastily drawn from easy occupation duty in Japan were overmatched by the battle-hardened North Koreans.

INCHON

President Truman turned to General Douglas MacArthur, who planned a bold amphibious invasion at Inchon, a place well behind the North Korean lines and deemed wholly unsuitable for such an attack by most. On September 15, 1950, MacArthur's gamble paid off. The North Koreans found themselves cut off from their supply lines, forcing them to retreat back up the Korean Peninsula.

Desirous of a final victory, MacArthur pursued the North Koreans back to their Yalu River border with Communist China. Unexpectedly to MacArthur, the move threatened the Red Chinese enough for them to enter the war, and 300,000 of its "volunteer" soldiers secretly began pouring across the Yalu on October 25, 1950.

STALEMATE

China's surprise entry into the war caught the U.N. forces completely off guard. They were pushed back across the 38th parallel, with communist forces recapturing the South Korean capital of Seoul on January 4, 1951. Still wanting a final victory, MacArthur argued with Truman over the General's demands to use atomic weapons to repel the Chinese, but the risk of all-out atomic war was too much for Truman to consider. On April 11, 1951, Truman relieved MacArthur of command, despite an

American public that overwhelmingly supported the General.

U.N. forces recaptured Seoul in March 1951. Not long afterwards, the battle lines stabilized roughly along the 38th parallel, as U.N. air superiority finally began to check China's numerical advantage on the ground. By July 1951, stalemate had fully set in, but the war went on for another two years as sporadic fighting continued and politicians argued over the fate of North Korean and Red Chinese prisoners of war who refused to return to their oppressive homelands.

A cease-fire establishing a demilitarized zone on either side of the 38th parallel was eventually signed on July 27, 1953. No formal peace followed; as of this writing (December 2005), the Korean War technically still remains at a pause over fifty years later.

THE GOLDEN AGE AND REAL-WORLD HISTORY

The time period encompassed by the Golden Age of comic books is a mere drop in the bucket from a historical perspective, but few other eras can match it for the sheer magnitude of change that occurred. In the space of a generation, the United States of America went from an isolationist, rural country suffering from the effects of the lingering Great Depression to the world's preeminent military and economic power, leading the world into the Atomic Age. It also happens to be a splendid time period in which to base a *Mutants & Masterminds* campaign. That's what this section is all about.

Much thicker books than this one have been written about the years 1938-1955 and all that happened during them, and *Golden Age* cannot try to outdo more detailed academic histories. Instead, this section focuses on how to use elements of real history to create more entertaining superhero adventures.

The dominant historical event of the era is, of course, the Second World War, so much so that it serves as a clear chronological divider. We shall therefore examine the Golden Age in terms of the prewar period, wartime, and the postwar years.
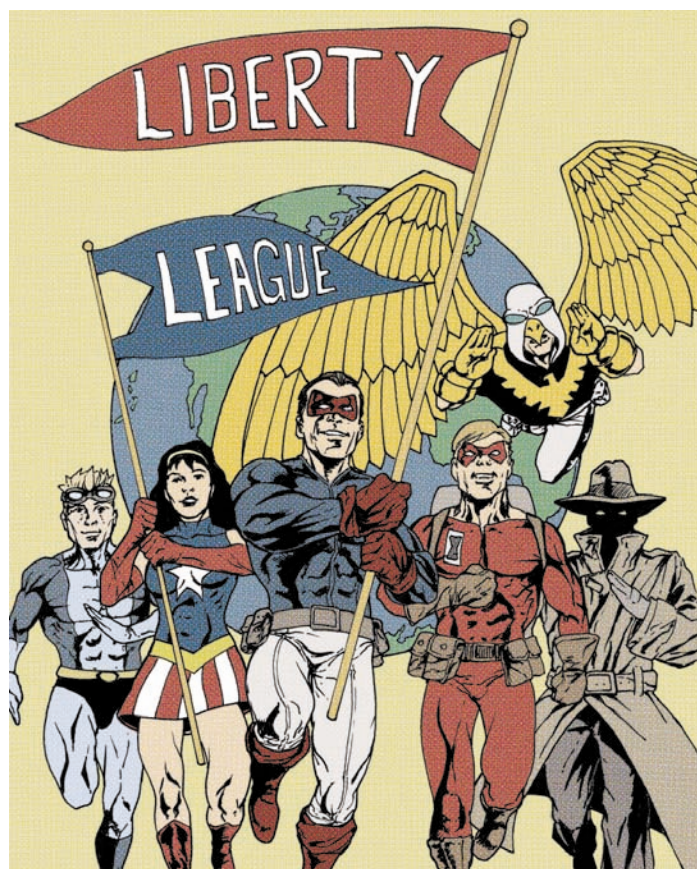
1938-1941: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE ROAD TO WAR

Adventures set in the tense times leading up to the conflagration of another global war offer up a heady mix of pulp science, mysticism, hard-boiled crime stories, and foreshadowing of the conflict to come. Just like the comic books of this period, the heroes' exploits are one part *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, one part *The Maltese Falcon*, and one part *The Untouchables*.

HARD TIMES

By 1938 the worst of the Great Depression had passed, but few Americans would have taken comfort from that fact had they known it. The unemployment rate, which had spiked following the Stock Market Crash in 1929, had fallen to 19% by that time, but remained in double-digits until 1941. The poverty, misery, and social dislocation that resulted remained the order of the day for millions of Americans right up to the outbreak of war.

Golden Age superheroes seemed personally immune from the economic hard times. Given that they were intended to be idealized fantasy characters that diverted audiences from their own often harsh reality, it's not really surprising that most costumed heroes remained gainfully employed, whether it be as reporters, attorneys, millionaire playboys, or that common but vague occupation, "freelance adventurer."

Even though very few *M&M* characters are going to be selling apples in the street or worrying how they're going to escape the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression is still keenly felt in campaigns set during the early Golden Age. Most commonly, the effects of the Depression manifest in people's motives and actions.

GOOD PEOPLE, BAD CHOICES

Golden Age comic books are laden with stories centered around good people who do bad things out of desperation brought about by the hard economic times. Panel after panel recounts how young men who had once dreamed of going to college join up with organized crime to score a few badly needed bucks, and young women who are forced to aid and abet terrible crimes in order to pay for a life-saving medical procedure for their child or younger sibling.

Naturally, these good people gone temporarily bad come to the attention of some costumed benefactor who sympathizes with their plight and ultimately puts things to right. The superhero punches out the bad guys, finds the formerly desperate folks a good job (often working for him in his secret identity), and comes up with the money for the kid's operation. The Depression can set the stage for an uplifting tale of redemption and justice for the poor and downtrodden—and what *M&M* player doesn't love a happy ending?

BAD PEOPLE, WORSE CHOICES

The Great Depression was a time when traditional American political ideals came into serious question. Capitalism was believed by many

to have been proven a failure, and democracy seemed at best slow to deal with the economic and social upheavals that came about in the Depression's wake. As a result, some Americans looked instead to ideologies like fascism for solutions, while others, less focused on politics, tried to make a living from illegal enterprises.

ILLINOIS NAZIS

Impressed by Germany's economic turnaround under Hitler, some Americans expressed admiration or sympathy for the Nazi regime. The legendary aviator Charles Lindbergh accepted a medal presented by the Nazi leadership and then warned against letting President Roosevelt and "the Jews" drag America into a war with Germany it could not hope to win. As many as 20,000 Americans joined up with the German-American Bund, headed by Fritz Kuhn, dedicated to bringing about a Nazi regime at home and domestic support for Hitler.

Despite their relative scarcity in real life, the one place where American fascists flourished was in the pages of Golden Age comic books. Even before America officially entered World War II, homegrown Nazis were making regular four-color appearances, acting as fifth columnists and sabotaging American support for overseas democracies. Granted, the comic-book mayhem they perpetrated was far in excess of anything that occurred in real history, but why let the facts get in the way of a mountain of Golden Age stories?

Typically, these fictional American Nazis caused trouble with words and intimidation, stirring up prejudice and hatred as well as fomenting strikes and labor unrest, particularly in critical war industries. Their trouble-making days lasted until a costumed superhero came along and showed what cowards the local fascists really were in front of the decent and law-abiding citizenry. If the page count allowed, this led the humiliated domestic Nazis to more violent acts, such as dynamiting dams and factories, which the hero thwarted *en route* to beating the would-be junior *Führers* senseless.

FIFTH COLUMNISTS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

The basic fifth columnist storyline is a simple plot, but it's one Gamemasters shouldn't deny their players. In case they don't already know, beating up Golden Age Nazis is fun for all. If that alone didn't make Nazis the perfect villains, the fact that any sneaky, underhanded, and/or dastardly act imaginable can be plausibly attributed to them surely does. In fact, American Nazis are heinous fiends simply because of their very presence in a story, without even having to detail their misdeeds.

As a matter of record, some literature of the period also depicted groups like the Black Dragon Society similarly agitating on behalf of Imperial Japan, and either enlisting or coercing the help of Japanese-Americans (*Nisei*) in the process. In doing so, Golden Age comic books depicted acts of disloyalty commonly believed to be happening at that time. It's a point of justifiable pride for Japanese-Americans, however, that no such assistance was rendered, under duress or otherwise—even after the establishment of the *Nisei* internment camps. It is up to the Gamemaster to decide whether honoring this genre convention and the misconceptions of that era or representing real history and modern sensibilities is more important to the success of the campaign.

GOODFELLAS

Traditional American ways of life were also menaced by organized crime. While the mobs lost the power, money, and influence they once had under Prohibition (which ended in 1933), gangsters still flourished throughout the Golden Age, thanks to the efforts of the notorious Charles "Lucky" Luciano.

Beginning in 1931, Luciano forged *La Cosa Nostra* into a truly organized crime administration known as the National Crime Syndicate, which represented the five largest mob families in America. Under the direction of "the Commission," families were assigned territories and spheres of influence. As a result, they spent much less time fighting each other and more effort on gambling, racketeering, prostitution, and drug trafficking. The end of Prohibition, which should have been the death knell for the mob, was merely a transition to a new and nearly as profitable a period.

La Cosa Nostra dug in its claws far and wide, even into the fictional cities found in Golden Age comic books. Fortunately, there were plenty of union-suit heroes to stand up to them, even when no one else could.

GANGSTERS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

In a time when all most comic-book characters had was a costume, two fists, and a thirst for justice, gangsters were the perfect foil. Mobsters made for an equal match in power and influence and were *very* easy to dislike.

Comic-book mobsters were portrayed as vicious leg-breakers who stooped to anything to squeeze another buck out of some poor helpless person trying to eke out a living in the big city. They're vengeful, double-crossing, nasty pieces of work with few if any redeeming characteristics; in short, people who are a heck of a lot of fun to punch in the mouth.

Typically, a hero begins the story waging a lonely battle in their secret identity against the local crime syndicate. The hero may be a police detective, a crusading district attorney, or an ace news-hound on the side of the underdogs. In any case, the mob is either large and well-funded, or has corrupted many of the city's institutions. The hero faces an uphill fight.

The challenge is two-fold. First, the costumed hero has to find enough proof to put the mobsters away for good—usually nothing less than a signed confession will do. Second, the hero has to protect the honest and law-abiding people who are otherwise going to fall victim to the syndicate's gambling and protection rackets. It's a classic comic-book plot, and one where familiarity breeds a lot of fun. Everyone knows the classic 1930s gangster tropes: pinstripe suits, tough-guy accents and slang, Tommy guns, gorgeous molls, rub-outs, and mob wars. It's a fun mythology to play around with, and one the players are going to want to see at some point if they're real Golden Age fans.

FILM NOIR

Comic books have always reflected the pop culture of their day, and the era of the Golden Age was no exception. One of the more interesting manifestations of this is the influence the *film noir* genre of cinema exercised on the four-color page.

Film noir (French for "black film") is a broad genre, but characteristically features desperate characters, lurid crimes, sex, dark humor, and downbeat, ironic endings. Like comic books, *film noir* originates in the era's pulp fiction, particularly the hard-boiled stories of writers like Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, James Cain, and Horace McCoy.

Most critics regard the 1941 version of *The Maltese Falcon* (starring Humphrey Bogart) as the first *film noir*. It and films like it helped usher in the elements that became hallmarks of the genre: hard-boiled private eyes, gorgeous dames gone bad, and gangsters interacting in murder mysteries and melodramas set on dark and dirty city streets.

FILM NOIR IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

While Golden Age comic books never got as lurid as *film noir* or adopted the widespread downbeat ending, many adult *noir* plot elements crept into kids' funny books of the day. More than a few features centered

on the adventurers of a tough P.I. who as often as not got by without superpowers or a multicolor union suit. Both they and their costumed cousins came across their share of *femmes fatale*, and got wrapped up in finding a group of very likely suspects, one of whom killed for the love of money.

Gamemasters and players who are fond of postmodern Golden Age adventures may want to play up the more lurid possibilities of *film noir* type stories, wherein the distinction between the good guys and bad guys is more blurred and the evil that men do is more depraved and explicit. If that's the case, they may find the forthcoming *Noir* Second Edition genre book for *Mutants & Masterminds* a useful purchase, as it explores in detail the idea of superpowers in a *film noir* setting.

THE RISING TIDE OF FASCISM

As noted above, American Nazis make great villains, the kind the players always enjoy vicariously beating the living crap out of. In fact, the only bad guys who outdo fascist wannabe's in this regard are the genuine, goose-stepping articles.

In many ways, the agents of foreign dictatorships are more interesting threats in the prewar era than after the actual outbreak of hostilities. The gloves are off from the Pearl Harbor attack onwards, but before that, the player characters' interactions with foreign fascist foes are more subtle and varied. In the prewar era, the characters' wits are challenged as much as their superhuman abilities.

Nazi and/or Japanese agents (with or without superpowers) can show up on American shores in the guise of diplomats or tourists, or under deep cover as ordinary American citizens. They may be leaders of their own ring of saboteurs, or may have come to give aid and comfort to a group of American fifth columnists. Whatever the nature of their mission, their prime objective is undermining America's ability to help its friends abroad and prepare for a more direct role in the wars overseas.

USING FASCIST AGENTS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Events usually proceed as described under **Illinois Nazis**, only with the threat level raised; superpowered Axis agents fear no consequences, since they won't be shy about invoking diplomatic immunity if things go awry. This is a great way for establishing continuing villains for campaigns. Their unfriendly rivalry with the player characters can continue throughout the prewar era and beyond.

In addition to acts of sabotage, Axis agents were frequently scheming to get their grubby mitts on some top-secret scientific research project or some ancient, all-powerful mystical artifact. Plenty of both went on in real life, of course (the Nazis being particularly obsessed with the latter), but in *Golden Age* the scientific discoveries can be the stuff of science fiction, and the lost magical totems really do work just as the legends tell.

The much sought-after item can be some futuristic wonder straight out of *Amazing Stories*, like a time machine or prototype missile to the moon, or it can be an actual secret weapon from the period, like atomic research, jet aircraft, or ballistic missiles. If the prize is truly arcane, it can be some classic comic-book invention like the "fabled" Ochre Lynx of Arbeitstadt, or a legendary item of the sort the Nazi regime was after in real life, like the Spear of Destiny, the Holy Grail, or the Lost Ark of the Covenant.

Regardless of the fascists' specific aim, the player characters are faced with the challenge of discovering exactly what the Axis agents are after, then learning when and how they will strike. This process may encompass a number of linked adventures, taking the heroes around the globe as the elements of the villains' master plan gradually come into focus.

The adventure can climax with a final mad dash to keep the device or artifact from falling into the wrong hands, or a desperate final act on the characters' part when they discover they've arrived too late.

1941–1945: THE WAR YEARS

American life changed forever on the seventh of December, 1941. What had been prime national concerns just the day before quickly faded into memory. The Depression came to an end as the draft and mass production of materiel put the nation back to work, albeit at the unpleasant task of waging war. Even the Mob joined the war effort after the authorities declared a truce with the Commission and enlisted the imprisoned "Lucky" Luciano's help in thwarting Axis sabotage of American shipping ports. The long-term changes were even more profound, as America shed its isolationist policies and become the leader of the greatest international coalition ever formed. In the end, a war that proved ruinous for most of the rest of the world left America more powerful and prosperous than ever.

With the war sweeping all other concerns aside, *M&M* campaigns set during this time period are likewise primarily concerned with the global struggle against fascism. Even campaigns that never get closer than a thousand miles to a battlefield can still feel the effects of conscription and rationing on society at large.

That said, there are still matters of degree involved. In some campaigns, the player characters fight on the front lines alongside the brave men in uniform. Other campaigns never leave stateside, and all the action the characters see takes place on the home front. No matter which type of adventure the Gamemaster chooses to run, there's still plenty of fun and excitement to be had for the players.

BATTLE FRONT

The first choice a Gamemaster running a wartime *Golden Age* campaign must make is how often actual fighting figures into their game sessions. In one option, the Gamemaster can send the characters right into the heat of battle. The adventures that follow closely resemble the exploits of military heroes, such as those outlined in the section on **Heroes in Uniform** (page 38).

Other adventures resemble many of the types of scenarios described in the **Home Front** section (see below), only with the heroes' and villains' roles reversed. In this case, it is the player characters who are asked to slip into Berlin to destroy the Reich Chancellery, or to go on a hit and run raid into Tokyo to paint "Kilroy Was Here" on the Imperial Palace. They may be called upon to help out resistance fighters all across Europe, perhaps even inside Nazi Germany itself.

In this type of campaign, Gamemasters must work carefully to make sure the challenges are suitable for the player characters. Individually, a costumed hero is more than a match for a common soldier. If a mission goes awry and reinforcements show up, however, the odds can quickly turn against even a team of superheroes facing an entire company, much less a regiment.

Superheroes work best as either costumed commandos, taking on the high-stakes missions that not even the toughest soldiers can tackle, or as battlefield countermeasures standing at the ready to thwart any interference by Axis supervillains or fantastic super weapons. With some planning and a healthy mix of story types, Gamemasters can keep this type of campaign vital for a good long time.

HOME FRONT

At the other extreme is the campaign where the action never leaves American soil, which is closer to what was actually depicted in Golden Age comic books. Still, the Gamemaster needs to do some work on this

KEEPING THE HEROES SAFE AT HOME

Authentic Golden Age comic books by and large kept their costumed protagonists close to home, or at least far away from the actual fighting. The explanation given was that the heroes did so as a matter of faith in America's fighting men. Largely, however, this was a reflection of an insoluble storytelling paradox.

The more powerful comic-book heroes should've been able to win the war in time for brunch, but couldn't do so without relegating their adventures to an unrecognizable alternate reality unpalatable to the readers. Thus, costumed heroes usually kept their civilian jobs and spent the war battling enemy saboteurs and gangsters at home, often without a word said about how they'd avoided the draft.

An authentic Golden Age campaign can proceed accordingly, simply taking for granted that the lead characters don't have to worry about being called into military service and that they sleep soundly knowing the war will be won without their direct help. Most players are going to wonder about this, however. Sooner or later they're going to ask, even if none of the non-player characters do. In such cases, the section **Don't You Know There's a War On?** explains the ins and outs of the new Benefit: Draft Exemption feat. It lists a number of good reasons for perfectly healthy young male heroes not to be in uniform. One of them is bound to fit each of the homebody heroes in a given campaign.

premise as to how the heroes stay out of the overseas fighting before implementing it as a campaign. See the sidebar on **Keeping the Heroes Safe at Home** for some helpful hints on this.

Once it's settled as to why the characters haven't gone off to war in either of their identities, it's time to plan some stateside adventures for them. They might involve the continuing struggle against Axis saboteurs that began in the prewar era, or be unique to a wartime setting. Some examples are outlined in the sections following.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

A supervillain-sized ego can be a tough thing to harbor in wartime. Sure, you have some nifty superhuman abilities, a fearsome costume, and a penchant for wrongdoing, but where's all the glory and attention you worked so hard for and deserve? Wasted on ordinary soldiers fighting ordinary battles in the newsreels, that's where. What's a megalomaniacal costumed evil-doer to do?

Well, if your patron is a power-hungry Axis dictator bent on world domination, the obvious answer is to sign up for a bold mission deep behind Allied lines aimed at showing the inherent strength of fascism and weakness of the decadent democracies. The assignment might call upon a villain to carve Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito's faces onto Mount Rushmore, rip the Declaration of Independence into shreds, knock over the Hollywoodland sign, break Betty Grable's legs, or some combination thereof.

These types of adventure scenarios are inherently high-stakes affairs. The Axis powers are likely to commit their most powerful and ruthless agents to such schemes. Discovering and defeating their plans will be no easy task. Furthermore, the country's morale and fighting spirit are

at stake, with the consequences of failure dire. In addition, the characters' reputation is at stake. After all, who wants to be remembered as the not-so-super heroes who let the Nazis tear the skirt right off the Statue of Liberty?

ILLEGAL BUSINESS AS USUAL

Global war, shmobal war—there are still banks to be robbed, jewels to be stolen, and rich people to be kidnapped and ransomed. At least, that's the attitude of many costumed villains depicted in Golden Age comic books.

Despite the largest war in human history raging all around, it's still quite possible to run a good old-fashioned supervillain caper or two. In fact, Gamemasters are encouraged to do so, to give the campaign some much-needed variety and a break from the usual Nazi-bash. These scenarios play out like similar ones in any other comic-book era, and thus most of the usual guidelines and suggestions apply. There are, however, additional options for Gamemasters who want to add distinctively Golden Age elements to the proceedings.

WARTIME SUPER-VILLAINY

The typical Golden Age bad guy was either non- or lowly superpowered, and as such had to plan for the long term. However, the added time allowed him to plan big. A wartime supervillain wouldn't try to knock over a local jeweler when the Hope Diamond was there for the taking (especially with the country's attentions overseas). Similarly, the local savings and loan seems passé when Fort Knox looks terribly under-manned and under-guarded, at least to a comic-book villain's eyes.

Second, wartime conditions create a whole new set of rules for villains

PROLONGING THE STRUGGLE

Contemporary comic books have offered up several different explanations as to why costumed heroes stayed stateside instead of ending the war early. In *Freedom City*, for example, costumed heroes have their opposite numbers among the Axis super-soldiers and must face the might of the Axis military machine.

Another potential explanation involves the propaganda value of superheroes. Allied democracies may fear for the blow national morale would suffer if such a visible symbol of national might as a costumed hero was killed or captured. The union-suit heroes therefore stay at home, exempt from the draft and away from the front by governmental decree.

Alternatively, the threat of Axis infiltration and sabotage may be greater in your campaign than it was in real history (not unbelievable with super-powered Axis spies). Superheroes, uniquely capable of rounding up such miscreants, could be ordered to remain on the home front where they can do the most good. This good also includes doing what celebrities did best, raising morale and selling war bonds.

Finally, some stories posit a comic-book reason for the lack of direct superhuman involvement in the fighting, inventing some technological or magical obstacle uniquely menacing to costumed heroes. Perhaps this obstacle suppresses any superhuman ability, or instantly brainwashes the good guys into becoming bad guys, or simply turns costumed heroes into children or monkeys. Whatever the reason, it's a line the heroes cannot cross.

to break. Rationing gave rise to counterfeiting the required coupons, just as shortages of desired consumer goods and the government price controls put upon them led to the development of a black market. It takes a true villain to compromise the war effort by participating in such schemes, but such a blackguard is all the more fun for true red-blooded American heroes to bring to justice.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

One of the more intriguing options available to long-running (or deeply back-storied) *Golden Age* campaigns involves the characters' prewar continuing villains. What happens if Professor Peccant declares that he hates Hitler more than he loves robbing banks and offers his scientific (albeit mad) gifts to the Allied cause?

Naturally, this sort of thing can be a ruse on the villain's part, aimed at getting the drop on his archenemies, which can make for an entertaining adventure. Gamemasters may also want to consider the less obvious possibilities, such as the villain harboring a more long-term plan for turning the outbreak of war to his advantage. In this case, it may be several game sessions before the truth comes out, making it more of a shock to the player characters. In truly long term *Golden Age* campaigns, the villain may not reveal his true colors until the postwar era, perhaps even well into it.

The alternative with the most possibilities involves the villain's offer being sincere. In this instance, the characters remain on their toes, watching for signs of a betrayal they don't know isn't coming. They likely remain paranoid no matter how grateful they might be for their formerly sworn enemy's help, no matter how invaluable it becomes to them.

In addition, the bad guy in question may not change his personality and methods, just his allegiances. The alliance between the player characters and him may then be an uneasy one, as the villain retains his haughty, condescending, or only-partly-sane manner, and employs means that are just this side of criminal and unethical.

The ex-villain may in fact cross the line between right and wrong, feeling justified by the ruthlessness of total war, creating a moral dilemma for the players, particularly if the former villain remains in the good graces of the War Department. What happens after that can be some of the most memorable roleplaying of the entire campaign.

ALLIES

One of the things a Gamemaster can do to show the global nature of WWII is to include some meetings with heroes from the other Allied nations. Such meetings are almost inevitable in battle front-based campaigns, but they can plausibly happen in home-front scenarios as well.

Perhaps the heroes' comrades in arms from overseas have come to America on a goodwill visit, helping to sell war bonds and warn civilians of the horrors unleashed by the Axis in Europe and Asia. Alternatively, the foreign heroes may be operating outside of their home countries because of an enemy plot of truly epic proportions, one requiring the might of several nations' superpowered champions to defeat.

Allied comic-book heroes usually reflect the best (or the best known, at least) characteristics of their nations at that time. British supers are plucky and redoubtable even under the worst circumstances, while Free French costumed heroes bravely but keenly feel the subjugation of the homeland they so badly wish to liberate.

Similarly, Soviet heroes are grimly determined to avenge themselves on the hated Nazis, all the while working for a government that sees them as just another expendable asset, particularly if their loyalties become suspect. Chinese superheroes are wise and inscrutable, and normally do not reflect the deep divisions in their homeland, united only in its hatred of the Japanese.

Of course, there's nothing that says a Gamemaster can't take the opportunity to go against such expectations. A dour, spite-filled British hero who lost his family during the London Blitz, or a happy-go-lucky, gregarious superpowered Russian can definitely liven up the proceedings with their surprise value alone.

REAL HISTORY VS. COMIC-BOOK HISTORY

Barring some incredible catastrophe (of the sort only seen in comic books), victory for the Allies was assured the moment the United States entered the war. The combined Axis powers were simply no match for America's industrial might, which simultaneously kept the Soviet Union equipped, the United Kingdom fed, and buried Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan beneath a rain of steel.

For the sake of a good story, however, creators have played fast and loose with this historical truth for decades. As a result, German fleets well in excess of any the Nazis ever planned to build menace America's shores on comic-book pages. Panels full of long-range bombers that Imperial Japan lacked the technical know-how to design (much less build) threaten to reduce Los Angeles and San Francisco to rubble. There was no historical basis for anything of this sort, but more often than not, the situation was so gripping the audience never knew (or cared).

COMIC-BOOK HISTORY IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Gamemasters may wish to exaggerate the capabilities of the Axis war machine for much the same reasons, especially for campaigns normally restricted to the home front. After all, nothing adds more excitement to those routine air raid drills than the possibility that there actually could be Nazi bombers hovering over the characters' hometown (or at least

there will be, if the heroes don't stop them). As in most comic books, Axis military parity can simply be accepted as a matter of course. In fact, players who know more comic-book history than real-world history may never question it.

More detail-oriented Gamemasters may want to spin this aspect of the game into a full-blown alternate history, however, where lucky breaks, comic-book science, and/or mystical powers have put the outcome of World War II into serious question. Things may be going so badly for the Allies that the good guys begin the campaign as noticeable underdogs. Only the supreme heroism of the player characters can prevent democracy from being swept away by the rising tide of worldwide fascism.

Regardless of how closely or loosely the campaign hews to actual historical events, the Gamemaster should never lose sight that *Mutants & Masterminds* is a comic-book roleplaying game. Be sure to include a healthy sampling of all the weird scientific and mystical devices the players are expecting, from samurai robots to giant rolling-swastika war machines to once-lost magically powered gadgets from the back pages of Da Vinci's notebooks.

REAL-WORLD HISTORY IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Gamemasters who want to adhere more strictly to what actually happened can still derive exciting stories from war-related inspirations. After all, an Axis defeat may have been inevitable, but its member nations didn't go down without a fight. The Allies didn't win every battle, and neither will the player characters. In a worst-case scenario, they might even become part of the millions who died to provide the inevitable Allied victory.

In addition to superpowered operatives and any magical help the GM tosses their way, the Axis powers can be made more formidable in a more historically accurate campaign by playing up the things that made them fearsome in real life. First was their militaries' fanaticism, personified by the Imperial Japanese forces' utter refusal to surrender and use of suicide attacks. Second were the advanced secret weapons developed by the Germans, including jet aircraft, ballistic missiles, and the assault rifle.

Blessedly, this list does not include the atomic bomb, something Nazi scientists lagged far behind their American counterparts in developing. However, anything is possible in a comic-book roleplaying game. The possibility of a Japanese *kamikaze* attack using a German-built atom bomb (or the like) is left wide open for Gamemasters to explore.

1945-1955: THE ATOMIC AGE

In complete contrast to the bleak outlook of the prewar era, the postwar era began as one of boundless optimism. Whereas the Great Depression once seemed endless, America now stood on the verge of an age of unprecedented wealth and plenty. The struggle just to make it from day to day was over. Peace was at hand and science, powered by the untold energies of the atom, seemed poised to alleviate mankind's remaining ills.

Time soon revealed, however, that the Atomic Age held perils all its own: namely, the threat of total nuclear annihilation. Despite this and the onset of the grim twilight struggle of the Cold War, the prevailing optimism never faltered in the waning days of comic books' Golden Age. The generation that had prevailed against both the greatest economic crisis of all time and the greatest war ever fought was ready to take advantage of a new tomorrow and enjoy it to the fullest.

Of course, better days brought with them less of a need for heroes, especially the super variety. Ordinary people seemed quite capable of dealing with the challenges that lay ahead in the bright shining future. This perception didn't always match reality, of course, but public interest

in costumed heroes nearly disappeared. In a world where a single bomb could destroy an entire city, superheroes just didn't seem that super anymore.

This dying light was reflected in postwar comic books. Like the medium itself, player characters in campaigns set in this area must somehow redefine themselves in the face of changing times and public indifference. The heroes who strive on, trying to grapple with the complexities of the Cold War, McCarthyism, and segregation, do so with much less certainty—and glory—than ever before. This melancholy sense of a marvelous age coming to an end pervades the comic-book stories about this era.

ATOMIC ANGST

On July 16, 1945, the world changed forever. In an experiment dubbed "Trinity," the work of the Manhattan Project blossomed in the shape of a fiery mushroom cloud, turning the desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico into glass. The Atomic Age had begun.

The potential consequences of living in this new era were evident only to a few, even after the world saw the extent of the damage done to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by A-bombs. It was horrific on a scale never before imagined, but it was a horror controlled by the benevolent hand of the United States. The atomic genie was safe in its bottle, emerging only when Uncle Sam needed a wish granted.

For a time, the atom did indeed seem to hold the power to fulfill our wildest imaginings. Cheap limitless power, advanced medical techniques, and travel to distant worlds on which we'd settle were just the start. Whatever men could dream, it seemed the atom could do.

COME THE APOCALYPSE?

Then, on August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union successfully tested an atomic bomb, and America had to face the prospect of one of its cities becoming the next Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Assurances that the enemy's homes would suffer the same fate in the event of an atomic war proved to be cold comfort, if any at all.

Even with the specter of the end of human civilization hanging over them, most Americans went on with their daily lives—there was no real choice to do anything else. The specter never disappeared, however. It hid in the shadows of people's darkest fears, always threatening to leap out and shout "Apocalypse." Even the gris-gris of backyard bomb shelters and "duck & cover" offered no respite from the spirit our own scientists had loosed.

The looming horrors of the Atomic Age terrified Americans of all stations, and it had the same effect on their comic-book heroes. Supremely powerful characters openly grappled with their own impotence in the face of an atomic holocaust. The steadily declining comic-book sales of the postwar era indicated a similar disenchantment in their readers. What good are superheroes, readers concluded, if they can't protect us from the A-bomb?

COMIC BOOK FALLOUT

Comic-book heroes seemed even more useless compared to the extraordinary things ordinary folks were devising and doing on (seemingly) a regular basis in the postwar era. A man who could fly seemed neat, until Captain Chuck Yeager raced past him and shattered the sound barrier. Likewise, being able to throw a mean left hook seemed puny compared to an H-bomb that could level cities. It scarcely seemed worth the time it took a hero to start up the old super-mobile once the guided-missile experiments at the White Sands Proving Grounds started to point the way to the moon and beyond.

The inability of comic books to top real life led to the demise of almost all the Golden Age heroes. In truth it was their most implacable foe—poor sales—that did them in. In the context of their own four-color world, however, it seemed the superheroes had been made obsolete. They were forced by changing times into hanging up their union-suits and taking straight jobs.

ATOMIC ANGST IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

While your *Golden Age* campaign isn't in any danger of being cancelled due to poor sales, that same sense of an uncertain future can be incorporated into your game sessions. It can even serve as the basis for a final act in a campaign, leading to a fond retirement or setting up a sequel.

If the Gamemaster chooses to incorporate some Atomic Age angst in the campaign, the first step involves the loss of the player characters' traditional foes—and along with them, much of the heroes' sense of purpose. For instance, the mobsters who were once feared and above the law find themselves on their way to Federal prison thanks to the FBI and the Kefauver Committee, with nary a cape in sight.

Likewise, the foreign saboteurs and fellow travelers who succumbed only to the last-second heroics of costumed crusaders all disappear at war's end (if the Gamemaster isn't playing up **The Red Menace**, as outlined in that section). In their place are American spies hidden amongst the country's elites who've opted for much more subtle tactics than planting bombs. Even the most patriotic heroes can feel unchallenged going after foes whose only power is super-disloyalty. Furthermore, they may find themselves disgusted by the means employed to hunt for potential traitors, as outlined in the section on **McCarthyism**.

THE SUPERHERO IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT

As happened in actual comic-book history, the player characters can watch as their superhero comrades disappear from the adventuring life, one by one. Some of them may find their luck running out, having survived the war only to be killed by a lucky shot from a stick-up artist. Others may trade in their costumes for gray flannel suits, settling down to lives of backyard barbecues and child-rearing. If the characters have any concerns about their own mortality or the quieter lives they put off having in order to win the war, such developments should bring them to the forefront.

Gamemasters can really drive home the point that the age of costumed adventurers is nearly over by having the player characters' archenemies give up super-villainy in exchange for a pardon and high-paying government jobs. The heroes may complain when they first catch sight of their old foe Major Evil out of costume and punching a clock at a government lab, but it makes the desired point. In the postwar age, there's just more money to be had selling off the plans to his giant mechanical mole machine than there is trying to rob banks with the contraption.

The morality of their once-trusted government employing ex-would-be-world-conquerors might seem questionable for the player characters, but if they see Major Evil working on captured German V2 rockets alongside former Nazi scientists like Dr. Werner von Braun, it will at least make sense in context. At this point, there are no more supervillains. The once-clear line between the former bad guys and the heroes' own government is now blurred beyond recognition.

If the characters need another blow to their egos, the Gamemaster can play up the widespread fear of imminent nuclear holocaust. While they contemplate all else that has come to pass, the heroes can observe their friends and neighbors rushing to build backyard bomb shelters and watch schoolchildren practicing their A-bomb attack drills. The question, spoken or unspoken, becomes: what's the point of trying to save a world that's about to end anyway?

THE BEGINNING OR THE END

Campaigns can take many different directions once the player characters' adventuring spirits are broken, including "The End." Things can be upbeat, with the characters living a comfortable life in a world that no longer needs their continued self-sacrifice. The A-bomb may make for an uncertain future, but as days go, the ones the characters are living in aren't too bad.

Things can also be downbeat, as the once-honored heroes find themselves anachronisms in a modern age. They may walk away embittered and cynical, but ready to return to action in a sequel campaign set in the Silver Age. Alternately, the heroes can go out in a last blaze of glory (either real or just in their imaginations) for a truly final ending.

Less terminally, the sense of atomic angst can serve as a transition to a different sort of campaign. There can be fantastic new menaces on the horizon that renew the heroes' sense of purpose (see **Keep Watching the Skies!** on page 25 for one example). In postmodern Golden Age campaigns, the heroes can exercise their superhuman abilities in the down-and-dirty black operations world of Cold War espionage, spanning the globe and doing whatever's necessary to save the free world from international communism.

Of course, a Gamemaster running a classic-style Golden Age campaign can keep things shiny and happy as always, running pretty much the same sort of adventures they always have. There's nothing at all wrong with this approach; in any other sort of campaign, however, a touch of atom-related angst is perfect for giving the players a sense of both the real-world and comic-book history of the postwar era.

MCCARTHYISM

All the good international feelings of the post-World War II days lasted up until the moment Americans realized their erstwhile ally good ol' "Uncle Joe" Stalin—murderer of over 20 million people—hadn't backed off his country's stated goal of ruling over a communist world. Still, Stalin's installation of oppressive puppet governments in Eastern Europe did little to diminish U.S. confidence that the atomic bomb would put those commies right if they ever *really* got out of line.

Change came suddenly with the shocking revelation of the successful Soviet A-bomb tests, made possible by top-secret information given them by sympathetic Americans. With that, American confidence turned to fear, and fear to paranoia.

"TAILGUNNER JOE"

This paranoia was personified in the doughy white shape of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, known as "Tailgunner Joe" from his wartime service in the Army Air Force. After three years' undistinguished service in Congress, McCarthy made headlines by alleging a massive communist infiltration of the U.S. State Department. The paranoid American public swallowed the Senator's stories whole, no matter how inconsistent they were in the retelling.

McCarthy quickly learned that the bigger his accusations, the larger his fame and influence became. During his 1950-54 reign of terror, he used his position as Chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations to level charges of disloyalty at the biggest targets he could find. Before McCarthy's bullying and smear tactics finally went too far and offended the better natures of most Americans, he claimed to have found communist spies throughout the U.S. government. In fact, McCarthy leveled charges at so many people that he actually managed to accuse some people who really *were* guilty of selling out their country to the Soviets.

ARE YOU NOW, OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN...?

Though this era's frantic search for communists is known as "McCarthyism," the Senator was far from acting alone. In addition to McCarthy, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) had by 1946 abandoned its original mission of investigating Nazi subterfuge and the Ku Klux Klan (which was somehow let off the hook due to "insufficient evidence") and focused its sights squarely on the Red Menace.

During its years of red-hunting, the HUAC managed to prosecute some guilty parties (most famously, the turncoat State Department official Alger Hiss), and destroy the names and reputations of many far less culpable individuals. The most celebrated of HUAC's targets are the "Hollywood Ten," who were cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to cooperate with the Committee (on First Amendment grounds) as it investigated communist subversion in the motion picture business.

This led to the infamous Hollywood blacklist, which denied work to anyone suspected of ever having any sort of ties to communism. It was emblematic of the sorts of things taking place in American society at large during this era.

MCCARTHYISM IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

In light of the historical record, it seems only natural that the costumed "mystery men" in your *Golden Age* campaign will sooner or later come under scrutiny from HUAC, Senator McCarthy, or both. If the game has any roleplayers worthy of the name, their reactions should make for some of the most memorable sessions of the entire campaign.

Do America's superpowered champions, once worshiped as heroes, stand on the country's timeless principles by calling the whole thing a witch-hunt and refusing to cooperate? Or do they acknowledge there really *are* traitors threatening America's very existence, and go along with the laws they've sworn to uphold? Most intriguingly, what if part of the once-solid hero team passionately feels one way, and the rest believes the opposite just as ardently?

Depending on the players involved and the group's ultimate plans for the campaign, this situation can be either the end or the start of something big. The team may opt to ride the prevailing popular winds and try to give the red-hunters what they ask for. This likely leads to more difficult dilemmas—what if the government demands the heroes make their secret identities public? After all, if they're good Americans, they shouldn't have anything to conceal. The war is over and the Mob is being driven out of business. What could the heroes still have to hide?

NAMING NAMES

After that, characters will likely be asked to report on the loyalties of people they know and trust, perhaps even the comrades they fought side by side with during the war. Will the heroes name names and implicate their former allies, or risk censure by keeping silent? Moreover, will those very same allies succumb to pressure and implicate the player characters in order to save themselves?

It can make for some interesting roleplaying to point out to any players having an attack of conscience (probably resulting from modern, rather than Golden Age, sensibilities) the zeal with which they pursued Axis subversives during World War II and

how the specter of communism loomed over America at the time. You can also make McCarthy's case for him by providing some *real* threats, either commie traitors amongst America's trusted heroes, or outside threats like the alien Grue in *Freedom City*, a true "red menace"!

HANGING TOGETHER

If the heroes stand together in resisting the governmental inquisitors, then a simple thing like saving the day becomes very difficult. Congress may hold them in contempt, and the characters may have to choose between retirement, jail time, or becoming vigilantes wanted by their own government. At the very least, any degree of support or sanction they once received from Uncle Sam is going to dry up and the heroes are going to have to go it alone.

Anything less than full cooperation with the government's inquiries is going to frowned upon by the general public. At best, people are going to grow suspicious of any hero not seen as fully supporting the hunt for subversives, no matter what tactics are used. In a worst-case scenario, the characters may become regarded as villains, hated and feared by the very people they've sworn to protect. They might even run afoul of a superpowered red-hunter (who might be a psychopath to boot).

HANGING SEPARATELY

Things get really interesting if the team is divided on what course of action to take. The divide can grow into a split that spells a bitter end for the once-united team. This outcome can serve as a sad, poignant, but thoroughly fitting end for a Golden Age campaign. Alternatively, it can be the set up for a sequel campaign in the early Silver Age, where the older and perhaps wiser heroes try to get past all the old disagreements and bitterness, reuniting to battle injustice on the New Frontier of the 1960s. If the breakup was nasty enough, the sequel campaign may even take place in the Modern Age, when their grandsons and granddaughters try to overcome generations of separation that came about because of the stubbornness and resentment of their elders.

It's an ugly situation no matter what happens, just as it was in real life, but adversity is the true test of a hero. The player characters' loyalty will be tested, as will their core beliefs and the principles they subscribe

to. For better or worse, the heroes have to stand for something or surely fall. In the end, if the player characters stick with their convictions and the better angels of their natures, they should be given a chance to endure the national tumult until sanity and reason overtake fear and paranoia. If the characters remain true while others falter, it may well be their words and deeds which finally topple the demagogues like Senator McCarthy.

THE RED MENACE

"Tailgunner Joe" McCarthy was exaggerating about there being a red under every bed, but you'd never know that from reading postwar comic books. One of the strongest reminders that comics are truly a product of their times is their use of communist bad guys engaged in all sorts of un-American activities.

As earlier noted, this was due to comic books' postwar conservatism. It was all too easy for creators who'd spent the last decade presenting yarns about fascist saboteurs threatening American security to go on telling the same types of stories with far-left fifth columnists filling in for far-right ones. Thus, the suggestions offered in the section on **Illinois Nazis** (page 17) still apply here.

The only real change is that communist agents have a more common objective. Most often, communists agents are trying to get their hands on some piece of classified military technology made in the good ol' U. S. of A., with A-bomb secrets high on their list. The challenge for the main characters is to figure out exactly what they're after, and which turncoat American fellow travelers are helping them. These types of adventures can be straightforward, where the two-fisted American superheroes give the no-good commies what's coming to them once they unravel the mystery. Others draw the heroes into cat-and-mouse Cold War games, involving wits and subterfuge.

THE RED SCARE IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

In *Golden Age* campaigns, the communists can be among the most dangerous enemies the characters ever face. Nothing else would befit the products of a large, totalitarian power with access to resources (including superpowers) that rival or dwarf those of the characters and their allies.

If punching commies until they bleed or international intrigue doesn't interest your players, or you're just looking for a change of pace, there are other ways to insert a little Red Scare into your campaign. As seen in real life, characters who are, or who ever have been, members of the Communist Party have a pretty sizable skeleton in their closet during the Golden Age, akin to the Prejudice Complication (see *M&M*, page 123).

This can cause all sorts of problems. If a person "betrayed his country" (by the standards of the age) or the party, angry representatives of either are bound to show up at some point. They or anyone else who learns about his communist past have some prime blackmail material on their hands. Will the big red target be willing to kill in order to protect his secrets? If so, the characters might be asked to unravel the resulting murder mystery. There may even be the added difficulty of having someone close to them as the prime suspect, or even the perpetrator.

THE KOREAN WAR

Despite being the one occasion during the Golden Age when the Cold War got hot, the Korean War drew little notice from contemporary superhero comic books, especially when compared to the omnipresence of World War II in their pages. It was a reflection not only of the American public's ambivalence about the country's involvement in Korea, but the waning presence of costumed heroes, both on newsstands and in the public imagination.

This certainly doesn't mean this significant event in world history has to pass by your *Golden Age* campaign without fanfare, of course. In fact, it opens up story possibilities not available in a World War II setting. It can serve as a metaphor for the fate of the superhero in the 1950s as well as the state of America itself—if your game does metaphors, that is.

From a metaphorical perspective, the Korean War was all about unfulfilled expectations. The North Koreans (and later, the Red Chinese) expected a quick victory which never materialized. President Truman and General MacArthur sought to liberate the entire Korean Peninsula, but had to settle for half; a draw for a nation long accustomed to winning wars outright.

The metaphor of unfulfilled expectations can make the Korean War scenarios distinctive from World War II adventures and give the players a taste of the era's zeitgeist. The key there is to find out what the player characters want, and give them just enough of it to make them miserable.

THE KOREAN WAR IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

When war breaks out in Korea, some characters will no doubt want to dust off their red, white, & blue costume and go fight the marauding red hordes. Others may want to help the war effort to prove their flag-waving skills beyond a shadow of a doubt, establishing their *bona fide* All-American-ness with the McCarthyites. The risk these patriotic characters run is that the government may not ask for or even want their help.

The early 1950s was a time in real life when America was outgrowing the need for union-suit heroes. America was an atomic superpower; why did the country need a bunch of weirdoes wearing their long johns on the outside? Even before Dr. Wertham revealed just how seedy the whole "costumed superhero" thing really was, there was plenty of public mistrust of the aptly named "mystery men." The Red Scare did little to alleviate such feelings. Sure, these heroes helped win World War II, but what had they done for the country lately? The heroes who most want (or feel the need) to beat the commies back across the Yalu may be kept at arm's length by the government. They may be asked to boost morale on the home front, or ordered to do nothing at all as the war drags on and thousands die.

WAR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

On the other hand, the player characters might share the prevailing sense of ambivalence about the war. They may be bitter over the treatment they or others received at the hands of HUAC, or just a bit unsure what good they still may be able to do (see the **Atomic Angst** section for more on this). Even those who more than did their part during World War II are probably in no rush to experience the horrors of war all over again.

Whatever the reason for their foot-dragging, these are the types of heroes who are the most poetically suited candidates to be asked (or ordered) to give a direct hand to the United Nations forces engaged in Korea. Once there, many of the same basic stories told in a World War II setting can be revisited, but with a twist.

BACK TO THE FRONT

Player characters are most likely to be sent into combat situations during the most desperate days of the war, such as the initial North Korean advance or the surprise entry of Red China into the conflict. Though a Gamemaster running a less-bleak classic Golden Age style campaign may want to run these as All-American commie-bashes, in more realistic games these battles are dire struggles for survival.

At critical junctures, even the most powerful, battle-tested heroes find themselves outnumbered, both by conventional forces and the hordes of superpowered operatives likely to be found in the communist ranks. Nothing should come easy for the characters during these times; the rewards for success are few, just as it was for the average fighting man.

Once directly involved in the conflict, the heroes find their range of actions limited just as the soldiers and generals did. In this war, there is no need for the Gamemaster to worry about the characters flying to the enemy capital and ending the war in a day, because they know as well as anyone that doing so will provoke the Soviet Union's wrath and lead to all-out atomic war. As elaborated on in the section on **Atomic Angst** (page 21), it's just another reminder that the characters exist like everyone else: in the shadow of a mushroom cloud.

Scenarios like those discussed in the preceding section on **Allies** (page 20) are possible as well. Characters who participated in the Second World War may renew acquaintances with the British and French superheroes they met during that conflict. They might decide to team-up for all new missions of vital importance, and perhaps commiserate over their postwar loss of direction and importance. They could even meet up with other old friends from China and the Soviet Union—now as adversaries.

THE GRIM REALITY OF WAR

Gamemasters running postmodern Golden Age campaigns will no doubt want to incorporate the atrocities committed during the war, such as the massacres of civilians suspected of enemy sympathies. Similarly, unlucky player characters may get to experience the horrors of the notorious prisoner-of-war camps run by the communists. In a comic-book setting, captured superheroes may be subjected to horrible scientific experiments, brainwashing, or worse.

The conflict in Korea is often referred to as "the Forgotten War." No matter what the player characters accomplish or endure there, that is what it is bound to remain in the public consciousness. In all likelihood, this means the characters must content themselves with the knowledge they are not the first who did good deeds few others noticed. It's a fate they share with all of America's veterans of "the Forgotten War."

KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!

Scores of American airmen reported seeing "foo fighters" during World War II, flying objects of an unknown nature. Most assumed they were just another sort of German secret weapon, like rocket fighters or buzz bombs. It wasn't until after the war that they learned German pilots were seeing the same type of airborne anomalies and falsely assuming they were Allied secret weapons.

The American public's fascination with such "UFOs" began when the newspapers got hold of a story told by pilot Kenneth Arnold. On June 24, 1947, Arnold was on a search and rescue mission in his small private plane when he claimed to have seen nine strange disk-like objects flying in formation "like a saucer if you skip it across the water." From that point on, sightings of "flying disks" and "flying saucers" became a national mania.

Mere days later on July 8th, an official U.S. Army Air Force press release seemed to validate the mania beyond doubt, as it carried word that a downed flying disk had been recovered at Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico. The report was officially retracted an hour later, with the revised story being that a downed weather balloon had been mistaken for a crashed flying saucer.

Weather balloon or not, the skies over America were soon full of flying saucers, disks, and various other airborne shapes—or so the eye-witnesses claimed. Speculation as to their origins was just as rampant, but centered on a hypothesis advanced by Kenneth Arnold himself: the flying saucers were from outer space, manned by little green men.

IT CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD

For several years following the initial reports, the media and the general public fed off each other in furthering the flying saucer craze. Public interest in alien visitors and the threat they might pose led to the production of hit movies like *It Came from Outer Space*, *The Thing from Another World*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still,* and *This Island Earth*, which in turn seemed to fuel even more outlandish claims from some individuals. George Adamski, for example, famously (and lucratively) spoke of his good friend Orthon from Venus, who came to warn Earth of the dangers of nuclear proliferation. When Soviet space probes revealed Venus to be lifeless, Adamski denounced their results as fake as he prepared to go to a intergalactic conference on Saturn in a huff. Adamski was only one of many Americans claiming he was taking regular Sunday drives around our solar system.

FLYING SAUCERS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

The most tantalizing prospect for a *Golden Age* campaign is assuming that Adamski was at least partially on the right track: aliens really are periodically riding their flying disks all the way to Earth and back. They may be as benevolent as he claims or as hostile as George Pal's film version of *The War of the Worlds* depicted them to be.

Alien attacks had already established themselves as classic Golden Age comic-book plots by the time the newspapers got hold of Kenneth Arnold's story. The flying saucer craze gave them added currency. Before long, alien visitors of every conceivable size and shape were menacing comic-book heroes on an even more regular basis.

Naturally, classic Golden Age campaigns are bound to dramatize the heroes' fights with the fire women from Venus and the lobster men from Neptune. Events proceed much as they usually do in later comic-book eras. The aliens' plot to take over Earth is eventually defeated, and they then fly back to outer space in their shiny disks as the heroes celebrate.

In postmodern Golden Age campaigns, the alien threat can be much greater and incorporate elements from present-day UFO mythology and conspiracy theory. The player characters can be called back into action by a shadowy government organization, such as the fabled "Majestic 12," to investigate and neutralize the extraterrestrial menace. They may then find themselves present at Roswell on the fateful day *they* came to Earth or another similar incident, battling hostile invaders in a head-to-head slugfest between superpowers and alien technology.

In a truly alternate postmodern setting, an alien invasion (thwarted or successful) can have lasting repercussions on a world made aware of hostile alien life and scarred by a true "war of the worlds" as well as a world war.

"THEY'RE HERE ALREADY! YOU'RE NEXT!"

There's nothing that says aliens come to earth with big flashing lights and metallic jumpsuits, of course. The alien menace may be subtle, more akin to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* than *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*. The player characters may have to log a lot of hours asking a lot of hillbillies about the Martian anal probes they've endured before they get to the (ahem) bottom of the aliens' agenda.

To make things really dark and postmodern, the aliens' agenda may be totally benevolent. Instead, the U.S. government is the party acting from less than pure motives. Perhaps Cold War-era paranoia blinds everyone to the possibility of friendly visitors, or a lust for advanced alien technology (needed to get a leg-up on the commies) outweighs any other concerns. In either case, the player characters are left in a difficult situation, opposed to their own government's actions but limited in the amount of assistance they can expect from their non-meddling alien allies.

LIFE DURING THE GOLDEN AGE

Perhaps the ultimate testament to the American spirit is how the 1938-1955 period resides in the memory of those who lived through it. Despite wars, poverty, and prejudice, most who were there look fondly back on these times as "the good old days." The generation that survived the Great Depression and the war counted its blessings. When people found a better (if not perfect) life than the one they'd had, they were happy about it. This is an important thing to bear in mind in any *Golden Age* game.

While it is *de rigueur* for modern writers and historians to focus on the very real misery and injustice of the period, they are in large part imposing a contemporary judgment that was not held by the public at large at the time. Focusing exclusively on the negative aspects of this period in history is no more fair or accurate than completely ignoring the injustices of the time.

The key, as always, is balance. Don't rant on the *Nisei* internment camps so much that you forget to include the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. As bad as segregation was, don't forget to celebrate Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson. It was an age that gave us both Charlie and Joe McCarthy–don't let either extreme dominate your stories. Most of all, don't lose sight of the fact that this era–like all others–had its good times and bad times, its heroes and its villains. Even in a roleplaying game about bulletproof super-mutants who can fly, a world that is painted as all good or all bad pushes the bounds of credibility too far. The pages following can help Gamemasters and players keep everything in perspective.

GOLDEN AGE SOCIETY

As with all forms of art, Golden Age comic books are reflections of the era that produced them. Like all mirror images, however, the result is distorted; when people stare at it, they tend to see only the best and worst elements. This section is intended to help campaigns replicate these most (un)flattering depictions or real history as the participants see fit.

BIG-CITY COMIC BOOKS FOR COUNTRY FOLKS

Then as now, Golden Age comic books portrayed urbane city-dwellers dealing with urban problems in urban settings. Not surprising really, given that the comic-book industry has been based in New York City from its earliest beginnings, but it is a misleading representation of what mid-twentieth century America was like.

Throughout the Golden Age, roughly half the country was decidedly rural in character—a far cry from the skyscraper-laden cityscapes seen in comic-book panels. The super-genius characters who filled their pages seemed rather out of place in a country where an 8th-grade education was the norm. The mansions and townhouses of the superhero well-to-do must've seemed strange to the quarter of all Americans who lived on small farms, the majority of which lacked electricity.

It's quite understandable if everyone involved in a *Golden Age* campaign wants to keep the action within the city limits just like it is in actual comic books. After all, it's just more fun for most to use their characters' superpowers to save the entire city rather than, say, the local county fair. With that in mind, most *Golden Age* games probably won't depict more than one tree per scene at any given time. If events ever take the player characters outside their familiar urban confines, however, the Gamemaster may want to give a more realistic portrayal of what America was like at the time rather than depicting it as a never-ending series of overlapping big cities.

LIFE IN THE BIG CITY

A typical American city of this era was one of row houses and buildings separated by tiny yards, paved streets and sidewalks, and the sort of side alleys that were the scene of much Golden Age comic-book excitement and intrigue. As a rule, cities were less developed so the occasional vacant lot could still be found, witness to many a sandlot baseball game and snowball fight between the neighborhood kids.

Automobiles were relatively uncommon until well into the 1950s, being out of reach for most Americans' incomes before the war and in very short supply during it. The wartime moratorium on automobile production, plus the rationing of gas and tires, made cars a scarcer sight than they are today. Cabs, subways, streetcars, and commuter trains were the order of the day.

HOME SWEET HOME

Dwellings were appointed rather like they are today: bed, furniture, lamps, stove (gas or electric), and radiator- or furnace-heated rooms. Radios were ubiquitous, but other appliances were in shorter supply until the postwar economic boom took firm hold in the 1950s. For example, at the start of the Golden Age, telephones (modern rotary in the city, operator-assisted in the country) were found in only a third of

homes. That number had increased to about 60% by 1950. By that same time, air conditioning could be found in many people's homes, whereas it had once been rare outside of libraries and movie houses.

Refrigerators also became more affordable and finally began to supplant ice boxes in American kitchens, improving food preservation and easing the once-daily ritual of shopping for groceries. Prior to that, the milkman's daily appearance was the only help most Americans ever got in preparing dinner.

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

The manner of dress for both men and women was much more uniform than it is today. Rather than serving as yet another means by which people "uniquely" advertise which sub-culture they belong to, folks during the Golden Age strove to look their best at all times. Only bare necessity could make them dress any differently.

Men venturing out in public did so wearing a snappy fedora or similar hat, an overcoat, a suit and tie, a pair of slacks and leather wingtip shoes. Only when a man was relaxing around the house would he think of dressing down to a long-sleeve button-up shirt, his chinos, and a pair of leather loafers.

Women wore dresses or skirts down to their calves, plus the mandatory hat and white gloves if she was going out. Stockings were a must, even when wartime rationing of silk and nylon forced gals to use leg make-up to fake it. Trousers were right out for women, unless they were gardening or the like.

Tweeds, plaids, and solids were the norm for all articles of clothing. Only the willfully rebellious, like brash young men in zoot suits or comic-book superheroes, wore any bright or loud colors.

Modern-style clothing items could be found, but wearing them sent a message—and not necessarily a positive one. Dungarees (or as they're known today, blue jeans) were worn only by blue-collar laborers like plumbers and ditch-diggers, as well as teenagers wanting to be non-conformist in a conformist kind of way. Tennis shoes were worn only when actually playing tennis, basketball, or the like. Only motorcyclists and thugs sported black leather jackets. (The two became largely inseparable in the public eye after the release of *The Wild One* in 1953.)

CLOTHES IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Including fashion details like this in a *Golden Age* campaign can go a long way to fulfilling the need for period flavor. This unofficial dress code for the era can also be used as character shorthand. It can cue the player characters as to who are the "nice boys and girls" and who are the juvenile delinquents, for instance, or serve as a complication for any time-traveling heroes dropping in on mid-twentieth century America.

A SOCIETY ON THE MOVE

The great social upheavals of the Golden Age led Americans to pull up stakes and move like never before. Though the precise groups in transit and their reasons changed over time, mass movements of people never stopped throughout this period.

In the prewar era, the Great Depression was the prime mover. Small-farm owners and other agricultural workers fled the Dust Bowl in search of work in California, where life often proved only marginally better for the derisively nicknamed "Okies." During the war, millions of soldiers, sailors, and airmen criss-crossed the country, on their way to or from postings both here and abroad. Scores of civilians overran the major cities to work in the burgeoning wartime industries or fill the many new government jobs. In the postwar era, many of these same people moved out to the suburbs, which had once been home only to the wealthy. With their arrival came the golden age of backyard barbecues and long commutes into the city for work.

MASS MIGRATIONS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

These mass migrations can be the catalyst for several plot points in a *Golden Age* game. For one, it creates a constant stream of poor, usually naive, people coming to the heroes' home city looking for a new start. Invariably, they get taken advantage of by gangsters, fifth columnists, or scam artists and wind up in need of help like only a costumed super-hero can provide.

JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

This social dislocation also gave rise to one of Golden Age comics' great menaces, juvenile delinquency. Parents who had to spend long hours working (or looking for work) led to hundreds of city kids left to their own mischievous ends, provoking hours of preachy lectures delivered to them by many a Golden Age crime fighter.

In the postwar era, the juvenile delinquent mutated into the more benign "teenager," the first appearance of the concept. While not depicted as quite the same social scourge as the juvenile delinquent, the "troubled teenager" continued to figure into comic-book plots for decades afterwards.

JOIN US!

One of the greatest shocks to a generation of web-surfing shut-ins is just how much people during the Golden Age were joiners with seemingly limitless social contacts. Even in an age of mass migrations, only the oddest of oddballs didn't know everyone on their block, and know them well. With bridge parties and the ubiquitous backyard barbecue during the postwar era, it didn't stop there.

Service organizations like the Lions Club, the Shriners, the Knights of Columbus, and the Moose Lodge were everywhere, and seemingly any-one who could joined them. Ladies' clubs dedicated to service, books, gardening, or just about anything else of interest were just as common, exceeded only by the number of groups for kids. When you consider their numbers, from the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the 4H Clubs, and Little League Baseball to wartime groups like the Junior Red Cross and the Junior Commandos, it's a wonder how kids ever found to time to become juvenile delinquents. Even by these standards, the wartime urge to pitch in and join up was another magnitude entirely. People of all kinds organized and participated in war bond rallies, scrap metal and scrap paper drives, blood drives, and air-raid drills.

JOINERS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Even in a postmodern Golden Age campaign, loners and oddballs are going to seem much more out of place than they do in present-day soci-ety. Self-isolated people are mistrusted, and are suspiciously viewed as eccentrics at best, criminals and subversives at worst.

These sorts of suspicions can be a tip-off for heroes on the trail of a supervillain, or a Complication for a superhero trying to keep his identity secret. Even a player character who manages to keep up an active social calendar is going to have to deal with his concerned and benevolently nosey friends and neighbors. It's going to be doubly hard for a hero to hide from his well-meaning buddies at the Moose Lodge how Professor Sinister's transforming ray has changed him into a chipmunk, especially when all they really want to do is help out.

INTOLERANCE

People excluded from American society at large were ostracized for the ugliest reason of all: prejudice, which was both open and prevalent throughout the Golden Age. Its manifestations and permutations were many.

First, it was a commonly held article of faith that non-white races were inferior, both morally and intellectually. Many people firmly believed they shouldn't be persecuted or blamed for their natural inferi-ority, but few went as far as to suggest they should be given free access to white society. Even fewer whites held the truly radical notion that all men (and women, for that matter) were created equal and thus worthy of the same treatment.

The well-meaning sorts who only wanted whites to remain separate from the "inferior" races more than got their way during the 1938-1955 time period. In the northern and western U.S., an unwritten code kept blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asians restricted to ghettos and excluded them from better-paying jobs. Even Jews, whom bigots conceded weren't intellectually deficient, were kept out of private clubs and the like by prejudiced gentiles.

BLACKS

Conditions were worse in the Deep South, where Jim Crow laws segregated blacks into separate and decidedly unequal schools, restau-rants, waiting rooms, restrooms, drinking fountains, and hotels. Black Americans were denied the vote and forced to work low-paying jobs. Any hint of discontent or failure to adhere to the code of segregation was punished by lynching. Insult was added to injury as polite people referred to blacks as "Negroes" while most opted for much less civil terms.

The Federal government upheld segregation, as even during the most desperate days of the Second World War, blacks were only allowed to serve in units separate from whites. Only in 1948 did the practice of racially segregated military units come to end, thanks to an executive order from President Harry Truman. Despite this, the segregation of many base facilities continued into the 1960s.

Violence against blacks was by no means restricted to the Deep South. The 1943 Detroit Race Riot claimed the lives of 25 blacks when a mob of whites, angry over the wartime housing shortage and being forced to work alongside differently pigmented people, attacked a pre-dominantly black housing community.

The hatred and segregation persisted unabated until 1955, when at last the national conscience began to stir after the brutal murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi and the acquittal of his killers. Prior to this, most of white America had no idea just how bad conditions were for southern blacks. With that one tragic event, change began to come, painfully slow as it was.

HISPANICS

While Hispanics fared better than blacks, generally speaking, the Zoot Suit Riots demonstrated they were far from immune to the most violent forms of bigotry. In that incident on June 3, 1943, American servicemen on leave in Los Angeles targeted young Mexican-American *pachucos* in the distinctive garb that gave the event its name, resulting in the city being declared off-limits for all military personnel. The Riots had started because of the servicemen's resentment towards the colorfully garbed youths' perceived flaunting of wartime rationing and shortages, but the criminal punishments that resulted (restricted to the *pachucos* alone) revealed a racial element to the incident.

THE NISEI

The most famous example of wartime prejudice was the internal exile of American citizens of Japanese ancestry (the *Nisei*) into internment camps after the Pearl Harbor attack. President Roosevelt ordered these imprisonments out of fear the *Nisei* might have some allegiance to the Japanese Empire and commit acts of sabotage or espionage against the

American war effort in the Pacific. The internments began in 1942, with releases for some beginning in 1944.

Due to their internment, Japanese-Americans were stripped of their rights, property, and dignity. Their treatment was symptomatic of a country that regarded them as "no-good Japs." While a far cry from the extermination camps set up by Nazi Germany, the internment camps were still an affront to the very liberties America fought to secure in World War II. Indeed, these were the same liberties many former internees enlisted in the military to defend, though they were allowed to fight only in the European Theater of War.

WOMEN

Women were considered to be guardians of home and family life, playing critical roles as mothers and homemakers. In a time when much larger families were the rule and household chores had to be done nearly appliance-free, such feelings are understandable. Chauvinism became evident when ladies chose a different path than home and family. Only certain occupations considered "women's work" were open to them, like secretary, nurse, or school teacher. Even when women worked at the same jobs as men, they were paid far less and advancement was nearly out of the question.

This was done partly to protect what was seen as a man's role as the family breadwinner, and partly out of the widespread belief that women lacked the intelligence and decisiveness to do many jobs. The thinking was, who wants a scatterbrained dame trying to work down at the auto plant when there's shopping, sewing, cooking, and kids to be raised at home?

The turning point for women came during World War II, when millions of women took factory jobs to keep the Allied war machine running. At the end of the war, most went back to their old home lives, but many others never forgot the experience of having their own money and independence. This was the seed which grew into the women's rights movement decades later.

HOMOSEXUALS

Homosexual desires during the Golden Age of comic books truly were "the love that dare not speak its name." Psychological manuals listed homosexuality as a mental disorder. Gay men were barred from military service, even as the country was told that "everyone must do their part." Anti-sodomy laws made homosexuality a criminal act in many states, but even the potential punishments the law carried seemed mild compared to the social ostracism gays and lesbians faced.

In the face of such social approbation, homosexuals became part of a subculture the average American knew nothing about. Throughout the 1938-1955 period, homosexuals continued to meet in secret, away from public view but still under constant threat of discovery by the police or media. Homosexuals during this time period were closeted, if not concrete bunkered. Most trusted only other homosexuals with their secret life, as well as their closest friends and relatives–though sometimes not even them. Openly gay people were rare, usually limited to the few who had the strength of will and the resources to withstand the worst sorts of abuse and societal mistreatment imaginable.

Things began to improve marginally in 1948 with the publication of Dr. Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, whose findings indicated that as much as 10% of men had participated in a homosexual encounter in their lives. Such scientific validation of the commonality of homosexuality meant little to the truly bigoted, but it remained an important first step in the widespread acceptance of gays in society.

PREJUDICE IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

To a large extent, the Gamemaster's handling of this issue defines what sort of campaign he's running. Classic Golden Age campaigns barely touch the issue at all, save for the occasional lecture to juvenile delinquents about treating everyone the same, regardless of race or religion. Less traditional campaigns might also touch upon major historical events like the Detroit Race Riots and the *Nisei* internment camps.

Postmodern Golden Age campaigns, on the other hand, typically have prejudice as a key element, with violence against blacks and gays as a frequent plot point. Events such as the internment of the *Nisei*, already an unpleasant event, are portrayed in the bleakest possible terms. Player characters are the only ones shown to be above the everyday bigotry, as well as some of their friends and allies. Certainly no one they come into conflict will be that enlightened.

The best rule of thumb for how much bigotry influences the campaign's goings-on is the players' tastes. A lot of people enjoy roleplaying games precisely because of their unreality. True life problems like racism are likely to interfere with the very reason these folks show up every week, dice in hand. Other players complain long and loudly (frequently on the internet) if elements such as race hatred are not included, finding things too "unrealistic" when they are absent.

Of course, no one gets to know the players better than the Gamemaster, and he's usually the best judge of how much human ignorance to include. If the Gamemaster isn't sure, the remedy is simple: talk to the players beforehand and ask them. Most gamers are not shy about telling you what they want out of a campaign.

DIVERSE CHARACTERS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

To whatever degree the era's unenlightened aspects figure into a campaign, the player characters are entitled to some satisfaction in the face of such ugliness. The Gamemaster needs to make sure any character who's the victim of the Prejudice Complication (see *M&M*, page 123) gets the hero point they've got coming to them. Further, the whole group deserves a chance to put an all-American beat-down on bigoted villains, particularly from those whom the villains targeted out of prejudice.

SUPERHEROINES

Female superheroes, no matter how powerful their abilities, are likely to be treated condescendingly. In a classic Golden Age campaign, they may accept it to a degree, but in other styles they're more likely to use it as an impetus to prove the chauvinists wrong. Whatever the case, it's important for the Gamemaster to know in advance how much the player behind a female character wants to deal with everyone thinking her life-risking superhero career is "cute" and an endless succession of wolf-calls from lonely GIs. If it starts to interfere with the player's enjoyment of the game, the Gamemaster can have the character's heroic exploits finally earn acceptance from the public at large (supervillains excepted) and tone down the sexist elements.

MINORITIES

Minority superheroes are in an even tougher fix. Do they hide behind a mask and costume rather than deal with the hatred and ignorance of society at large, or do they wear their heritage proudly, perhaps in an effort to inspire others of similar backgrounds?

Reactions to non-white superheroes vary during this era. While some are grateful for their help (General George S. Patton once told an all-black unit, "I don't care what color you are as long as you go up there and kill those Kraut sons of bitches"), large parts of American society resent it.

The loyalty of any Japanese-American hero is in constant public question, even if they aren't breaking the law by not being interned. Other Asian American heroes fare better in that their allegiances are not in as much doubt—when said public is sharp enough to distinguish other Asian Americans from those of Japanese ancestry. They are subject to the full range of racial intolerance, however, including insults and an ungrateful public.

Black heroes become targets of the same sorts of scurrilous charges made about regular black people during this time, from rampant drug and alcohol use to raping white women. In some areas of the country, they may have to rescue people who don't want to be saved by a black person. In those places, people may go as far as helping out the preferred white super-villains, based on color alone.

Jewish and Hispanic heroes fare better than other minorities, but still come across any of the hateful responses listed above. This is particularly true in the western parts of the country, where Mexican-Americans were widely assumed to be poor, uneducated criminals, and in areas where pro-Nazi groups flourish. An openly gay hero risks his entire costumed career in this era, as such a person gets treated much like a known child-molester would be today.

PLAYING DOWN PREJUDICE

It's vital for the Gamemaster to remember that roleplaying games are supposed to be fun, not long, nasty historical polemics. Though it may be anachronistic, it's often better to discard elements of the era's bigotry than to irritate and offend the players. Also, it's important to bear in mind that not everyone in 1940s and '50s America was a closet Nazi or a sheet-carrying member of the Ku Klux Klan. There were good people around in that era, and some of them were even white and male. Don't forget about them, Gamemaster, or all your players may lose sight of whom they're fighting for.

Player characters who proudly show off their non-white heritage are likely doing so to inspire others of their kind and to prove the bigots wrong. Gamemasters should give them plenty of opportunities to do both, as changing hearts and minds may be the only thing that truly makes up for the abuse they suffer. And lest we forget, one person making a difference is *the* classic comic book theme.

GOLDEN AGE ECONOMICS

As with all other aspects of American life, the economy underwent major changes during the Golden Age of comic books. Hard days and lean years gave way to good times and living off the fat of the land, permanently transforming the ways Americans spent and earned their money.

STEADY WORK

Agriculture employed millions of Americans throughout the Golden Age, though the Great Depression and the emergence of the Dust Bowl took their toll—especially on small farmers. Despite the hardships, American farmers continued their critical work of keeping a substantial portion of the world fed, including the peoples of many Allied nations during the Second World War.

Service sector jobs, while not as predominant in the economy as they are today, proved to be the most resilient in the face of economic upheaval. The simple truth remains that as bad as the economy might get, people still need doctors, lawyers, police, firemen, and teachers. And of course, the government always seems to manage to stay in business and keep its many workers gainfully employed.

GET A JOB

The two growth areas of the 1940s and 1950s economy were military and industrial. Joining the armed services was an attractive proposition during the Depression, with their promise of three square meals a day plus travel and pay. The Second World War, of course, made the military a job for millions, not all of them volunteers. Even in the return to a peacetime economy, America for the first time ever did not near-totally demobilize its wartime forces. That plus the peacetime draft ensured many Americans continued to cash GI paychecks throughout the remainder of the Golden Age.

American industry nearly collapsed during the Great Depression, but grew past all precedent during World War II. Factory jobs were plentiful and highly sought after throughout the war, as plants remained in operation around the clock. 48-hour work weeks became commonplace. So great was the demand for factory workers that the normal barriers to hiring women and minorities fell by the wayside, for the duration of the war at least.

After the war, the demand for materiel was quickly replaced by Americans' pent-up desire for consumer goods. Factories responded by rolling out new automobiles, refrigerators, radios, vacuum cleaners, television sets, and other household appliances to satisfy the wants of a society that could afford such items as never before. From 1948 on, anyone who didn't have a good-paying job either didn't want one or was essentially barred from it by the prejudices of the time.

WORLD WAR II AND THE ECONOMY

The effects the war had on the American economy were profound. First and foremost, the war did what nothing else had seemed able to do—it

ended the Great Depression. In addition, the war brought with it both rationing and the draft, which had economic implications all their own.

CAUGHT IN THE DRAFT

Military conscription of able-bodied American men began on October 16, 1940, and shifted into high gear after the Pearl Harbor attack. Ultimately, over ten million men were drafted into the various branches of the U.S. armed forces.

The absence of such a large portion of the American workforce, coupled with the critical need for increased industrial production, created new economic opportunities for demographic groups not normally given access to avenues for financial independence, including women and blacks. Ladies also filled many other critical positions, by joining the women's auxiliaries for each branch of the military or ferrying aircraft to overseas bases. Even the big leagues opened up to women with the creation of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, which sanctioned games throughout the war.

V-GIRLS

Not all ladies who aimed to help out our fighting men did so with a rivet gun or wearing a uniform. Some women supported the troops in other, more intimate ways. The more innocent of them were known as "V-girls," who remained ever vigilant for a lonely serviceman who'd just gotten leave and his monthly paycheck. Before the night was over, the girl would usually be ahead by several drinks, an expensive meal, and a movie, having given up nothing more than a dance, a smile, and a sympathetic ear. Most of the time, the lonely serviceman felt like he got the better part of the deal.

Some of the V-girls were nothing more than "cuddle bunnies," young girls looking to fill the void in male companionship caused by the draft. Others worked with male accomplices to extort gullible servicemen out of their entire wallets. Of course, there were also women engaged in the world's oldest profession, and the war created a booming demand for their services. So widespread was prostitution during the war that many localities simply stopped enforcing laws against it. The U.S. military, unable to fight a three-front combined war against the Axis and hookers, stuck to showing V.D. prevention films and distributing millions of condoms to men in uniform.

The movies and prophylactics enjoyed only limited success. At any given time, as much as 5% of American military personnel in the European Theater were infected with a venereal disease, with similar problems persisting right up through the Korean War.

V-GIRLS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Open prostitution is just the ticket for a postmodern Golden Age campaign, as it adds just the right amount of salaciousness and historical hypocrisy. Hookers and V-girls can be useful sources of street information, or a cover for enemy spies looking to rob GIs of some military secrets as well as their money. The ladies of the evening may even need protection from a concerned costumed type should a "Jack the Ripper"-style killer appear.

With the proper amount of discretion, a V-girl can also serve as a plot catalyst in more classically oriented campaigns. A good girl who "lost her way" because of dire financial need and then "got into trouble" is not far removed from the other types of down-on-their luck characters superheroes were helping out all throughout the Golden Age.

USE IT UP, WEAR IT OUT, MAKE IT DO, OR DO WITHOUT!

One of the great ironies of the 1940s was that at the same moment the country finally came out of the Depression and people resumed working steadily for good pay, shortages and rationing began. Just when folks had money in their pockets again, there was often little or nothing for them to buy.

Most Americans responded patriotically, even if they did grumble a little, and "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without!" became the slogan of the day. They learned to be frugal and thrifty, mending old clothes or making their own. People planted "victory gardens" in window-boxes to make up for the now-rationed vegetables. And when all else failed, they did in fact learn to do without, something they'd had great practice at during the Great Depression.

YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS

Many items were simply not available to civilians. The war in the Pacific almost entirely cut off America's rubber supply, and what was available was needed for military use. Items like new tires were virtually nonexistent during the war, forcing home-front motorists to get by on bald, patched-up tires, or ersatz substitutes made of wood or discarded shoe soles. The U.S. silk inventory was similarly affected, and the need for parachutes left none for ladies' stockings. With nylon also in short supply, enterprising women resorted to using leg make-up in order to keep up appearances.

Industrial production was directed almost entirely towards fulfilling the military's needs, leaving items like automobiles, utensils, batteries, shoes, tools, firearms, nylon stockings, flashlights, nails, and radios either unavailable or in very short supply for civilians. To make matters worse, home-front shortages of these items grew more severe as the war dragged on.

The needs of wartime production also left little room for consumer goods. As the fighting continued, items like electric toasters, curling irons, nylon stockings, vacuum cleaners, typewriters, and record players became scarcer and scarcer.

RATIONING

The most prominent items officially rationed during World War II were gasoline and food, instituted to ensure that the Allied war machine remained fueled and the embattled nations (the United Kingdom, in particular) stayed fed. For obvious reasons, limitations on these two items had major ramifications.

Every month, each U.S. civilian was issued two books of food ration stamps, valid until the start of the following month. One book contained 48 points worth of blue stamps which allowed the bearer to purchase dry and canned goods, while the other book contained 64 points worth of red stamps which were required for meat purchases.

Food items cost not only money (price predetermined by the government's Office of Price Administration) but a certain number of points as well. For example, a pound of porterhouse steak cost 12 red points, while a pound of hamburger set the purchaser back 7 red points. A can of carrots was equal to 6 blue points, while a can of pineapple juice cost a princely 22 blue points. This was assuming, of course, particular items were available at all, which was not always the case with things like coffee, bacon, steak, and sugar.

Gasoline was even more strictly controlled. The average American citizen was limited to between three and five gallons of gas per week, though people in critical occupations (e.g., defense-plant foremen, doctors, truckers, firemen) qualified for larger shares. A monthly ration card and a color-coded car-window sticker verified a person's gas-ration status. Motorists also had to cope with a government ban on pleasure driving and a new national speed limit of 35 mph, with violators forfeiting their gasoline ration cards.

Despite food rationing, the average person was actually eating better by the war's end than he was during the Depression. Gas rationing,

by contrast, was a major disruption for the American motorist. The rationing of gas, tires, and a halt to new car production made automobiles far more rare during the war than they were in the pre- and postwar era.

RATIONING IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Wartime shortages can serve as Complications for player characters throughout World War II. Heroes' super-mobiles run out of gas while chasing the bad guys, and they find themselves completely out of red stamps right after promising their significant other a special home-cooked meal.

Depending on the campaign's background, rationing may even extend to whatever wondrous power source a player character relies on. Surely if a well-known superhero can derive fantastic abilities from that rare, mysterious element "atmospherium," the U.S. government will want to restrict access to it so it can both exploit its potential and keep it out of the hands of its enemies.

SMOKING & DRINKING

A nation less than a decade removed from Prohibition was once again forced onto the wagon thanks to wartime production shortages, with wine and whiskey being in particularly short supply. Things were nearly as bad for the roughly half of all American adults who smoked.

The most sought-after brands of smokes, Lucky Strikes and Camels, were earmarked for soldiers overseas, making them difficult to obtain stateside—when they could be found at all. Smokers had to make due with inferior brands like Wings and Chesterfields. They were better than nothing at all, but little more than that to most tobacco connoisseurs.

BAD HABITS IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Any character subject to either of the Golden Age's most common vices (i.e., those with a Complication: Addiction to alcohol or tobacco–see *M&M*, page 122) are in for some difficult days and nights during the war. The monkey on their backs is going to go unsatisfied from time to time due to long lines or empty store shelves. They're going to have to fight the bad guys, the shakes, and their nicotine fits all at once.

THE BLACK MARKET

World War II era rationing was subject to the immutable rule of government prohibitions: restricting any item the public wants simply makes it available illegally at steeper prices. During the war, "Mr. Black" (as the illicit trade was anthropomorphized) was always there to meet any unfulfilled need as long as people had the necessary cash.

Just about anything that could be had was available for purchase on the black market, even such hard-to-get items as radios and new tires. The going rate started at twice the peacetime price, however, and went up from there. There's also the small matter of involvement in the black market being a serious criminal offense, punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. Over one thousand people were brought up on such charges during the course of the war—which did little to stop Mr. Black from pocketing tens of millions of dollars in illicit profits.

WANTED: MR. BLACK

The mere act of trafficking in goods in violation of the law was not the limit of black-market criminality. All those rare goods had to come from somewhere by some method, and at least one step in the process was illegal to some degree.

First, items sold on the black market were usually stolen from the rightful owners, often by mobsters. Truck drivers transporting scarce commodities were either bribed or beaten out of their cargos, assuming of course their trucks weren't stolen right out from under them. Agricultural products were taken right off farms, as were many valuable items (like radios) from military depots with inattentive guards. Warehoused items or cargos transported by ship were easy enough for mob-controlled unions to acquire. If that was not feasible, there were far more leg-breakers for hire than there were able-bodied night-watchmen left after the draft began.

Ration stamps were a popular target for either theft or counterfeiting. Even after the government got wise to the latter and started printing up rationing documents on special paper, the gangsters simply stole the required parchments right from the mills.

One other specialized service Mr. Black offered to his close friends in *La Cosa Nostra* was draft exemptions. For a price, medical practitioners of questionable ethics certified perfectly healthy people as 4-F, purportedly too sick or chronically injured to serve in the military, thus freeing them to pursue their criminal careers here at home.

THE BLACK MARKET IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Golden Age heroes spend a lot of time battling gangsters. The black market becomes just one more racket for the player characters to break up. This can involve protecting shipments of precious goods, smashing up ration-coupon counterfeiting rings, or simply lecturing ordinary citizens on the evils of trading on the black market.

Of course, a player character (especially in a postmodern Golden Age campaign) may be tempted to buy something from Mr. Black, due to shaky morals or dire necessity. This carries with it risks. If a character's involvement in illegal trafficking of goods is discovered, they may wind up eating prison food instead of porterhouses.

A player character attempting to buy an item illegally does so with double the usual Wealth check DC but half the normal Rationing Table DC (rounding up when needed). Rolling a natural one means the character doesn't get what they want and gets caught by the authorities in the process. At the very least, the character gains a Reputation Complication (see *M&M*, page 123) until they can redeem themselves in the public eye, assuming they avoid prison and get the opportunity to do so.

USING THE RATIONING TABLE

If the Gamemaster is using the optional Wealth rules (see *M&M*, page 132), civilian player characters are going to have to succeed at two checks for certain items. First, they have to make a Wealth check as normal, and then succeed at a second check on the Rationing Table if the desired thing is listed there.

Failing the Wealth check means the character is too broke to afford whatever it is they want. Passing the Wealth check and failing the roll on the Rationing Table means they have the cash, but the stores are out until next week at the earliest.

RATIONING TABLE

Item	DC
Common rationed item (gas, most foods)	10
Scarce rationed foods (coffee, bacon, steak, sugar)	15
Top-brand cigarettes, wine, whiskey	20
Consumer goods (vacuum cleaner, electric toasters)	25
Military-used item (radio, firearm, flashlight, shoes)	30
Scarce-material items (tires, silk or nylon stockings)	35
New automobile (1942 model year)	40

RATIONING TABLE MODIFIERS

Benefit: Rationing Exemption	for each rank in this feat a character has, he receives a +4 bonus to his roll.
Black Market Purchases	a character attempting to buy an item illegally does so with double the usual Wealth check DC, but half the normal Rationing Table DC. Rolling a natural one means the character doesn't get what they want and gets caught by the authorities in the process. The Benefit: Rationing Exemption is of no use on black market transactions.

SOUND AS A NEW DOLLAR

Whether or not the optional Wealth rules (see *M&M*, page 132) are used in a campaign, knowing the real-world value of an item can still be useful in adding a degree of period flavor to the game. Otherwise, the Gamemaster is stuck describing the paper boy who's hawking his wares by exclaiming, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Get your paper here! Only a Wealth check Purchase Difficulty of 2! Extra! Extra!"

The Great Depression, wartime rationing and shortages, and the growing prosperity of the 1950s caused prices to fluctuate wildly during the Golden Age. Still, even at its lowest point a dollar enjoyed much more purchasing power than it does today. As a good rule of thumb, a given item costs roughly 8% of its modern price in the 1930s and 1940s, and approximately 16% of its current cost in the 1950s. Thus, the daily newspaper that runs fifty cents apiece nowadays sets a player character back about a nickel (50¢ x 0.16= 8¢; rounding down in this estimate) during the fabulous '50s, and a few pennies (50¢ x 0.08= 4¢;

again rounding down in this estimate) during the Depression—assuming they can spare the change, that is.

This rule applies to wages as well. The current (as of 2005) minimum wage of $5.15 per hour is roughly equal to the 1945 rate of 40¢ ($5.15 x 0.8= 41¢). Similarly, the 2005 pay rate for workers in the automobile industry (about $30 an hour) is comparable to the $2 to $3 per hour people in that line of work were making during World War II ($30 x 0.8= $2.40).

Please note that the effects of inflation do not factor into the normal *M&M* Wealth rules. In all cases, the normal Wealth Bonuses and DCs remain unchanged.

CHANGING VALUES

It's worth noting that even though many items retain the same relative value across seven decades, changing tastes and technologies cause a number of exceptions to this general rule. Some things just offered far more (or less) for the same relative amount of money, while others are simply more or less scarce than they were back in the day—supply and demand, don't you know?

For instance, modern audiences are willing to pay $6 (or more) to see one blockbuster movie, while 1940 movie-goers only had to pony up a quarter for a double feature plus a cartoon, a newsreel, and one or more short films. Likewise, the 20¢ per gallon gasoline sold during World War II—though in short supply and rationed to boot—seems like a real bargain to motorists in today's more petroleum-hungry world.

MONEY IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Gamemasters who are looking for total authenticity in their fake RPG monetary transactions are encouraged to check out any number of great online and off-line resources. Newspaper and magazine ads as well as vintage mail-order catalogs are great places to start, and can provide specific numbers as to how much a given item cost at a given time.

GOLDEN AGE ENTERTAINMENT

The tougher the times, the more people need pleasant diversions. America during the Golden Age was no exception. People with time on their hands wiled away the hours at drugstores and soda fountains, leafing through the latest Hollywood gossip magazines while a Wurlitzer jukebox spun the latest big-band 78s.

In addition to the finest comic books ever published, people in the 1938-1955 period spent their (often scarce) dimes going to the movies, listening to the radio, or going to the ballpark or the arena. As the Golden Age ended, people discovered yet another diversion: the strange box with the tiny glass and funny-looking antennae known as a television.

HOLLYWOOD ON PARADE

Motion pictures defined entertainment throughout the 1938-55 time period, as evinced by the number of movie-star cameos a film buff can spot on the pages of many Golden Age comic books. In this era, nothing–not the privations of the Depression, wartime shortages, or television–could keep people out of their local movie houses.

Going to see a picture during this era was a very different experience. Theaters were large, elegant movie palaces, attended by uniformed ushers and pretty young girls working the box office. A night at the movies was a true experience, as a quarter (or less) admission got patrons a double feature, a newsreel, a cartoon, and one or more shorts. During this period, an average American typically went to a picture show two or three times a week.

Movies reflected and defined the popular culture. Viewing a few films from and about this era can give Gamemasters and players a good impression of what living during the Golden Age was like. It's also perhaps the most entertaining way of researching the kind of period details that bring a *Golden Age* campaign to life.

PREWAR MOVIES

Movies like *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) starring Errol Flynn illustrate the type of escapist adventures popular with Depression-era audiences, just as opulent epics like *Gone with the Wind* (1939) swept movie-goers far away from their worries with their grandeur and scope. Other films, such as *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), painted a more realistic picture of the hardships of day-to-day living that many Americans faced.

Pictures like *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), which initiated the *film noir* genre, spoke to Americans' suspicions and worries that all was not as it seemed, anxieties brought about by the worsening international situation. As war drew nearer, films like *Sergeant York* (1941), ostensibly about a past armed struggle, seemed like a new call to duty for a nation about to be plunged into the greatest conflict of all time.

WARTIME FILMS

Motion pictures were deemed important to wartime morale and thus avoided many of the strictures placed upon other industries. The major studios took this as a sacred charge, and turned out films designed to support the American cause by various means, ever mindful of the slogan, "What's this film going to do to win the war?"

Films like *Casablanca* (1942) and *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) focused on and celebrated the sacrifices of ordinary people for the sake of the war effort. Scores of other movies attempted to show audiences back home of the heroism of their boys in uniform, such as *Wake Island* (1942), while others found humor in the absurdities of changed wartime conditions, like *Buck Privates* (1941).

At the same time, Hollywood was making more direct contributions to the war, as a good portion of its behind-the-camera talent were assigned to the Army Signal Corps to crank out training and propaganda films. Several of its best-known stars (such as Jimmy Stewart) also donned uniforms, eschewing the celebrity lifestyle for front-line combat duties.

Despite Hollywood's accepting Washington's call to arms, there was still plenty of room for escapist fare. Taking people's minds off a world war is no easy task, however, resulting in some truly mind-bending pictures, such as *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943) and *House of Dracula* (1945).

POSTWAR CINEMA

After the war, Hollywood seemed poised to remain foremost in audience hearts, as evinced by films like *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), which seemed to capture perfectly America's peacetime zeitgeist with its mixture of anxious transition and hopeful optimism. By the early 1950s, however, television's effect was beginning to be felt at the box office, eroding audience numbers and causing full fledged panic in the major studio bosses.

Studio moguls tried everything to lure people away from their homes and sets, from splashy musicals like *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) to big-screen adaptations of critical and commercial hits from other media like *From Here to Eternity* (1953) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). There was also an increased emphasis on a more realistic, naturalistic cinema, giving rise to such archetypal '50s dramas as *Marty* (1955) and *On the Waterfront* (1954).

As television continued to keep parents at home, the movie business grew increasingly gimmicky and youth-oriented. Such fads as 3-D movies made a brief mark during this period, but when even promises of "A lion in your lap!" (1952's *Bwana Devil*) failed to pry mom and dad off the couch, the studios began to aim pictures at their most reliable remaining audience: amorous teenagers. By the mid-1950s, America's drive-in theaters were packed with teens, more affluent and mobile than their parents ever dreamed of being at that age. To them, the theaters served up such titles as *The Beast with 1,000,000 Eyes!* (1955) and *The Phantom from 10,000 Leagues* (1955) that kept them coming back to the outdoor "passion pits" for more.

MORE STARS THAN THERE ARE IN THE HEAVENS

In addition to some timely film references, a *Golden Age* game can be livened up with some mention of the era's most popular and well-regarded movie stars. Popular actors of the day included Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Stewart, James Cagney, Spencer Tracy, Gary Cooper, John Wayne, and Cary Grant. Their leading ladies included Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn, Lauren Bacall, Olivia de Havilland, Ingrid Bergman, Jane Russell, and Lana Turner. While not a movie star himself, Walt Disney was as well-known as most of them. This was thanks to his classic full-length animated features, including *Pinocchio* (1940) and *Fantasia* (1940) as well as his most enduring creation, Mickey Mouse.

The Golden Age of comic books was simultaneous with the golden age of comedy teams, for whom audiences lined up for in film after film. Foremost of them were Bob Hope & Bing Crosby (who were also very successful individually), Bud Abbott & Lou Costello, and Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis. In the postwar era, new stars emerged in light of the cine-

ma's new direction towards prestige and realism. Among this new breed of actors and actresses were some of the most iconic personages of the 1950s, including Gregory Peck, Kirk Douglas, Marlon Brando, Marilyn Monroe, and James Dean.

THE NATIONAL PASTIME

By far the most popular sport was baseball, which during this era truly earned its sobriquet as "the national pastime." So ingrained in the culture were the Major Leagues that when English-fluent German soldiers in U.S. Army uniforms attempted to infiltrate American lines during the 1944 Battle of the Bulge, GIs started distinguishing friend from foe with baseball trivia questions. They naturally assumed anyone who didn't know which team won the 1941 World Series just *had* to be a Kraut in disguise.

The preeminent team of the era was the New York Yankees, winners of the World Series in 1938, 1939, 1941, 1943, 1947, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953. A timely succession of all-time great players made the Bronx Bombers dominant, from Lou Gehrig in the prewar era to Joe DiMaggio in the interim, and then to Mickey Mantle in the 1950s. Of the other major-league ball clubs, the St. Louis Cardinals enjoyed the most success during this era. Led by ace pitcher Stan Musial, the Cardinals captured the 1942, 1944, and 1946 World Series pennants.

In testament to its popularity, the major leagues kept playing throughout World War II when several other sports (like the Olympics, auto racing, and horse racing) were suspended for the duration. With many of its top stars trading in their baseball uniforms for military ones (including DiMaggio and the Boston Red Sox' .400-hitting Ted Williams), teams had to make due with whatever players they could find. Throughout the war, 4-Fs, ex-retired players, and former big-league washouts took the field in a crude semblance of the prewar quality of play.

THE NEGRO LEAGUES & INTEGRATION

Racial segregation proved as deeply ingrained in American culture as baseball. Black players, no matter how talented, were excluded from all major league clubs. For as long as this situation persisted, however, Black Americans could still take the field in the Negro Leagues.

It was in the 1930s and 1940s that the Negro Leagues reached their apex. The foremost of these organizations, the Negro American League and the Negro National League, offered some of the all-time baseball greats a chance to play the game, including (from 1942 to 1948) a Negro League World Series. Among that era's stars were James "Cool Papa" Bell, Buck Leonard, Leon Day, Hilton Smith, Norman "Turkey" Stearnes, and most famous of all, Leroy "Satchel" Paige, perhaps the greatest pitcher ever to take the mound.

The Negro Leagues faded away once baseball's color barrier was finally broken in 1947, with the Brooklyn Dodgers' signing of Jackie Robinson. Robinson's strength of character allowed him to endure the racial harassment he was subjected to both on and off the field. That he won the Rookie of the Year award certified the fact that integrated baseball was here to stay. Other stand-out black players followed Robinson into the majors, including Satchel Paige (still dominant on the mound at age 42) and several other former Negro League players. The best known (and perhaps most talented) of them was the "Say Hey Kid" Willie Mays, who joined the New York Giants in 1951.

TONIGHT, IN THIS VERY RING...

After baseball, America's most beloved sport was professional boxing. Throughout the '30s, '40s, and '50s, people filled arenas across the country to see prizefighters of all weight classes put on the gloves and step into the ring for ten or more rounds. Pugilism's popularity is quite evident in the pages of Golden Age comic books, as almost every adven-

ture character of the era knew how to throw a good right cross.

The greatest fighter of the era was "The Brown Bomber" Joe Louis, heavyweight champion of the world from 1937 to 1949. Louis was a rare transcendent figure who was beloved by both black and white audiences, the latter won over by Louis' victory over the German (and, as the fans saw him, Nazi surrogate) Max Schmeling in 1938. Throughout the war, Louis's popularity grew as he proudly donned an Army uniform, giving boxing lessons to his fellow enlistees and appearing at war-bond rallies.

Louis returned to the ring in 1951, only to go down in defeat to the next great champ Rocky Graziano in a bout carried to thousands over the infant medium of television. To this day, Graziano remains the only undefeated heavyweight champion. His in-ring clashes with Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, "Jersey Joe" Walcott and Archie Moore remain the stuff of boxing legend.

DON'T MEAN A THING IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING

The most popular music of the Golden Age was swing, beloved by jitter-bugging folks all across America and played by big bands featuring as many as forty musicians. Popular bandleaders of the day included Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Artie Shaw, Gene Krupa, and Glenn Miller. A CD or MP3 player featuring any or all of these greats is an inexpensive way to set a proper Golden Age mood for gaming.

In addition to their favorite big bands, people fed jukeboxes to hear popular vocalists of the day. Crooner Frank Sinatra was the wartime favorite of the "bobbysoxers" (teenage girls), while Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters played to wider audiences. Reflective of the wistful and patriotic mood of the day, Crosby ("White Christmas") and Kate Smith ("God Bless America") recorded the era's two biggest sellers.

Vocalists gradually supplanted big bands in the postwar era. Among the most popular were Nat "King" Cole, Mario Lanza, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett, Perry Como, Eddie Fisher, Frankie Laine, and Teresa Brewer.

ON THE JAZZ

Swing is a musical genre steeped in jazz to varying degrees (depending on the bandleader and the song), but the genuine article also reached a peak in popularity during the Golden Age. The leading lights of the big jazz band form were Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Don Redman, and Jay McShann.

Jazz bands were at the forefront of the trend in the entertainment industry towards breaking down the barriers of racial segregation, a development which met with more popular acceptance than similar trends elsewhere. As the racial barriers began to fall, jazz began to evolve.

First came "jumping the blues" or jump music, which both harkened back to the boogie-woogie of the 1930s and presaged 1950s rock & roll. Pioneers of this jazz offshoot included "Big Joe" Turner and saxophonist Louis Jordan.

Next came the development of bebop, which made jazz more interesting artistically but doubtlessly less popular. To borrow a phrase from a later decade, it no longer had a good beat and you couldn't dance to it anymore. Still, our musical culture would be much the poorer without the work of bebop stylists such as saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Dizzy Gillespie.

DAMN RIGHT I'VE GOT THE BLUES

The exodus of blacks away from the segregated South and to the booming wartime economy of the Midwest carried with it the distinctive sounds of blues music to a whole new audience. By the end of World War II, Chicago, Kansas City, and Detroit became the genre's wellsprings and the home turf of blues legends like John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Willie Dixon.

Postwar blues was electrified and amplified, but still had the distinctive beats (and somewhat unsavory reputation with "respectable" white audiences) as its forerunner boogie-woogie, a style established by artists such as Jimmy Yancey, Clarence "Pine Top" Smith, and Earl Hines. By the mid-1950s, however, the amped-up sound and rebellious image pioneered by the blues finally connected with white teens in the form of rock & roll.

RADIO DAYS

What television is today, radio was to the Golden Age. From cheap and basic to expensive and elaborate models, radios were in almost every home. The AM airwaves brought news, sports, soap operas, musical performances, game shows, and live dramas for the average American, who had their choice of NBC, CBS, the Mutual Broadcasting System, or (from 1943 on) ABC.

The power and influence of radio was demonstrated early on during the Golden Age, when Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre presented its now-infamous dramatization of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* on October 30, 1938. As outlandish as an invasion from Mars seems, when the radio said it was happening, people believed it, and panic resulted. Many more shocking events were carried on the airwaves in the years following, but they proved to be all too real, such as when word of the Pearl Harbor attack reached a stunned America.

WHAT'S ON

More so than any other medium, radio was influenced by the goings-on in comic books, comic strips, and pulp magazines. Listeners thrilled to the serialized adventures of Superman, the Green Hornet, the Shadow, Little Orphan Annie, Terry and the Pirates, and Red Ryder. It sent a generation of kids in search of enough box tops to get the badges, rings, and other assorted decoding devices offered by the shows' sponsors.

Befitting an era as full of upheavals as the Golden Age, comedians were king. Talents as great and diverse as Bob Hope, Groucho Marx, Jack Benny, George Burns & Gracie Allen, Red Skelton, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, Fred Allen, Abbott & Costello, Amos 'n' Andy, Spike Jones, Stan Freberg, and Bob & Ray brought much-needed laughter to millions and became household names in the process.

Radio dramas reflected all the classic types, like the police procedural (*Dragnet*), Westerns (*Gunsmoke*, *The Cisco Kid*), crime stories (*Gangbusters*), and juvenile adventure yarns (*Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*). Anthologies also aired on many networks, including *The Lux Radio Theater* (which adapted popular movies of the day), as well as suspense thriller shows like *Suspense*, *Escape*, and *The Inner Sanctum Mysteries*.

RADIO IN A GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGN

Some of the player characters may have shows on the air based (loosely, at least) on their in-game exploits. This can serve as an amusing sidelight to more serious adventures, or as the impetus for storylines all their own, such as when an archenemy decides he wants to cancel a character's show by blowing up the actors and the station that broadcasts it!

Much as television is in a modern-day campaign, radio can serve as a quick and direct method of getting the player characters where the Gamemaster wants them to go, particularly if the characters remain tuned into that classic dramatic staple, the All Plot Point Station ("This just in: a major disturbance has occurred down at police headquarters…").

DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL

Everything radio had been—its popular influence, its role in American daily life, its formats—television became. TV even did its broadcast predecessor one better, becoming so popular it dealt a serious blow to the movie industry.

Television had been primed to enter American life at the start of the 1940s, but wartime broadcast restrictions and a total halt to set production put a stop to its early inroads. At the war's end, television regained momentum. The price of a set began to fall, more stations began broadcasting, and after many failed efforts, TV finally aired a show a lot of people wanted to watch—*The Texaco Star Theater* starring comedian Milton Berle.

Thanks to "Uncle Miltie" and his new-to-you vaudeville gags, five million American families owned a set by 1950. By 1955, over half of all the country's households had one. Viewers could choose from offerings from four different networks: NBC, CBS, ABC, and the DuMont Network.

Many of the successful shows that followed in Berle's wake were direct ports of successful radio shows: *Amos & Andy*, *Dragnet*, *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, and *The Jack Benny Show*. Others carried over proven radio formats, such as music (*Your Hit Parade*), game shows (*What's My Line*), variety (*The Ed Sullivan Show*), and Westerns (*The Roy Rogers Show*).

In time, television gave rise to classic shows that were all its own, ones still watched and enjoyed today, such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Honeymooners*, *Your Show of Shows*, and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. It also reached out to children as radio never could, with kids' shows like *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, *Howdy Doody*, and *Bozo the Clown*. They featured colorful (and often non-human) hosts that
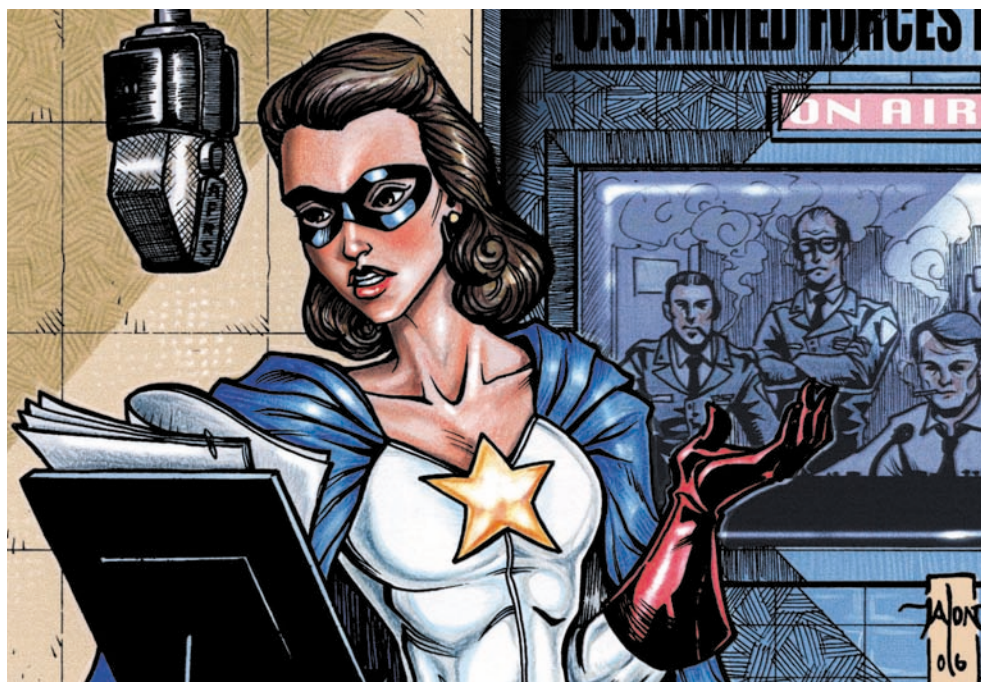
endeared themselves to a generation of kids. By the end of the Golden Age, it was these same children who best showed the influence television had gained over the country. For example, seemingly overnight, thousands of American youngsters sported coonskin caps in emulation of TV's *Davy Crockett, Indian Fighter*, creating a nationwide mania for the once-obscure item.

TV IN A GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGN

The greater intimacy of television made it a powerful influence on the events of the day, even more so than radio had been. Shows like *See It Now*, hosted by the legendary broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, used the medium to vividly dramatize the noteworthy events of the day. Murrow's March 9, 1954 expose of the excesses of Senator Joe McCarthy's anti-communist inquisitions helped turn many Americans against "Tailgunner Joe" and his methods, to cite just one example.

Superheroes in the television era may have similar problems adjusting to this greater and more immediate level of public scrutiny, even if they are the good guys. While live satellite broadcasts are still a ways off, television still covers many major public events of the sort supervillains like to attack or rob. Costumed heroes—especially those who've grown accustomed to the more shadowy radio age—may find themselves fielding tough questions about their actions, especially once they've been broadcast straight into America's living rooms. They may learn the hard way, just as Senator McCarthy did, that TV often does not catch people at their best and have to deal with the ramifications.

GOLDEN AGE TECH

Technology in the Golden Age is primarily mechanical and chemical in nature, with electronics still coming into its own. Computers, radar, television and atomic power are the cutting edge, while most people get by with slide rules, naked eyes, radio, and electricity.

How far past the cutting edge a super-smart, scientific genius character is allowed to go is up to the Gamemaster. This section outlines what was technologically feasible in real history during the Golden Age. These parameters can serve as a baseline for just how outlandish the Gamemaster wants comic-book science to be in his campaign.

ATOMIC ENERGY

Italian physicist Enrico Fermi triggered the first nuclear chain reaction at the University of Chicago on December 2, 1942, but practical applications of this discovery (other than bombs) came later. The first atomic energy plant to generate electricity for general use came online in the Soviet Union on June 27, 1954 (America's first such plant appeared in 1957). On January 17, 1955, the submarine USS *Nautilus* became the first vehicle to travel under atomic-generated power after two and a half years of construction and testing.

ATOMIC WEAPONS

America detonated the first-ever atom bomb on July 16, 1945, with the Soviet Union following suit on August 29, 1949. The United Kingdom joined them in the nuclear club in 1952, but no other nations did so during the Golden Age time frame.

The U.S. exploded the first hydrogen bomb on November 1, 1952. The brainchild of physicist Edward Teller, such devices harnessed the same energies as the sun. They were magnitudes more destructive than "mere" atomic weapons. However, any advantage America derived from such a weapon was short-lived, as the arch-rival Soviets detonated a similar device on August 12, 1953.

Primarily, atomic weapons during this period take the form of unguided bombs dropped from huge propeller-driven strategic bombers like the B-29 Superfortress (jet bombers finally entered service in 1955). Field artillery shells with atomic warheads made their debut in 1953. Many other possibilities—intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched missiles, and atomic depth charges—remained on the drawing boards and proving grounds.

COMPUTERS

For an overview of what is (and isn't) possible with computers, see the discussion of the Computers skill in **Chapter 3**. *Golden Age* characters aren't going to spend much time complaining about stuff on internet message boards, and not just because they've got better things to do with their time.

ELECTRONICS

In the first half of the Golden Age, vacuum tubes and large mechanical relays are the state of art. Thousands of them were required for the earliest computers (like the German Z3, the British Colossus, and the American ENIAC) to function. Transistors first appeared in 1947, the handiwork of a team of Bell Labs scientists. They began to replace vacuum tubes henceforth and for the remainder of the Golden Age, giving rise to such items as the first transistor radio in 1954.

At the end of the Golden Age, plans for integrated circuits are "the next big thing." They do not actually appear until 1959, leaving technology that employs them (like microprocessors and cell phones) for the decades following.

MEDICINE

Without MRIs and the like, Golden Age doctors were reliant on exploratory surgery for diagnosing many internal maladies. Once discovered, physicians then had to rely on a few proven drugs and further surgery to cure a patient with a major illness.

Though it was in short supply, penicillin (rediscovered in 1928) significantly reduced the number of wounded soldiers lost to infections during World War II. In the mid-1940s, Oxford University researchers led by Howard Walter Florey discovered how to make synthetic, mass-producible penicillin, making the drug widely available for the first time.

One of the dread diseases of the era, polio, was finally bested in 1952 with the development of the Jonas Salk vaccine. In the decades that followed, the iron lungs and leg braces that had once been commonplace because of that crippling illness gradually disappeared.

Advances in mental health, on the other hand, were much more dubious. Prefrontal lobotomies (first "successfully" performed in 1936) were common practice throughout the Golden Age, "curing" patients of their mental disorders via a jiggled ice pick inserted near the tear duct. Of equally questionable value to the patient, electroshock therapy was instituted in 1938. It was usually administered without anesthesia, resulting in broken bones and pulled muscles for many subjected to it.

RADAR

Shortly after its entry into World War II, the United Kingdom had in place a decimetric microwave radar system known as Chain Home. Primitive as may have been, it gave the Royal Air Force critical early warnings it desperately needed during the Battle of Britain. Thus, new developments in radar technology were top military secrets throughout the war.

The most important such breakthrough was the development of the cavity magnetron in 1940 by Birmingham University scientists John

ROBOTICS

Westinghouse exhibited eight robots named "Elektro" at the 1939 New York World's Fair (joined by a robotic dog named "Sparko" at the 1940 Fair), who could walk, talk, and move their limbs, all under human direction. At seven feet tall and three hundred pounds, they were an impressive sight and a harbinger of things to come.

The first robots capable of acting independently came about in 1948. Named "Elsie" and "Elmer" by their creator, British neurophysiologist Grey Walter, they were capable of following a light back to a recharger whenever their batteries ran low. Robots capable of much more than that (like, say, going on a rampage) remained the stuff of comic books throughout the Golden Age.

ROCKETS & JET AIRCRAFT

Experiments with rockets date back to ancient China, but practical applications remained elusive until Nazi Germany began production of the V-2 in 1943. It soon after leapt from the furthest imaginings of most to laying waste to portions of London. As the Nazi regime collapsed, the United States and Soviet Union raced to capture as much German rocket technology as possible. With it, the road to the first intercontinental ballistic missile (the Soviet R-7) and Sputnik were paved.

The Nazis also flew the first jet aircraft, the Heinkel He 178, on August 27, 1939. Fortunately for the Allies, they did not put the technology to military use until 1944, when production of the Messerschmitt Me 262 began. By that time, the British had their own jet fighter, the Gloster Meteor, in service and the tide of war had turned against the Nazis.

Jet aircraft were the military norm by the time of the Korean War, as evinced by the American F-86 fighter planes and their communist nemesis, the MiG-15. Despite these advanced models, pilots were still dog fighting and blazing away at each other with cannon or machinegun fire, unlike today's distant confrontations with heat-seeking missiles.

TELEVISION

Electronic television had been around since Philo Taylor Farnsworth publicly demonstrated it on August 25, 1934, but broadcasts were sporadic until the eve of America's entry into World War II, when ten stations were authorized to broadcast for 15 hours a week to the 10,000 sets then in use. During the war, the Federal Communications Commission reduced that figure to a mere four hours a week.

A format war and the attendant legal wrangling delayed the first color television broadcast until June 25, 1951. Even then, color sets remained luxury items until after the Golden Age, making color broadcasts consequently limited both in number and scope.

Randall and Harry Boot, which produced much more powerful microwaves than previous systems could. Using the cavity magnetron, the U.K. and the U.S. were able to deploy advanced centrimetric radars, which significantly outperformed competing Axis systems. (As an aside, the cavity magnetron later led to the development of the microwave oven in 1954. Remember that the next time you nuke a burrito before your weekly *Mutants & Masterminds* game.)

Allied forces also enjoyed a tremendous advantage in mating advanced radar technology with existing weapons systems. Radar-directed artillery was deadly against both ships and planes (especially when firing proximity-fused shells), and could even bring down the vaunted German V-1 rockets. Radar-equipped planes played havoc against enemy submarines, capable of spotting them from just their exposed periscopes.

HEROES IN UNIFORM

One of the more interesting contrasts in World War II-related comic books is their difference in focus. Those published during the conflict are predominantly about costumed superheroes, while later books set during that period tend to concentrate on the more mundane (but no less heroic) men and women in uniform.

The former is of obvious interest to present readers (you did buy this book, after all), but *Mutants & Masterminds* games that feature uniformed heroes instead of the costumed kind can be every bit as much fun. Such campaigns are equal parts action-packed and gut-wrenching, as all the excitement and horror of battle are on full display. This section gives some helpful hints on how the Gamemaster can bring the war to their gaming table.

DESIGNING MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

Comic-book genres change, but the overlap in creators means most of the rules and guidelines that apply to creating Golden Age superhero campaigns work just fine for military hero campaigns with the occasional tweak here and there. For example, there's usually little to no continuity in war comics; the same group of soldiers can be part of the 1944 D-Day invasion in one issue, then fighting for their lives on the

Bataan Peninsula in 1942 in the next.

War comics have sidekicks galore, even more so than in superhero books. Typically, the sidekicks serve as part of the lead character's commando unit, infantry company, fighter squadron, or the like. For better or worse, one of them is usually a bumbling comedy-relief type.

Military heroes can also take part in either postmodern or classic style Golden Age campaigns. The former focuses on the brutality and inhumanity of war, with battlefield atrocities, slaughtered innocents, and the Nazi death camps figuring prominently in stories. In postmodern campaigns, the greatest reward is staying alive. Classic campaigns, by contrast, are all about the heroism of our fighting forces and their righteous flag-waving triumphs over the unspeakable evil of our enemies. Stories in such campaigns are about destroying these enemies before they can spread their evil to any more of the world.

KILL 'EM ALL

The one real difference between war and superhero comics is the issue of killing. In the latter, deliberate killings by the heroes were not allowed from relatively early on. In the former, the main characters shot, stabbed, and blew up Nazis, Japanese, Fascists, and communists by the score right from the start and never stopped. This is one element that doesn't really change in classic or postmodern style campaigns (though killings are done more gleefully in the former).

Partly, this reflects a storytelling reality: it would be laughable to tell a war story where soldiers went around knocking the evil-incarnate enemy unconscious. It also reveals the level of hatred felt by most towards the treacherous Japanese and barbaric Nazis during the war. Sure, the characters were killing, but they were "only killing Japs" (Interestingly, this same standard applied to costumed heroes of the day when they ventured near the battlefield).

CREATING ADVENTURES FOR MILITARY HEROES

It's important for Gamemasters always to bear in mind that, in the absence of player characters with flashy superpowers, adventures for military heroes are first and foremost a matter of wits and courage. Normally, those two qualities are called for in that order.

The first step in a war-comic adventure is to present the player characters with a nigh-impossible objective: a well-defended hill must be captured, a bridge behind enemy lines must be destroyed, a ship full of Allied prisoners of war must be liberated, or a new enemy aircraft with superior capabilities must somehow be bested. Next, the player characters must be challenged to discover the way to achieve their seemingly hopeless objective.

Perhaps the player characters have to somehow win the friendship of the locals, be they French, German, or Pacific Islanders, and learn from them the secret path that leads to the top of the enemy hill unnoticed. The characters' stealth and acting abilities might be put to the test as they sneak past enemy patrols to reach the vital bridge, or their dog fighting skills might be called upon to keep them alive just long enough to discover the new enemy fighter plane seizes up in a steep dive. Possibilities, as they say, are limited only by the imagination, and you're got plenty of that, right?

The second step is no less difficult than the first for the players. They've gleaned the knowledge necessary to give themselves a fighting chance for success. In step two, it's time for the fighting part. Though surprised, the enemy force should still be at least an even match for the player characters, who can only hope to prevail by pushing their skills and hero points to the utmost.

For example, a character might be forced to roll between the spinning treads of a German Tiger tank in order to jam his last two grenades next to its most vulnerable spots in desperate hope of stopping the metal monster. Exploiting the new enemy fighter's weakness might mean the character has to put his own plane into a dive that may rip its wings off. Whatever it is, the effort can't be easy. In the end, it may claim the lives of some (heretofore unseen) members of the unit, who painfully illustrate how wars are won through individual sacrifices.

CHANGING THE FORMULA

Gamemasters should never lose sight of the fact that in a roleplaying game, the types of stories they can tell are unlimited. This is true even in as hidebound a genre as the war comic. For instance, the player characters are going to get leave sooner or later. Whole adventures can be based around what they do away from the front lines. They can interact with the local civilians and help them solve their problems, such as assisting the village priest in finding a new church bell in time for Christmas. The player characters can also fall in love, get drunk and brawl, or scrounge up some extra candy rations for the war orphans, all without firing a shot.

Particularly well-known military heroes may even be sent back to the States to help boost morale and sell some war bonds. In the process, they may find themselves during their off-hours getting drawn into conflict with home-front bad guys like mobsters, black marketers, or saboteurs. This presents an interesting challenge for heroes who must fight, but without blazing away as they normally do.

HEROES IN UNIFORM, HEROES IN COSTUME

Really creative Gamemasters may want to push the boundaries of the war comic well past its usual limits and have his military player characters tangle with a supervillain or two. While even the most lethal team of PL 6 commandos aren't much of a match for an evil extra-dimensional magical entity, they can certainly give the typical PL 8 villain a run for his ill-gotten money, particularly if said villain isn't used to fighting anyone whose first instinct isn't to take him alive.

At some point, military heroes may even cross paths with the costumed variety, perhaps in pursuit of a common goal. If that's the case, it's certainly a mission of critical importance, requiring both the knowledge and combat experience of military heroes and the extraordinary powers of the superheroes. Perhaps the enemy fortress the player-character commando team has been scouting for an upcoming assault is being used for unholy magical rituals designed to summon forth demonic aid for the Axis. Without the commandos' knowledge of the fortress and the superheroes' ability to cope with magical threats combined, the effort is bound to fail.

While the worlds of superhero and war comic books won't intersect often, Gamemasters should consider having it happen at least once regardless of the nature of their campaign. The sheer novelty of it all (not to mention the severity of the challenge involved in such a high-stakes encounter) is bound to make it an unforgettable experience for the players.

CHAPTER 3: GOLDEN AGE HEROES

All ready to put on your red, white, and blue union suit and punch Mussolini in the jaw, hero? Are you ready to fight your way across the islands of the Pacific and stop the onslaught of Imperial Japan? Great! This chapter will have you slapping the lips off fascist dictators in no time. Best of all, it only takes a few minor adjustments to the existing *Mutants & Masterminds* rules to get them ready for the challenges of the twentieth century.

This chapter looks at how to create Golden Age *Mutants & Masterminds* heroes, starting with suggested power levels, then going through skills, feats, powers and other traits. Along the way, it looks at what traits you're going to want to have, as well as ones that aren't appropriate for heroes in the 1940s and '50s. It provides lists of Golden Age equipment and vehicles, focusing on military hardware, and wraps up with a selection of Golden Age archetypes that allow you to jump right into the action.

STARTING POWER LEVELS

Golden Age comic books (and comic books set during that period) feature main characters of varying degrees of superhuman ability, from war-comic heroes who fight with nothing more than guts and a Tommy gun to nigh-omnipotent supernatural beings who play billiards with the solar system. This section outlines how these differences translate into the *Mutants & Masterminds* rules.

PULP ADVENTURERS & UNIFORMED HEROES

Campaigns from this era often center around the type of non-costumed, double-tough, globetrotting pulp-style heroes that predominated in comic books of the mid-to-late 1930s. Such men are men among men, and manly men to boot. By their side (and sometimes, in the lead-character spot) are equally formidable women, more than capable of holding their own when trouble rears its ugly head. These Einstein-smart, Olympic-gold athletic, movie star good-looking folks start out as PL 6 characters with 90 power points to spend.

The heroes in uniform found in war comics seem a lot like prewar two-fisted adventurers who got their draft notice. Therefore, they too start out at PL 6 and with 90 power points, though the other members of their unit (especially the non-player characters) are usually of a slightly lower PL and starting power point total.

CLASSIC GOLDEN AGE SUPERHEROES

If war-comic heroes seem like pulp heroes who traded in their trench coats for combat fatigues, most Golden Age superheroes seem like pulp heroes who opted for multicolored long johns instead. This is mainly because the superheroes of that era certainly were heroic, but by today's standards, they just weren't all that "super." Indeed, the most common ability 1940s comic-book characters had was a mean right cross.

Even the heroes who had unusual abilities were typically possessed of what might best be described as "neat tricks" rather than full-blown superpowers. Therefore, classic-style Golden Age superheroes begin the campaign as PL 8 characters with 120 power points to allocate.

MODERN-STYLE GOLDEN AGE SUPERHEROES

A few Golden Age heroes stood out from their fellows because their abilities were amazing by anyone's reckoning. Whereas most of their costumed contemporaries—the kind seen in the early days of superhero comics—were limited to socking crooks, these heroes were powered by super-science and super-sorcery. They could do truly extraordinary things, like flying, moving at super-speed, and zapping criminals with their magic jewelry.

These really super superheroes were the forerunners of the types that predominated in comic books during the Silver Age and afterwards. Not surprisingly, they were among the first Golden Age heroes to be revived in the late 1950s and 1960s, as they fit right in with the comic-book trends of that time. So close are these more-super-than-usual heroes to their present-day counterparts that they start at the usual PL 10 and 150 starting power points found in standard *M&M* campaigns.

It's worth noting that (just like today) Golden Age super-teams had members of noticeably different power levels, from the PL8 boxers-in-tights to PL10 types who move quicker than the human eye. If the Gamemaster and players want authenticity more than they want to all start at the same PL, their characters can represent a similar mix of power levels. In these cases, it's important to make sure that lower PL characters have skills and feats that no one else on the team has so they can remain vital contributors to the group's efforts.

OMNIPOTENT GOLDEN AGE HEROES

When super-powered heroes sold super-stacks of comic books during the Golden Age, publishers soon after tried their luck with even more powerful characters, whose abilities bordered on the godlike. Such characters were capable of dispatching their enemies by hitting them with the sun, or casting them into the dark dimensions and otherworldly nether regions. They start at PL 12 with 180 power points, and go up from there.

These seemingly omnipotent heroes were sometimes seen as part of a super-team, though in hindsight, one wonders why they needed any sort of backup. Still, a Gamemaster who's running a mixed-power level campaign can allow them to join the group if he doesn't mind a supreme challenge in keeping all these differently-abled heroes simultaneously occupied.

The easiest way to use such powerful characters in an *M&M* game is as the focus of a campaign with a small number of heroes, perhaps even a solo-hero setup. Obviously, this situation is not preferable for every *M&M* gaming group. If a mixed-power level campaign is similarly unpalatable, then omnipotent characters are going to work best as occasionally seen non-player characters.

That said, omnipotent characters can be a nice change of pace for a long-running campaign, even as a one-shot digression from the normal campaign. The weeks when not all the players can be there for the regularly scheduled game are perfect to give the people who do show up a shot at playing the team's omnipotent mystical ally. Letting the lucky few in attendance take on an entire enemy battalion all by themselves and so forth can definitely liven up what could've otherwise been an off-week.

GOLDEN AGE ABILITY BENCHMARKS

Abilities work pretty much the same way in any comic-book era, but if they'd had character sheets back in the '40s, one couldn't have helped but notice some point-allocation choices that are distinctly Golden Age. This section gives some details on these choices for those who want to do authentically retro characters; all others are free to spend their points building their Golden Age hero however they see fit.

First, while superpowers were often in short supply in the typical Golden Age costumed character, ability scores that were well above the human norm were not. Golden Age creators thought their readers would find, say, a flying man a little hard to swallow, but a brainy strongman was someone every reader could identify with and aspire to be. Therefore, ability scores in the 20-25 range are not uncommon in Golden Age characters, even for those who don't have a single true superpower.

Second, Golden Age superheroes tend to favor physical characteristics over mental ones. Strength is a must-have, given how much time 1940s heroes spend punching out crooks. Dexterity (or just a good Reflex save) is handy, what with all the bombs and falling debris. Constitution (or Toughness) is valuable for the times when Strength and Dexterity fail.

Keeping these guidelines in mind not only adds some Golden Age flavor to the campaign, it can be invaluable in mixed-PL campaigns. Doing so allows room for the two-fisted heroes to specialize in doing their thing, while allowing high-Intelligence gadgeteers and high-Wisdom detectives to engage in their own particular idioms.

SKILLS

The things each skill allows your character to do are mostly unchanged in *Golden Age*. The alterations that have been made are mostly accommodations for the more retrograde technology found in mid-twentieth century America. Unless otherwise stated, a given skill works exactly as described in *Mutants & Masterminds*. Here are the exceptions:

COMPUTERS

At the start of the Golden Age, digital computers are a brand-new invention. They are few in number, fill up an entire room each, and are pretty much limited to just adding a lot of really big numbers faster than a guy with a pencil and paper can—and doing even that demands enough power to dim all a surrounding city's lights.

This is not to say computers weren't handy to have around, especially for compiling a census, plotting artillery ranges, and breaking enemy codes. The later task was most famously carried out with the British-made Colossus II electronic machines secreted away at Bletchley Park, the very existence of which became known only in the late 1970s.

Despite some important technological advancements made during this period, use of the Computers skill is limited to Write Program simply because the technology of the time doesn't allow for anything else. Even then, the +2 bonus applies only to situations where it's beneficial to have many very large numbers computed relatively quickly. "Programming" is putting the requested operations onto punch cards, or paper or metal tape. The first programming language (Fortran) doesn't appear until 1953, not long after the first commercially available computer (the UNIVAC I) appears in 1951 at the low, low price of a $1 million.

Of course, depending on the campaign, there may very well be enough super-geniuses about to come up with computers that resemble those found in the future, like an Apple IIe or Commodore 64. There may also be computers that are pure science fiction even today, like artificial intelligences. In either case, such computers allow more of the uses of the skill listed in *Mutants & Masterminds*.

SURVIVAL

The Korean and Second World Wars left millions of homeless refugees in their wake as the clashing armies devastated cities and villages. In addition to those whose residences were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, there were areas like the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, whose inhabitants were deliberately targeted for suffering.

In these desperate circumstances, people were often forced to learn to eke out an existence from the rubble. To simulate this hard-earned knowledge, the Survival skill can be used to stay alive in urban as well as wilderness settings.

The specific uses remain the same from *Mutants & Masterminds*; only the methods change. In urban settings, instead of feasting on nature's bounty for dinner, characters are looking in trash bins for leftovers. Similarly, characters are counting on broken pipes instead of clear-running streams for water. They can also use this skill for Navigation when the surrounding city landmarks have all been bombed into an unrecognizable state.

GOLDEN AGE FEATS

The following newly minted feats are meant to add a little period flavor to the player characters and to help them better cope with the often harsh realities of that time. These feats' utility outside the Golden Age is limited, as the draft and rationing both eventually stopped and America never again needed quite so many hotshot pilots. Still, with the Gamemaster's permission, characters residing in a different era can purchase these feats.

Existing feats work in Golden Age campaigns just as described in *Mutants & Masterminds*. Some are more suitable for some campaign styles than others (such as Rage, which fits better in a postmodern Golden Age campaign than a classic style), but any existing feat is available with the Gamemaster's permission.

DON'T YOU KNOW THERE'S A WAR ON?

Sacrifice was the word that best describes life during the Second World War, so much so that even complaining about it was frowned upon and usually dismissed with a curt "Don't you know there's a war on?" Though it varied in degrees from person to person, everyone felt the pinch of global war. Everyone, that is, except for player characters who purchase the following Benefit feats. They can make life in their secret identities a lot more comfortable and more closely resemble the carefree civilian existence most heroes in Golden Age comic books enjoyed.

BENEFIT: DRAFT EXEMPTION   GENERAL, RANKED

You are exempt from compulsory military service due to some rarified condition. Whatever the exact reason, you're not classified 1-A (fit for military service), 1-B (fit for limited service), 1-C (already in the active-duty military), 4-C (an alien national who can still be drafted) or 4-D (an ordained minister, eligible to be drafted into the chaplain corps). You are free to pursue your costumed hero career (or anything else, for that matter) as you see fit.

RANK 1 EXEMPTIONS

Your exemption is of the sort that carries with it some degree of social stigma for your secret identity. You are classified 4-F ("physically, mentally, or morally unfit for service"), which makes you in the eyes of most people either (respectively) a goldbricker shirking his duty, a dangerous crackpot to be avoided at all costs, or a criminal deviant. Alternately, you are considered 4-E, a conscientious objector, or, as most people call you, a no-good coward.

Whatever the specific insults normally hurled your way, all but the most sympathetic civilian souls are considered to have an Unfriendly attitude towards you on the Interaction table. Servicemen on leave, on the other hand, are going to be downright Hostile to you. In many Golden Age comic books, costumed heroes dutifully tried to join up, but were rejected as medically unfit due to the alterations to their physiology that occurred when they gained superpowers. Characters whose powers derive from the fact that they're an alien, a mutant, or the like can take a rank 1 exemption to represent their unusual 4-F status.

RANK TWO EXEMPTIONS

Your exemption is one that carries no societal approbation with it, but has some specific conditions that must be met in order to retain it. It's a Complication to be sure, but one you get no extra hero points for. For example, your character might be classified 1-D (student, fit for service) or 1-E (student, fit for limited service), with the catch being your character has to stay in school and keep his grades up—something that might not be easy if he's got his hands full battling enemy saboteurs all hours of the night.

A character might be considered 2-A (meaning your job is considered critical to the war effort, like industrial magnate, scientist, cop, engineer, or fireman) or 4-B (meaning you work for the government as a judge or similar high elected official), making it critical for you to hang onto your current employment. As a result, your character may have to suffer the indignities of his jerk boss, or campaign for re-election like his life depended on it in order to keep his cushy draft status.

You may even be classified 3-A because of your many dependents (five or more was typically enough to keep you stateside for the duration). While Uncle Sam likely won't come a-calling on you in this case, a steady stream of concerned principals, teachers, truant officers, neighborhood cops, and all the other assorted problems of child-rearing certainly will, only five-fold. You're bound to have your hands full protecting your large brood from neighborhood bullies and the like—not to mention your supervillain archenemies—even without taking into consideration your crime-fighting activities. And what happens when one of the little tykes finds daddy's super-suit?

Depending on your campaign, costumed heroes may qualify for one of the rank 2 benefit statuses simply because of the nature of their work.

Patriotic superheroes who work directly for the government may qualify for 4-B status, or Uncle Sam may generously extend 2-A status to select costumed figures for the duration of the war. Here the catch is remaining a good soldier and doing everything the government asks of you, or keeping up your home-front crime fighting activities at all costs.

RANK THREE EXEMPTIONS

Your character is considered to be 4-A, which indicates past military service. Many discharged personnel were recalled to active duty at the outbreak of war, but your character's service was either so long ago (World War I, or maybe even the Spanish-American War) or so very recent (your character fought earlier in the current war, but was discharged and sent home for some reason) that a recall isn't a concern for you.

In addition to having your autonomy, you are also considered to have "done your part" by the public at large and thus don't suffer any sort of Interaction penalties. If your character has obviously and visibly seen action (you are wearing your medals, or have battle scars you just can't hide), most people will have Friendly or Helpful attitudes towards you because of your war record.

If the idea of playing a recent vet or old geezer doesn't suit your character conception, there are other ways of justifying purchasing the rank 3 exemption. Perhaps your character performed some vital service for his country during the prewar era, one that may have been done unofficially and out of an actual uniform but that your government is nonetheless grateful for. This can be a great way to simulate a character who spent the 1930s hunting down items like the Holy Grail or the Lost Ark of the Covenant as a favor to President Roosevelt, and got a 4-A status (or the like) as a reward. This is a good edge to hang on to even after V-J Day. Even though World War II ended, the draft didn't, save for a brief pause in 1947-48. It otherwise continued well past the end of comic books' Golden Age.

BENEFIT: RATIONING EXEMPTION   GENERAL, RANKED

You are exempt from some (or all) aspects of wartime rationing. This may be due to your valued status in the government's eyes, like the extra gas ration offered to doctors or the unlimited gasoline to which truckers, firemen, and members of Congress were entitled. Whatever the reason, you receive a +4 bonus per rank when rolling on the Rationing Table.

Keep in mind this benefit can be tenuous. If your worth to the government diminishes or any involvement in the black market on your part is discovered, your character may have to learn to get by on the same meager portions as everyone else. Unlike Benefit: Draft Exemption, this feat loses its value at war's end. When World War II ended, so did rationing.

BENEFIT: MILITARY RANK   GENERAL, RANKED

You're in the Army now, or the Navy, or the Marines, or the Army Air Force... at least until 1947, when you're just in the plain ol' Air Force. Moreover, you've gotten some extra stripes or brass to show for your time spent in uniform. It's not all smiles and sunshine, though. This is definitely a benefit with some downside to it.

On the good side, you've got a steady job–nothing to sneeze at during the Great Depression. Plus, there's the three meals a day, free room and board, world travel, and access to some pretty cool stuff. Where else are you going to get your hands on a tank, after all?

In game terms, this is represented first by the Wealth Bonus that accompanies each rank, for use in campaigns which employ the optional Wealth rules (see *M&M*, page 132). Second, your character doesn't have to worry about the effects of wartime rationing, since he's one of the

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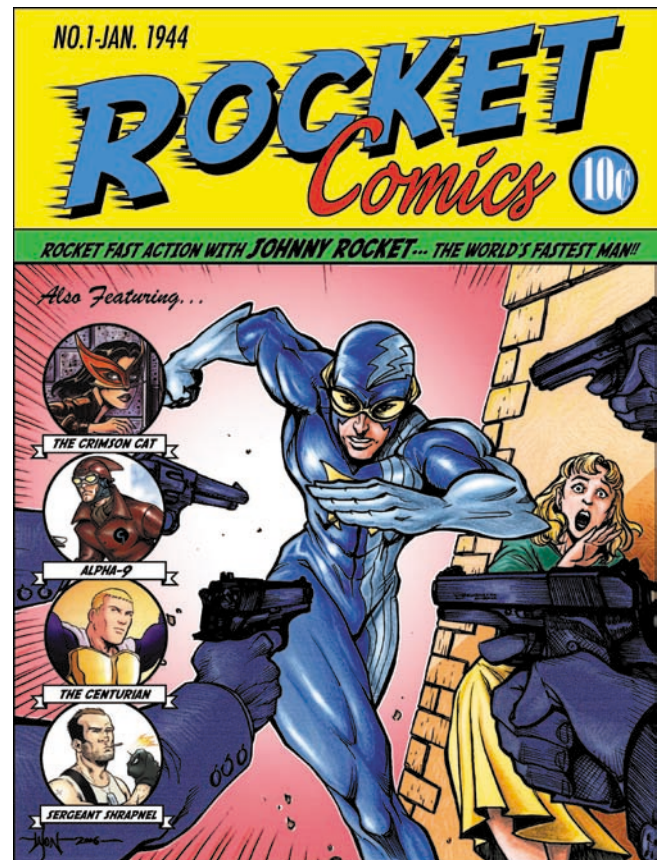
people for whom everybody else is doing without. Third, you get access to equipment most people don't, so long as it makes sense for your job (so forget about your tanker getting a battleship) and you can pay the EP cost.

The best part of this feat is all the new friends you make. Paying 6 PP to be a full-bird colonel puts a whole regiment under your command, complete with the +10 force modifier, and pretty much guarantees your freedom from neighborhood bullies.

MILITARY RANK BENEFITS

PP Cost	Army/Army Air Force/Marine Corps Rank	Navy Rank	Wealth Bonus
0	Private	Seaman	+1
1	Corporal	Seaman First Class	+2
2	Sergeant (any grade)	Petty Officer (any class)	+6
3	Second or First Lieutenant	Ensign/Lt. Junior Grade	+8
4	Captain	Lieutenant	+10
5	Major/Lt. Colonel	Lt. Commander/Commander	+12
6	Colonel/Brigadier General	Captain	+14
7	Major General	Rear Admiral	+16
8	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	+16
9	General	Admiral	+16
10	General of the Army	Fleet Admiral	+16

The buzz-killing part of this feat is the responsibility involved–you didn't think all that power came for free, now did you? No matter how many

points you put into this benefit, you still have somebody outranking you. Even a five-star General of the Army has to answer to the President of the United States—just ask General MacArthur about that. Anyone who has this benefit spends a lot of time doing what someone else tells them to. Granted, it's less so at higher levels, and the duties aren't as tedious (no potato peeling or toilet scrubbing for a general), but you can't come and go as you please without serious consequences involved. Forfeiting this benefit is just a start, with prison time and a firing squad (for wartime desertion) as other possibilities.

Because this benefit greatly limits the freedom of action most role-players crave, it's best suited for war-comic style military campaigns, where the characters are all commandos (or the like) on "special detached duty," left to do as they will once a mission has been assigned to them. Superhero player characters are better off looking at Benefit: Draft Exemption (see page 42) unless they're prepared to risk going AWOL anytime there's crime to be fought.

A NOTE TO GAMEMASTERS

Any players who spend 6 power points with the intention of using regimental firepower to crush their enemies every single game session can and should have that notion quickly dispelled. The chain of command is your friend in limiting too-frequent or downright abusive use of this feat.

In such cases, either their unit is engaged in a mission (which realistically should be a lot of the time), or has orders from higher-up that forbid it from running to the character's rescue whenever they need it. Any character who forces the issue and orders a unit to break off a mission had better have a darn good reason, or else be prepared to learn what military discipline is all about.

That said, this is a feat, and the player did pay points for it, so it should be useful to them at some point. Maybe the character can't get the whole regiment to act like the cavalry in a movie Western, but in a pinch he might be able to spare a squad or two. Even if that's not feasible, he still might be able to pull some strings and get the group some badly needed gear, from a truck to a bazooka, as the Gamemaster sees fit.

BENEFIT: WEALTHY	GENERAL, RANKED

Here are some sample Golden Age jobs and the Financial Condition they correlate to on the Wealth Bonus chart (see *M&M*, page 132).

- **Impoverished (+0):** Farmhand, New Deal laborer.
- **Struggling (+1 to +4):** Clerk, beginning factory worker, farmer, manual laborer, waiter.
- **Middle class (+5 to +10):** Average factory worker, bank teller, black marketers, clergyman, foreman, journalist, mechanic, police-

man, private investigator, professional entertainer, prostitute, skilled laborer, teacher, telephone operator.
- **Affluent (+11 to +15):** Author, business manager, doctor, engineer, lawyer, mine speculator, university professor.
- **Wealthy or better (+16 and higher):** Atomic scientist, bank president, corporate executive, mob boss, movie actor, politician.

NEW VEHICLE FEATS

Never before had so many men's lives depended on their skill with a control stick or a steering wheel as during the Second World War. The ones who lacked such acumen either learned quickly or died trying. Those who did master the art of getting the most of out of their machines became some of the finest warriors who ever lived. More importantly to them, they gained an edge over the enemy that allowed them to keep on living.

The following new feats simulate this edge, allowing players (and Gamemasters) to create lethal fighter aces, redoubtable bomber pilots, and wheel-men capable of racing a jeep through an artillery barrage without getting so much as a scratch. These feats are also useful for costumed characters who race around in super-vehicles to get the most out of their expensive rides.

COMBAT DRIVER	COMBAT, RANKED

You know some tricky maneuvers that can keep you alive while driving a ground or water vehicle under combat conditions. Choose the type of vehicle when you acquire the feat. You gain a +1 bonus on either attack rolls or a +1 dodge bonus for the vehicle (allocated each round) per rank in this feat when driving any vehicle of your chosen type that is Size Huge or smaller.

Multiple ranks in this feat can be divided between attack rolls and the vehicle's dodge bonus as the player sees fit. Your total attack and defense bonuses are limited by the campaign's power level. Dodge bonuses from multiple operators with Combat Driver do not stack.

COMBAT PILOT	COMBAT, RANKED

You know some tricky maneuvers that can keep you alive while piloting an air or space vehicle under combat conditions. Choose the type of vehicle when you acquire the feat. You gain a +1 bonus on either attack rolls or a +1 dodge bonus for the vehicle (allocated each round) per rank in this feat when flying any vehicle of your chosen type that is Size Gargantuan or smaller.

Multiple ranks in this feat can be divided between attack rolls and the vehicle's dodge bonus as the player sees fit. Your total attack and defense bonuses are limited by the campaign's power level. Dodge bonuses from multiple operators with Combat Pilot do not stack.

POWERS

Roleplaying in the era in which the idea of comic-book superpowers was first developed is full of possibilities. As such, players are free to purchase whatever powers they wish in *Golden Age*, provided (as always) their Gamemasters approve of their choices. Just because we say yes doesn't mean the GM is obligated to follow suit.

If the aim of all involved is to recreate the feel of actual Golden Age comics, there are some powers that don't quite fit the milieu. Datalink, for one, is of limited utility simply because of the relatively primitive

computer technology of the day (see the discussion of the Computers skill earlier in this chapter for details). Others just weren't seen all that much in 1940s comic books.

Please note that these are just *suggestions* for greater authenticity, not bans or prohibitions of any sort. If it makes the game more fun for a player to create a character with Mind Control and Plasma Control, then the Gamemaster should let him. These guidelines are presented for the sake of people for whom authenticity is a big part of the fun.

THE POWERS THAT MIGHT NOT BE

Mental powers like Emotion Control, ESP, Illusion, Mental Blast, Mind Control, Mind Reading, Mind Shield, Mind Switch, and Telepathy were avoided by comic-book creators of that era. Given that readers wanted to see fast-paced, slam-bang, running, jumping, and punching, it's understandable why they were loath to draw panel after panel of a hero furrowing his brow, closing his eyes, and *concentrating*. Mentalist abilities were mainly the province of villains, or a handful of mystic-adventurer type heroes whose use of such powers came with suitably weird special effects.

Golden Age comic-book creators also liked to keep things easy to grasp for their mostly young readers. They avoided depicting any superpowers that couldn't be explained to a kid in one panel of action or one line of dialogue. In contrast, some powers listed in *Mutants & Masterminds* are more Silver Age-like, when just about every hero's superhuman ability came with its very own scientific lecture, waiting to break out at any moment. Powers like Friction Control, Kinetic Control, Life Control, Plasma Control, Spatial Control, and Vibration Control would've gone right over the heads of most Golden Age comic-book readers. Since confusing the readers can risk a character's featured spot in a comic book even more than wartime paper shortages, classic-style Golden Age characters may wish to steer clear of these.

COMPLICATIONS

Just like superpowers, most of the classic comic-book Complications made their debut during the Golden Age. Of the ones that came after, most of them were retroactively inserted into the era in stories set in that time period but published years later. This section details how to give a character's Complications a genuine Golden Age touch. Unless otherwise noted, all of the Complications listed on *M&M*, pages 122–123 are available to player characters with Gamemaster consent.

ADDICTION

While rarely depicted in the era's comic books, the Golden Age was a time when seemingly everyone smoked cigarettes, especially soldiers, who got free smokes in their ration packs. In campaigns that seek to recreate the time period more so than the comics themselves, this is a common Complication— and one that can make for some uncomfortable situations for characters once wartime rationing sets in (see the section on **Smoking & Drinking** in **Chapter 2** for more details).

In a postmodern Golden Age campaign, this Complication can be used to simulate the more adult vices of the day. It can represent characters with a fixation on heroin (virtually eliminated during World War II, but back bigger than ever in the 1950s thanks to mobster Lucky Luciano) or alcohol. Likewise, the rampant randy-ness of American GIs can fall under this Complication, for those with a hankering for the V-girls.

ENEMY

Note that in a war comics setting (or similar), it's not fair to pick "the Germans" or "the North Koreans" as an Enemy and expect to get a hero point for it since they pretty much show up every session. It is, however, perfectly acceptable to pick a particular nemesis from the other side of the front lines, like a crafty communist officer or an elite Japanese fighter squadron who bedevils the player characters time and again.

HATRED

This Complication is just as much out of place in a classic Golden Age campaign as it is at home in a postmodern one. Note that in classic campaigns, this was true even during wartime, as few comic-book characters were truly rabid in their enmity for the enemy nations. By contrast, postmodern characters as a rule are angry about something pretty much all the time, so the war's opposing side (or just about anything else, for that matter) works for them here.

HONOR

This Complication was as common for Golden Age heroes as colorful costumes, as it made it crystal clear to impressionable young readers that the good guys are really good at all times, not to mention showing how despicable the bad guys were. It's found in war comics for much the same reason, and it mirrors the real-world reputation American GIs had for fair play even under the duress of battle.

OBSESSION, PHOBIA, SECRET, AND TEMPER

By the same token, classic Golden Age heroes were largely immune to these Complications (save of course for having secret identities). Even those who did manifest them did so in the form of colorful and mostly harmless eccentricities, like leaving some sort of calling card behind once they've wrapped up a case.

These types of Complications drive postmodern characters, as costumed crime-fighting is just an extension of their own inner demons. In fact, it's odd for a character in that type of campaign to *not* have at least one of these as a Complication.

PREJUDICE

As discussed in the section on the section on **Intolerance** (page 28), minority heroes can take this Complication and, in anything other than a classic Golden Age style campaign, get a steady stream of hero points and grief for it. That is unless the people involved in the campaign agree to forego this historical reality, by mutual assent, a reasonable allowance in all but postmodern style campaigns.

DRAWBACKS

These were not all that common in Golden Age comic books, though a few characters did suffer from a Disability, have a Normal Identity, suffer from a Power Loss, or have a Weakness (particularly alien characters). This is not to say your character can't have all the Drawbacks the Gamemaster allows (and most GM's are pretty generous on this point), but rather to highlight which ones are most authentically Golden Age.

DEVICES & EQUIPMENT

Golden Age gadgets represented two extremes. On the one hand were the commonplace gadgets, such as gangsters' guns, juvenile delinquents' souped-up jalopies, and major plot points relayed to characters via radio broadcasts. When superheroes and supervillains entered the scene, logic and proportion disappeared, but never the sense of wonder.

Death rays, time machines, magic rings, and giant Nazi robots were part and parcel of the era's storylines, to the delight of readers.

This section gives Gamemasters a handy guide to the real-world hardware that existed during this era, which should be valuable to Gamemasters running military campaigns or those who send their char-

acters to the front lines with some regularity. There's also some advice on how to give the products of comic-book science a real Golden Age sheen.

GOLDEN AGE DEVICES

In the hands of heroes, most Golden Age devices defy every law but that of the land. Explicitly magical devices were seemingly taken from the adventures of Aladdin, granting almost anything the wielder desired.

Scientific devices were comparatively more limited, but still worked inexplicable wonders, like hand-held ray projectors capable of melting through a tank. Even Modern Age comic-book stories are hard pressed to explain how scientific gadgets of the Golden Age worked, as present-day superheroes look back at how casually their 1940s predecessors broke the laws of science and can only shake their heads.

With that in mind, knock yourselves out, players. Justify whatever crazy powers you want with "cosmic energy" or "atomic power" and project "rays" that do whatever you need them to do. If things get too far out for your Gamemaster, just put all the kooky powers into a piece of magical jewelry, and it's all good.

RETRO TECHNOLOGY

One way to make devices unmistakable products of the Golden Age is to make them offshoots of "the World of Tomorrow," the fantastic yet-to-be forecast by people of the 1930s and 1940s: the future we never got to live in. Hallmarks of this age that never was include once-promising technologies like travel by airship, jet packs, ray guns, broadcast power, household robots, and autogyros.

Any of these devices instantly and identifiably places a character right smack dab in the middle of the Golden Age. If the device's nature isn't enough, then be sure to include plenty of period flourishes in its visual design. In this era, no super-vehicle is complete without streamlining and fins, while Art Deco lines make everything look more super.

PLOT DEVICES

With the heroes getting all those wonderful toys, Golden Age supervillains had to have some truly amazing tricks up their lab-coat sleeves. Fortunately for them, the only thing more potent than the weird science wielded by the costumed good guys was the mad science harnessed by the bad guys. The villains' insanely powerful inventions frequently crossed over into Plot Device territory. They had giant death-ray cannons that could level a city with each shot and devices that could pluck the moon from its orbit. Sure, these gadgets usually took a while to work (the writers had to give the heroes time to save the day, after all), but it suited the big thinking typical of Golden Age supervillains.

When equipping your villains, Gamemaster, don't be afraid of giving them stuff from the furthest reaches of your imagination. When the players encounter the time-travel machine that plucks the evil Genghis Khan and his armies from history to do the mad scientist's modern-day bidding, they'll know for sure they're gaming in the Golden Age.

GOLDEN AGE EQUIPMENT

Within the boundaries of the era's technology (see the section on **Golden Age Tech** in **Chapter 2** for more details on this), rules for Equipment in *Golden Age* are just the same as in the *M&M* rulebook. Wartime rationing may affect the availability of some items, but assuming it can be had (and it exists in this era), all the normal rules are in play.

The following is a list of weapons found in the hands of cops, crooks, and civilians during the Golden Age. There are also some military-grade weapons from World War II and the Korean War. Military-grade weapons are, of course, normally found in the hands of soldiers, but they can also turn up in civilian use, such as with ex-GIs who kept a few souvenirs from their days in uniform or gangsters who found them after they "fell off the back of an Army truck."

PROJECTILE WEAPONS (FIREARMS)

The following listed weapons are man-portable firearms that are likely to be encountered during the Golden Age, both on the battlefield and off of it.

DERRINGERS

Derringers are holdout weapons primarily used by rogues and criminals. Their cost is reduced slightly due to their reduced range and limited number of shots.

PISTOLS

Pistols are issued to officers, aircrews, tank crews, and any other personnel who either work in confined spaces or otherwise can't easily carry a heavier weapon.

CARBINES

Carbines were intended to replace pistols in the American military, but only really found favor in the hands of the U.S. Marine Corps, who preferred their more compact size for jungle fighting in the Pacific Theater.

SERVICE RIFLES

Service rifles were the standard-issue weapons for infantrymen of all nations.

SNIPER RIFLES

Sniper rifles are only issued to infantrymen who have demonstrated the deadly marksmanship required to use these weapons effectively.

SUBMACHINE GUNS

Submachine guns are issued to commando units, low-ranking unit leaders on the front lines, paratroopers, and some vehicle crews—essentially anyone who needs a lot of firepower at close range. These weapons were also popular in Soviet service, perfect for the brutal house-to-house urban warfare seen on the Eastern Front.

LIGHT MACHINE GUNS

Light machine guns are issued singly or in pairs to squads of infantrymen to give them some much-needed extra firepower on the battlefield.

MEDIUM AND HEAVY MACHINE GUNS

Medium and heavy machine guns are usually found mounted on vehicles or in dug-in emplacements protecting important positions, like

PROJECTILE WEAPONS (FIREARMS)

Name	Damage	Critical	Range	Size	Cost
Handguns					
Derringer	+2 Ballistic	20	10 ft.	Diminutive	3
Hold-out pistol	+2 Ballistic	20	20 ft.	Tiny	4
Light pistol	+3 Ballistic	20	30 ft.	Small	6
Heavy pistol	+4 Ballistic	20	40 ft.	Medium	8
Longarms					
Sawed-off shotgun	+6/+7* Ballistic	20	10 ft.	Medium	13
Pump shotgun	+5/+6* Ballistic	20	40 ft.	Large	11
Skeet shotgun	+4/+5* Ballistic	20	40 ft.	Large	9
Carbine	+4 Ballistic	20	30 ft.	Large	8
Light service rifle	+5 Ballistic	20	50 ft.	Large	10
Service rifle	+6 Ballistic	20	60 ft.	Large	12
Sniper rifle	+5 Ballistic	19-20	250 ft.	Large	13
Assault rifle	+5 Ballistic, Autofire	20	50 ft.	Large	15
Light submachine gun	+3 Ballistic, Autofire	20	30 ft.	Medium	9
Submachine gun	+4 Ballistic, Autofire	20	40 ft.	Medium	12
Machine Guns					
Light Machine gun	+5 Ballistic, Autofire	20	50 ft.	Large	15
Medium Machine gun	+6 Ballistic, Autofire	20	60 ft.	Large	18
Heavy Machine gun	+7 Ballistic, Autofire	20	70 ft.	Large	21

Notes * = See individual description for **Shotgun** on page 139 of M&M for more information on the differences between loading up these weapons with shot or slugs.

HEAVY WEAPONS (EXOTIC)

Name	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Size	Cost
Flamethrower*	+6 Fire	—	—	Large	18
Hand grenade*	+5 Explosion	—	50 ft.	Tiny	15
Antitank Rocket*	+9 Explosion	—	90 ft.	Large	36
Light Mortar*	+5 Explosion	—	50 ft.	Small	15
Medium Mortar*	+7 Explosion	—	70 ft.	Medium	21
Heavy Mortar*	+9 Explosion	—	90 ft.	Large	27
Light Antitank Gun*	+7 Penetrating	—	70 ft.	Large	21
Medium Antitank Gun*	+8 Penetrating	—	80 ft.	Large	24
Heavy Antitank Gun*	+9 Penetrating	—	90 ft.	Large	27
Light Field Artillery*	+8 Explosion	—	800 ft.	Large	27
Medium Field Artillery*	+9 Explosion	—	800 ft.	Huge	30
Heavy Field Artillery*	+10 Explosion	—	2500 ft.	Huge	34

*=See individual descriptions for more information.

field headquarters. Heavy machine guns were sometimes deployed in multi-weapon mountings for use against enemy aircraft.

HEAVY WEAPONS

Sometimes even a machine gun isn't enough to get the job done. Maybe the enemy's too far away, too well dug-in, or there's just too many of them. Maybe the enemy's skin is bulletproof, and a bigger bang is the only hope of stopping him.

Whatever the cause, here are the statistics for some of the most common heavy weapons found in the ranks of the armies of the Korean and Second World Wars. For fairly obvious reasons (just glance at their game statistics), the Gamemaster should incorporate these truly big guns into their games with care, lest their perfectly crafted adventures be ruined by a hail of high-explosive shells fired from a mile away, or the careers of new heroes be brought to a precipitous (and tragic) end.

MILITARY SMALL ARMS BY COUNTRY

The following are the names and types of weapons most commonly issued to soldiers by the major participants in World War II and the Korean War. Caliber and name are listed first, followed by how the weapon is classified on the **Projectile Weapons (Firearms)** table.

FASCIST ITALY

.380 Beretta Modello 34 (light pistol)
6.5mm Carcano Fucile Modello 91 (light service rifle)
9mm Beretta Modello 1938 A (light submachine gun)
6.5mm Breda Fucile Mitragliatore Modello 30 (light machine gun)
8mm Breda Mitragliatore Modello 37 (medium machine gun)

NAZI GERMANY

.32 Walther PPK (hold-out pistol)
9mm Luger Pistole 08 (light pistol)
9mm Walther P-38 (light pistol)
7.92mm Karabiner 98k (service rifle)
7.92mm Sturmgewehr (assault rifle)
9mm MP-40 "Schmeisser" (light submachine gun)
7.92mm MG-34 or MG-42 (medium machine gun)

IMPERIAL JAPAN

8mm Nambu 14 Shiki (light pistol)
6.5mm Arisaka 38 Shiki (light service rifle)
7.7mm Arisaka 99 Shiki (service rifle)
8mm Kokura 100 Shiki (light submachine gun)
6.5mm Arisaka Nambu 11 Shiki or 96 Shiki (light machine gun)
7.7mm Arisaka Nambu 92 Shiki (medium machine gun)

SOVIET UNION /COMMUNIST BLOC

7.62mm Tokarev TT-33 (light pistol)
7.62mm Mosin-Nagant 1891/30 (service rifle)
7.62mm PPSh-41 "Stalin's Banjo" (light submachine gun)
7.62mm DP 1928g (light machine gun)
7.62mm SG-43 (medium machine gun)
7.62mm SKS-45 (service rifle) (Korean War)

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

.38 Enfield No. 2 Mk I/Webley Mk IV (light revolver)
.380 Browning Model 1910 (light pistol)
.303 Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk. I (service rifle)
9mm Enfield Sten Mk II Machine Carbine (light submachine gun)
.303 Bren Mk II (light machine gun)
.303 Vickers Mk I (medium machine gun)

(Note that in addition to weapons of their own manufacture, Commonwealth forces carried many American-made types. See the following entry for data on U.S. armaments.)

UNITED STATES

.45 Colt M1911A1 (heavy pistol)
.30 M1 (carbine)
.30-06 M1 Garand (service rifle)
.30-06 M1903 Springfield (sniper rifle)
.45 M3A1 "Grease Gun" (submachine gun)
.30-06 M1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) (light machine gun)
.30-06 M1919A4 Browning (light machine gun)
.50 M2 HB Browning (heavy machine gun)

HEAVY WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT POINTS

Many of the weapons listed here are pricey equipment point-wise. This is for reasons of game balance, but in some cases it can bend history a little bit, denying real-world soldiers weapons they got to use on a daily basis during the various wars of the Golden Age era.

As it happens, most of the higher-cost weapons are also crew-served weapons that don't work (or at least, don't work well) unless they're fired as a group effort. Therefore, as an optional rule Gamemasters can allow characters acting as a dedicated crew for a certain weapon to acquire it using equipment points contributed by each of them.

For example, the two GIs responsible for the unit's Light Mortar can split up the 15 equipment point cost to account for the fact that without one of them loading and the other aiming, the weapon is pretty much useless. Likewise, a Heavy Field Artillery Gun isn't as much of a point burden if all ten guys in its crew chip in 3-4 EP each.

As an option, the Gamemaster can simply choose not charge military characters for equipment issued to them by their government as part of their assigned duties. In a campaign centered around the crew of a tank haunted by the ghost of a Confederate general, for instance, the player characters receive the tank itself for zero equipment points (though they may have to pay for the ghost, depending on how much help he is to the crew).

FRIENDLY FIRE

In any given war, the trouble with artillery is that it's always landing somewhere it's not wanted. The enemy being targeted certainly doesn't appreciate it, but when the shells come up short, the soldiers getting hit with "friendly fire" are even more upset. This is because artillery is foremost used for indirect fire, which is a fancy way of saying the men operating the gun can't actually see what they're shooting at. Instead, they're relying on the word of someone who can see the target, who may or may not be describing its position well enough to result in a hit. Even when they are, words get misheard in the heat of battle, men under pressure forget to carry the two, and mistakes get made—like shelling their own troops, for instance.

Any attack made with a hand grenade, mortar, or field artillery gun that results in a natural one hits a friendly target instead. Grenades, distrusted during the war because of their unpredictable fuses, might even blow up in the hands of those throwing them.

FLAMETHROWERS

Flamethrowers shoot a stream of fire 5 feet wide and 50 feet long in front of the attacker as an area attack (see *M&M*, page 159). These weapons were issued to combat engineers for clearing out concrete bunkers, tunnels, and other closed-in enemy positions.

HAND GRENADES

Hand grenades are issued to infantrymen for clearing out foxholes, bunkers, buildings, or anywhere an enemy might take cover. Grenades project both blast force and shrapnel, and thus have the Explosion modifier (DC 15 Reflex save for half damage).

ANTITANK ROCKETS

Antitank rockets are fired via a number of different systems, including the American bazooka, the British Commonwealth PIAT, and the German *Panzerfaust* and *Panzerschreck* launchers. Whatever the type, it can only fire once; reloading requires a full-round action. Antitank rockets have the Penetrating extra, allowing them to damage heavily armored targets. Typically, one such weapon was issued per infantry company, but the Germans issued them in much greater numbers dur-

ing the closing months of the war, usually to troops barely trained in their use.

MORTARS

Mortars are basically metal tubes capable of launching shells at targets in a high, slow arc. They are relatively easy to transport, set up, conceal, and operate. Most mortar rounds are high explosive, and thus have the Area: Explosion extra. Mortars need a crew of two or three men to operate normally. Typically, a light (60mm) mortar is issued to an infantry company, six medium (81mm) mortars to a heavy weapons company, and six heavy (120mm) mortars assigned to an infantry regiment. Medium mortars were also mounted on halftracks to provide mobile fire support.

ANTITANK GUNS

Antitank guns are direct-fire artillery weapons designed to take out armored vehicles. Light models are fairly portable, but as the war dragged on, heavier and less mobile models were necessary to defeat the newer, better-armored tanks. Antitank rounds have the Penetrating extra on their damage. Antitank guns need a crew of three to five to operate normally. Typically, an antitank company had 12 such weapons: lighter ones (37mm) at the start of the war, and then progressing to medium (50mm) and heavy (75mm or 88mm) guns later in the conflict. Antitank guns were also mounted on lightly armored chasses and put into a dedicated armor-killing role as tank destroyers.

FIELD ARTILLERY

Field Artillery is the king of the battlefield, raining destruction down on enemy positions and softening them up for attack by tanks and infantry. Most artillery rounds are high explosive, and thus have the Explosion modifier. Artillery pieces also have the Improved Range power feat, since they fire in such long ballistic arcs. Artillery is large and heavy, and requires some sort of transport, be it horses, trucks, or being self-propelled on lightly armored chasses. Each gun requires a crew of 5 to 10 men to operate normally. Typically, an infantry regiment had 6-8 light (75mm) and/or medium (105mm) guns assigned to it, while an infantry division had 12 heavy (155mm) pieces at its disposal.

GOLDEN AGE VEHICLES

Transportation in the 1940s (both civilian and military) was in a time of transition. Passenger train service began to lose ground to the airlines, and jets supplanted prop-driven planes. On the oceans, the feared dreadnought battleships of days gone by lost their naval dominance to the aircraft carrier.

This section provides all the necessary *Mutants & Masterminds* game information to incorporate Golden Age vehicles in your campaign, from giant airships like the *Hindenburg* to Sherman tanks. Some types included here are also mentioned in *M&M*, but note that changes in time and technology give the Golden Age versions somewhat different capabilities than their modern descendants.

GROUND VEHICLES

Golden Age automobiles lack most of the standard car features listed in *M&M* (see page 144), in part due to the fact that new car production (and thus innovation) was halted for the duration of the war. Automobiles did have heaters, and the first car with air conditioning rolled off the assembly lines in 1940. Radios (AM, of course) were avail-
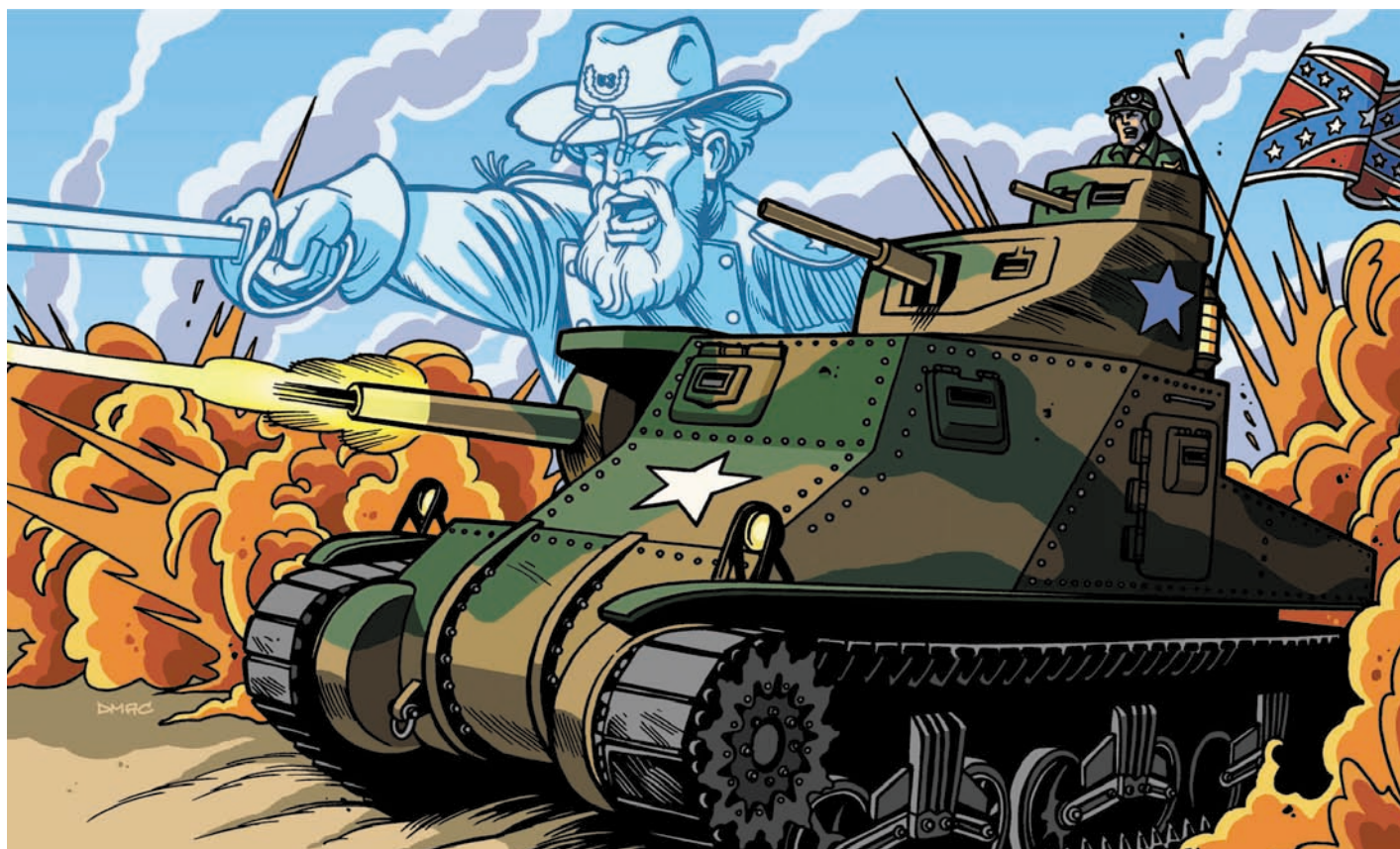
GROUND VEHICLES

Name	Strength	Speed	Defense	Toughness	Size	EP/PP Cost
Motorcycle	15	4	10	7	Medium	7/2
Coupe/Roadster	25	5	9	7	Large	7/2
Sedan/Police Car	30	4	8	9	Huge	6/2
Touring Car/Limo	35	4	8	9	Huge	7/2
Pickup Truck	35	4	8	9	Huge	7/2
Panel Truck/Ambulance	40	4	8	10	Huge	9/2
Bus	45	4	6	11	Gargantuan	8/2
Bank Armored Car	40	4	8	11/3 Imp	Huge	13/3
Jeep*	30	5	8	9	Huge	7/2
Army Truck	35	4	8	10	Huge	8/2
Halftrack*	35	4	8	11/4 Imp	Huge	28/6
Light Tank*	40	3	8	11/5 Imp	Huge	54/11
Medium Tank*	45	3	8	11/6 Imp	Huge	59/12
Heavy Tank*	50	3	8	12/7 Imp	Huge	64/13

*=See individual descriptions for more information

WATER VEHICLES

Name	Strength	Speed	Defense	Toughness	Size	EP/PP Cost
Speed Boat	35	4	8	9	Huge	7/2
Freighter	100	2	6	11	Gargantuan	17/4
Patrol Boat*	40	4	6	11	Gargantuan	52/11
Cutter/Destroyer Escort*	55	3	6	12	Gargantuan	58/12
Submarine*	60	3	2	13	Colossal	43/9
Destroyer*	70	4	2	13/8 Imp	Colossal	83/17
Cruiser*	75	4	–2	15/9 Imp	Awesome	51/11
Battle Cruiser*	85	3	–2	15/9 Imp	Awesome	56/12
Battleship*	90	3	–2	16/10 Imp	Awesome	59/12
Escort Carrier*	80	2	–2	15/7 Imp	Awesome	48/10
Aircraft Carrier*	120	3	–2	18/9 Imp	Awesome	62/13

*=See individual descriptions for more information.

AIR VEHICLES

Name	Strength	Speed	Defense	Toughness	Size	EP/PP Cost
Airship	60	5	–2	15	Awesome	15/3
Autogyro*	30	5	8	9	Huge	12/3
Helicopter*	30	4	8	9	Huge	10/2
Airliner/Cargo Plane	35	5	8	10	Huge	13/3
Military Transport Plane	40	5	6	11	Gargantuan	13/3
Flying Boat*	40	5/4	6	11	Gargantuan	32/7
Prop Fighter*	30	4	6	9	Huge	55/11
Medium Bomber*	40	4	4	11	Gargantuan	41/9
Strategic Bomber*	50	4	2	11	Colossal	67/14
Jet Fighter (WWII)*	40	6	6	11	Gargantuan	60/12
Jet Fighter (Korean War)*	40	7	6	11	Gargantuan	63/13

*=See individual descriptions for more information.

able throughout the Golden Age, but did not become standard features until later in the era.

Military vehicles are even more no-frills. A radio receiver/transmitter and a fire extinguisher are about the only standard features to be found, courtesy of Uncle Sam (or his other-national equivalents).

JEEPS

Jeeps (and similar vehicles used by other countries) were versatile workhorses for the army, whether towing guns or transporting officers or wounded men wherever they needed to go. Some jeeps had a medium machine gun on a pedestal mount in the back, and the cost for these models goes up accordingly (by 18 equipment points).

HALFTRACKS

Halftracks were essentially armored trucks with the rear wheels replaced by tank tracks. Examples include the American M3, British Bedford BT, and the German SdKfz 250. They were designed for moving troops in close proximity to the battlefield, where their armor provided passengers with some degree of protection. A halftrack mounts a light machine gun; 4 points of its Toughness is Impervious.

LIGHT TANKS

Light tanks were used primarily for reconnaissance and scouting missions. An example is the American M5 Stuart or the German Panzer II. A light tank mounts a medium machine gun and a light antitank gun, capable of firing either antitank rounds (as specified under the gun's description) or antipersonnel rounds (as an Alternate Power, with the Explosion extra instead of Penetrating); 5 points of its Toughness is Impervious.

MEDIUM TANKS

Medium tanks are the most common types seen on the battlefield, and consequently carry on most of the fighting. Examples include the American M4 Sherman, the German Panzer III and IV, and the Soviet T-34. A medium tank mounts a medium machine gun and a medium antitank gun, capable of firing either antitank rounds (as specified under the gun's description, above) or antipersonnel rounds (as an Alternate Power, with the Explosion extra instead of Penetrating); 6 points of its Toughness is Impervious.

HEAVY TANKS

Heavy tanks were relatively scarce on the battlefield, a fact for which any who faced them were grateful. An example is the German Panther or Tiger tank. A heavy tank mounts a medium machine gun and a heavy antitank gun, capable of firing either antitank rounds (as specified under the gun's description, above) or antipersonnel rounds (as an Alternate Power, with the Explosion extra instead of Penetrating), and 7 points of its Toughness is Impervious.

WATER VEHICLES

Naval vessels were required to spend months away from port. They had to function as self-sufficient floating cities during these times, providing three squares, laundry, and even the occasional movie for their crews. In addition to the facilities needed to provide these services, they came equipped with radar and sonar systems that gave much-needed warnings of approaching carrier-based planes and submarines (the two deadliest anti-ship weapons of the war).

PATROL BOATS

Patrol boats like the American PT boats, the British MBTs, or the German S-boats were small, short-range patrol craft intended for coastal defense and interdiction of narrow waterways where larger craft could not operate. They were armed with heavy machine guns and torpedoes (Blast 8, Penetrating).

SUBMARINES

Submarines operated primarily as commerce raiders throughout World War II, sinking enemy merchant ships by the score and creating shortages of critical materiel like food and fuel, as Great Britain and Japan experienced. German U-boats preferred to attack at night when they could safely use their deck guns (Blast 6) to sink unarmed freighters, saving their valuable torpedoes (Blast 8, Penetrating) for use against warships. American submariners were better supplied, and used torpedoes pretty much exclusively.

CUTTERS AND DESTROYER ESCORTS

Cutters and destroyer escorts are similarly equipped vessels with different missions. Both are armed with heavy machine guns and naval guns (equivalent to light artillery), but cutters are intended for short-range patrol. As often as not, they are used by organizations like the U.S. Coast Guard for civilian law enforcement and rescue operations. Destroyer escorts, on the other hand, were quickly built vessels designed to provide the vital merchant convoys some defense against enemy submarines. Both cutters and destroyer escorts carried depth charges (Blast 12 Explosion) for such purposes.

DESTROYERS

Destroyers are small warships used primarily for antisubmarine warfare, often providing such services for task forces of larger vessels. They are equipped with depth charges (Blast 12 Explosion) and light naval guns (equivalent to medium artillery).

CRUISERS

Cruisers are intermediate-size warships used to screen smaller vessels away from the larger capital ships, or to perform missions where a destroyer is too little and a battleship too much. They are equipped with medium naval guns (equivalent to heavy artillery).

BATTLE CRUISERS

Battle cruisers or "pocket battleships" were built in the prewar era on the presumption they would outgun smaller vessels and outrun larger ones; in short, providing a battleship on the cheap. As often as not, it turned out that smaller vessels just ran away from them and larger vessels outgunned them too badly to risk a confrontation. A battle cruiser's main guns are equivalent to heavy artillery.

BATTLESHIPS

Battleships were widely believed to be the decisive naval weapon in the prewar era, but very early on proved extremely vulnerable to air and submarine attack. They spent the war being carefully escorted by destroyers underneath a protective umbrella of carrier-based planes. This limited their wartime role to bombarding shores with their massive guns (heavy artillery) in order to soften up the enemy prior to an amphibious landing.

ESCORT CARRIERS

Escort carriers were born of desperation at the height of the U-boat threat to Allied convoys. They were about as basic a design as could be imagined, amounting to little more than a tiny floating airbase. These ships performed their antisubmarine role magnificently, and were key in finally eradicating the German submarine menace. Escort carriers were armed with medium artillery, but their primary weapons were the aircraft they carried aboard (use the statistics for a carrier squadron).

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

Aircraft carriers proved the decisive naval weapon, as their dive-bombers and torpedo planes could sink any other vessel afloat. The war in the Pacific quickly became a battle of carriers, which American industrial might could produce in numbers no other country could match. Carrier air power was also used against land targets, usually to soften up the enemy prior to an amphibious landing. Normally, aircraft carriers were armed with light naval guns (medium artillery) and a mixture of fighters and bombers. During World War II, these types were propeller-driven planes like the F6F Hellcat fighter and the SB2C Helldiver dive-bomber, but by the Korean War jet fighter-bombers like the F9F Panther and F2H Banshee were the norm. A carrier's air group can be simulated in game terms either by three or four carrier squadrons or one carrier group.

AIR VEHICLES

Forget the free bag of peanuts in the Golden Age, frequent flyers. People are still gawking at those weird new flying contraptions, so things are a mite primitive by comparison. In this era, aircraft came equipped with a radio receiver/transmitter, some basic gauges, and a fire extinguisher. Military planes didn't add much more, as only bombers had the room to do so, and even then it's basic stuff like bombsights and toilets (for those long missions). Even radar was scarce, though some fighter aircraft were fitted with sets so they could function as night-fighters.

AUTOGYROS

Autogyros are propeller-powered airplanes with additional overhead rotor blades. Examples like the Pitcairn models have been around since the 1920s. They were the forerunner of the helicopter, but were slower and incapable of hovering. They did require a lot less runway than other fixed-wing aircraft, however.

HELICOPTERS

had only become practical when the German Focke-Wolf Fw 61 made its first flight in 1934. A limited number of Fw 61s were used during the war by German submarines for aerial scouting missions. America's first true helicopter, the Bell 47, was approved for use in 1946, and proved its worth in both civilian and military roles. The latter was most famously seen during the Korean War (and every episode of *M*A*S*H*), quickly evacuating

wounded personnel to field hospitals. Consequently, soldiers in that war enjoyed a much improved survival rate than in any previous conflict.

FLYING BOATS

Flying boats like the American PBY Catalina could land and take off from either solid surfaces or (reasonably calm) waters, and thus were vital during World War II for air/sea rescue missions. In the air, a flying boat could manage speed 5; speed 4 on the water. Flying boats were also armed with heavy machine guns.

PROP FIGHTERS

Prop fighters like the American P-51 Mustang, the British Spitfire, the German Messerschmitt Me-109, and the Japanese Zero were primarily used to escort bombers to their targets, or to try to shoot down said bombers before they got there. As the war progressed, fighters were increasingly called upon for close air support, strafing ground targets that were largely helpless against them. Prop fighters came equipped with heavy machine guns and often carried a light bomb or rocket load (Blast 8 Explosion) for ground-attack missions.

MEDIUM BOMBERS

Medium bombers like the American B-25 Mitchell and the German Junkers Ju-88 were used against enemy troop concentrations, as their comparatively small bomb loads made them unsuited for a strategic attack role (though the Germans tried unsuccessfully to use them for just that during the Battle of Britain). Their payloads are equal to a Blast 10 Explosion attack; they also carry heavy machine guns to ward off enemy fighters.

STRATEGIC BOMBERS

Strategic bombers like the American B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator bristled with heavy machine guns and carried huge bomb loads (Blast 12 Explosion attack) that devastated Germany and Japan, despite the fact their bombs couldn't be dropped with any degree of accuracy. Later models like the B-29 Superfortress were more advanced, having pressurized cabins that allowed them to fly at altitudes Japanese interceptors simply could not reach. So advanced was the B-29 that its service continued through the Korean War.

JET FIGHTERS

Jet fighters entered combat for the very first time during World War II in the form of the German Messerschmitt Me 262. Its speed and maneuverability made it an instant threat to the Allies' propeller-driven air forces. Later models, such as the American P-80 Shooting Star and F-86 Sabre, clashed with Soviet-made MiG-15s over "MiG Alley" in Korea, alternately trying to strafe enemy ground targets or prevent the same from happening on their side. Jet fighters came equipped with heavy machine guns and often carried a light bomb or rocket load (Blast 8 Explosion) for ground-attack missions.

HERO ARCHETYPES

The following archetypes encompass the more commonly seen superheroes in the pages of Golden Age comic books. Some are keyed very much to the era, but many are versions of modern hero-types modified to suit the era's storytelling conventions, such as the greater disparity in power levels.

In addition to the ones listed here, the Energy Controller, Powerhouse, Speedster, and Weapon-Master archetypes in *Mutants & Masterminds*

are good fits for this era, though they may need to be similarly altered to suit the time period, depending on the campaign.

Readers with access to the *Archetype Archive* electronic products (available online from Green Ronin) can also find suitable Golden Age archetypes in their pages, notably the Agent, Amphibian, Android, Archer, Dark Avenger, Elastic Hero, Jungle Lord, Mystic Warrior, Ring Bearer, Robot, and Super Soldier archetypes.

MASKED ADVENTURER

POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+3	+4	+3	+3	+2
16	16	18	16	16	16

| TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4	+4	+6	+6

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+8), Bluff 5 (+8), Disable Device 5 (+8), Escape Artist 5 (+8), Gather Information 5 (+8), Intimidate 5 (+8), Investigate 5 (+8), Knowledge (business, current events, streetwise) 5 (+8), Notice 5 (+8), Profession (businessman) 5 (+8), Search 5 (+8), Sense Motive 5 (+8), Stealth 5 (+8), Swim 5 (+8)

Feats: All-out Attack, Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Equipment 3, Improved Block, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Well-Informed

Powers: Device 7 (knockout gas gun) [**Obscure 5** (visual, easy to lose, *Extras:* Linked with Stun), **Stun 5** (easy to lose; *Extras:* Area Burst, Duration Sustained, Linked with Obscure)]

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +9, Damage +5 (knockout gas gun), +3 (unarmed), Defense +6, Knockback –2, Initiative +8

Abilities 38 + Skills 20 (80 ranks) + Feats 11 + Powers 21 + Combat 24 + Saves 6 = 120
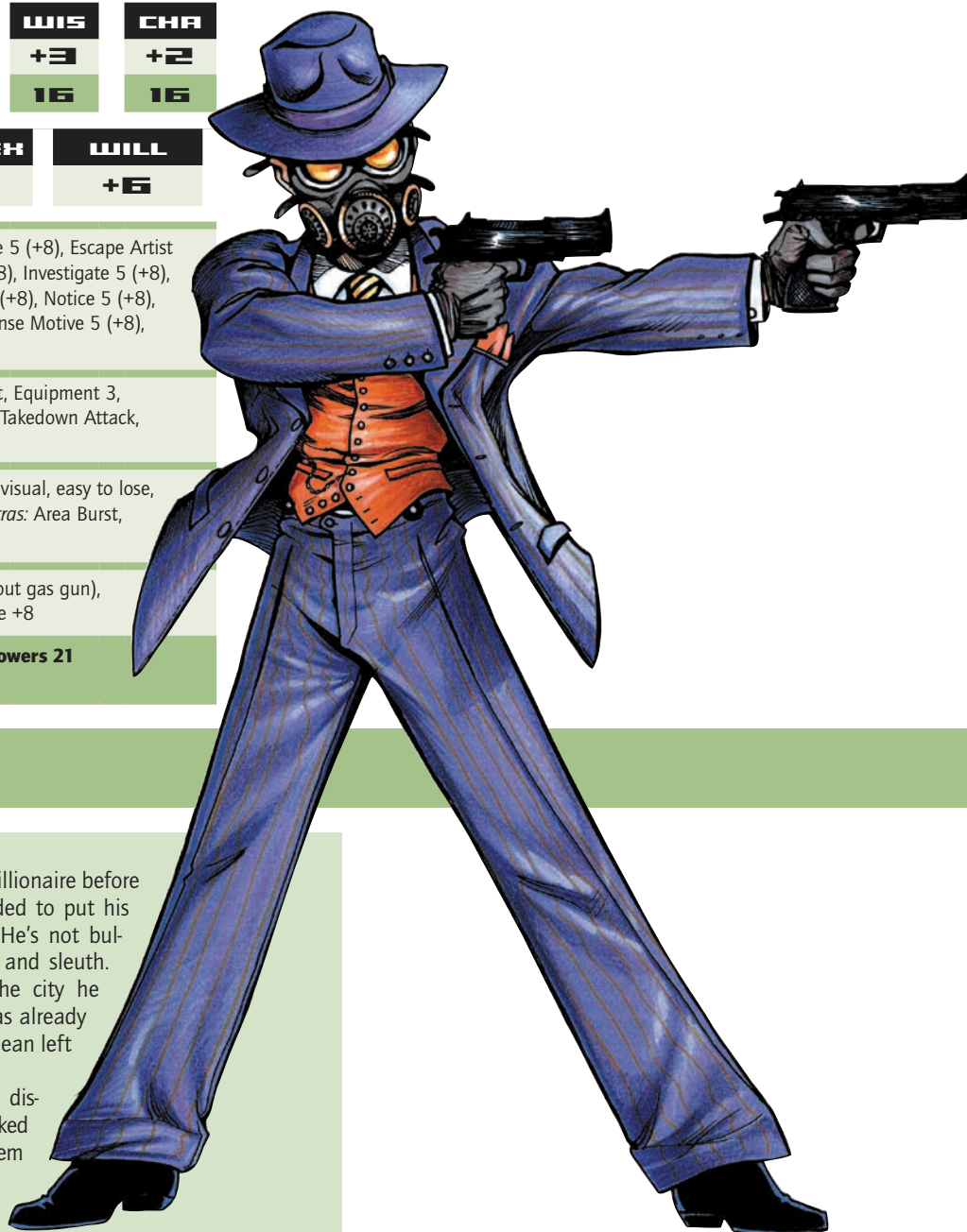
The Masked Adventurer was once a bored millionaire before he grew tired of high-society life and decided to put his wealth and talents to use fighting crime. He's not bulletproof, but he is a skilled amateur boxer and sleuth. There's also very little that happens in the city he doesn't know about, and the underworld has already learned to fear his trademark gas gun and mean left hook.

Customization: Rather than relying on a distinctive weapon like a gas gun, some Masked Adventurers count on their friends to help them out of a jam. Such characters can trade the Device 7 power for the feat Sidekick 7, which can be created using one of the handy archetypal Sidekicks in the **Supporting Cast** section as a starting point. They can also trade in their Intimidate skill for Diplomacy or Handle Animal, to better relate to their new partner.

Other Masked Adventurers are known for their rides, which are tricked out to be bulletproof, fly, swim, or just go really, really fast. These types can trade in the Device 7 power for 35 equipment points with which to build their dream car (or tank, or sub, or whatever). Since these gear-heads need to get their hands dirty, they can also trade in the Knowledge (business) and Profession (businessman) skills for Craft (mechanical) and either Drive or Pilot (as appropriate).

"WHEN WILL YOU MOBSTERS LEARN THAT CRIME DOESN'T PAY?"

MYSTIC ADVENTURER

POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+2	+5	+7	+3
12	14	14	20	24	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+2	+4	+5	+8

Skills: Concentration 5 (+12), Craft (artistic) 5 (+10), Gather Information 5 (+8), Intimidate 5 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 7 (+12), Notice 5 (+12), Search 5 (+10), Sense Motive 5 (+12), Sleight of Hand 5 (+7), Stealth 5 (+7), Survival 4 (+11), Swim 4 (+5)

Feats: Artificer, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Fearsome Presence, Master Plan, Ritualist, Startle, Trance, Uncanny Dodge (sight)

Powers: Device 8 (magical relic, easy to lose)

Magical Relic: **Magic 8** (select nine Alternate Powers as spells), **Super-Senses 6** (Ranged Sense Evil [visual], Ranged Sense Magic [visual])

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +5, Knockback –2, Initiative +2

Abilities 40 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 24 + Combat 20 + Saves 8 = 120

The Mystic Adventurer travels the world and worlds beyond, battling dark mystic forces wherever she encounters them. During her journeys she has acquired knowledge of things Man Was Not Meant to Know, as well as some items of great magical power, which she uses to keep ancient unknowable evils at bay. Her job also includes keeping arcane secrets and powers away from those who would misuse them, or ignorantly unleash great evils, like the Nazis. The Mystic Adventurer is acquainted with the night, and preys on the fears of what lurks in the darkness.

Customization: Some Mystic Adventurers don't rely on a Device, having innate powers of their own, most commonly lower ranks of Magic. Substitute **Magic 8** and eight Alternate Powers for the archetype's Device, making Super-Senses into a spell rather than an independent power.

A Mystic Adventurer who operates primarily as a debunker of the strange and occult might have **Nullify Magic** in place of the archetype's normal powers. Either the Mystic Debunker is aware of the existence of the supernatural and carefully covers it up or truly does not believe, so strongly that mystic forces fail to work!

"YOU ARE TAMPERING WITH FORCES YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND!"

OMNIPOTENT MYSTIC

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+5	+6	+8	+7
14	14	20	22	26	24

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+11	+6	+6	+16

*without suit

Skills: Concentration 5 (+13), Craft (artistic) 4 (+10), Intimidate 5 (+12), Knowledge (arcane lore) 6 (+12), Notice 5 (+13), Profession (choose one) 5 (+13), Search 5 (+11), Sense Motive 5 (+13)

Feats: Artificer, Attack Focus (ranged) 3, Attack Specialization (Magic), Fearless, Fearsome Presence, Quick Change 2, Ritualist, Startle, Trance

Powers: Device 12 (magical raiment, hard to lose), **Super-Senses 2** (ranged visual detect magic)

Magical Raiment: **Magic 12** (choose 15 Alternate Powers as spells), **Protection 6** (Impervious), **Immunity 9** (life support),

Combat: Attack +7 (melee), +10 (ranged), +12 (Magic), Grapple +9, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +10, Knockback –3, Initiative +2

Abilities 60 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 12 + Powers 50 + Combat 34 + Saves 14 = 180

The Omnipotent Mystic has delved deeper into the arcane than anyone—perhaps more than mortal beings should. He possesses more power than even most superhumans, but at the cost of his humanity. Perhaps it was the ordeal he underwent to gain such power, involving his death and resurrection or a bargain with an ancient sorcerer, or maybe it's simply the amount of time he spent involved in things not of this world. Whatever the cause, he is often cold, aloof, and unconcerned with earthly matters. Still, the Omnipotent Mystic is a powerful force for good, and his very appearance usually indicates a crisis of the highest order.

Customization: Like the Mystic Adventurer, some Omnipotent Mystics do not rely on a Device for their power, having their own abilities: exchange the 48 power points in Device for powers like Flight, Magic, Protection (or Force Field) and so forth. Such a character is slight less "omnipotent" but still powerful by Golden Age standards.

On the other hand, some Omnipotent Mystics depend even more on their magical Device, being quite a bit less omnipotent without it. You can acquire some portion of the archetype's increased ability scores as Enhanced Abilities granted by the Device, applying any points freed up by this to other powers.

"NOW SUFFER THE PUNISHMENT YOUR CRIMES DESERVE!"

PATRIOTIC HERO

POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+5	+5	+5	+1	+2	+5
20	20	20	12	14	20

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+5	+5	+5	+2

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+11), Climb 6 (+11), Diplomacy 6 (+11), Drive 6 (+11), Escape Artist 6 (+11), Intimidate 6 (+11), Knowledge (history, tactics) 6 (+7), Notice 6 (+8), Stealth 6 (+11), Survival 6 (+8), Swim 6 (+11)

Feats: Assessment, Attractive, Connected, Defensive Attack, Diehard, Endurance, Favored Opponent (fascists/communists), Fearless, Improved Block, Improved Critical (strike), Improved Disarm, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Interpose, Inspire, Leadership, Luck, Power Attack, Seize Initiative, Startle, Teamwork, Ultimate Effort

Powers: Device 3 (patriotic weapon): [**Deflect 4** (all ranged attacks; easy to lose), **Strike 3** (easy to lose; *Power Feats:* Accurate, Mighty, Ricochet, Thrown)]

Combat: Attack +6, +8 (strike), Grapple +11, Damage +8 (strike), +6 (thrown strike), +5 (unarmed), Defense +6, Knockback –2, Initiative +5

Abilities 46 + Skills 18 (72 ranks) + Feats 23 + Powers 9 + Combat 24 = 120

With the democratic world surrounded by Nazism, Fascism, Militarism, and Communism, someone has to take a stand for freedom, just like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Nathan Hale did. That person is the Patriotic Hero. Empowered by his unshakable faith in America and the principles it embodies (and perhaps a top-secret government experiment as well), the Patriotic Hero is the perfect soldier in the fight for freedom. He is well-versed in all scales of fighting, and carries a weapon in the shape of a treasured American symbol to inspire his allies and strike fear in his enemies. Whenever tyranny is on the march, the Patriotic Hero is there to lead the good fight against it.

Customization: Naturally, the United States hadn't cornered the market on patriotism during World War II. The Patriotic Hero could just as easily represent any Allied nation in the fight against fascism, with the appropriate adjustments to the character's background and motif.

Some Patriotic Heroes weren't front-line fighters, but partisans or spies operating behind the scenes. You can replace the archetype's Device with a suitable power like Concealment or Morph for a sneaky Patriotic Hero who slips into Axis strongholds undetected to escape with their top-secret plans, or simply to leave a package of explosives behind.

"FOR AMERICA AND DEMOCRACY!"

RETRO GADGETEER

POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+2	+7	+4	+1
12	14	14	24	18	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+2	+3	+5	+4

Skills: Concentration 7 (+11), Craft (chemical, electronic, mechanical) 7 (+14), Disable Device 7 (+14), Investigate 7 (+14), Knowledge (popular culture, physical sciences, technology) 7 (+14), Notice 7 (+11), Pilot 7 (+9), Search 7 (+14)

Feats: Eidetic Memory, Equipment 3 (autogyro), Improvised Tools, Inventor, Master Plan, Skill Mastery (Craft skills and Disable Device)

Powers: Device 4 (ray gun, easy to lose), **Device 2** (portable radio set, easy to lose), **Device 2** (rocket pack, hard to lose), **Device 2** (smoke bombs, easy to lose)

Ray Gun: **Blast 8** (Penetrating 4, Accurate)
Portable Radio: **Communication 5** (radio, Area)
Rocket Pack: **Flight 5**
Smoke Bombs: **Obscure 5** (visual)

Combat: Attack +5, +7 (ray gun), Grapple +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), +8 (ray gun), Defense +5, Knockback –1, Initiative +2

Abilities 34 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 8 + Powers 32 + Combat 20 + Saves 5 = 120

Comic books have always mirrored Americans' love of gadgets. In the 1930s and '40s, readers were witness to several characters espousing and embodying the virtues of technologies that today seem (depending on one's point of view) silly, quaint, or seriously cool. If you're of the third viewpoint, the Retro Gadgeteer is for you. Forget cell phones and the Internet, the future is in radio, folks! And what better way to show the better world technology will create in the 1960s than by using its wonders to fight crime in the Golden Age? For justice and science, the Retro Gadgeteer labors on.

Customization: The Gadgeteer's Devices can be changed around to suit particular concepts or Gadgeteers interested in certain fields of technology. For example, a chemical expert might have a gun that fires special tranquilizer bullets and sleep gas grenades rather than a raygun and smoke bombs. The section on **Golden Age Devices** on page 46 may provide some inspiration.

Some Golden Age Gadgeteers drop the rocket pack Device in favor of two ranks in Equipment to acquire a suitable vehicle like an autogyro or souped-up car.

While the Retro Gadgeteer can use the Inventor feat and power stunts to come up with new gadgets as needed, for a truly flexible inventor, or someone with an "omni-gadget," substitute ranks in the Gadgets power from *Mastermind's Manual* for the archetype's Devices.

"QUICK! TO THE AUTOGYRO! WE'RE GOING TO SAVE THAT ZEPPELIN USING THE MIRACLE OF RADIO!"

SUPERHUMAN HERO

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+11	+7	+5	+3	+4	+5
32(10)	24(10)	20(10)	16	18	20

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+11	+5	+7	+4

Skills: Diplomacy 12 (+17), Gather Information 12 (+17), Intimidate 12 (+17), Knowledge (current events, streetwise) 12 (+15), Notice 12 (+16), Profession (select one) 12 (+16), Search 12 (+15)

Feats: Connected, Contacts, Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Improved Initiative 2, Inspire, Interpose, Quick Change, Ultimate Effort (Strength checks), Well-Informed

Powers: Enhanced Constitution 10, **Enhanced Dexterity 14**, **Enhanced Strength 22** , **Flight 7**, **Immunity 5** (aging, critical hits, disease, poison), **Protection 6** (Impervious), **Quickness 2**, **Super-Senses 12** (Extended Hearing 2, Extended Sight 2, Microscopic Vision 3, Ultra-Hearing, X-Ray Vision, blocked by lead)

Combat: Attack +9, Grapple +20, Damage +11 (unarmed), Defense +9, Knockback –8, Initiative +15

Drawbacks: Power Loss (rare element, major, –3 points), Weakness (rare element, major –3 points)

Abilities 24 + Skills 24 (96 ranks) + Feats 11 + Powers 91 + Combat 36 – Drawbacks 6 = 180

"THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR..."

The Superhuman Hero comes to us from another place, perhaps another time, but like so many immigrants to America, she has to come to embody the best of her adopted homeland. Part of this is her sense of responsibility to mankind, which led her to don a costume and use her awesome otherworldly (or magical) powers for the common good. When not in costume, the Superhuman Hero works at a job that keeps her abreast of all the latest happenings, be it in the media or government, so she can respond quickly to emerging crises. In fact, the only thing that stops the Superhuman Hero is the one rare element that robs her of her powers and leaves her helpless and dying.

Customization: The Superhuman Hero's background may dictate various modifications, particularly to the archetype's powers, although many of these may come solely in the form of different descriptors (mystic or divinely-granted powers versus alien physiology, for example).

A Superhuman Hero from an advanced or powerful race may have naturally high ability scores rather than Enhanced Abilities. Some Superhuman Heroes have different powers, such as Leaping in place of Flight, fewer (or no) Super-Senses, but ranks of Super-Strength, or one or more Devices in place of existing powers.

TWO FISTED ADVENTURER

POWER LEVEL 6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+3	+1	+2	+2
14	16	16	12	14	14

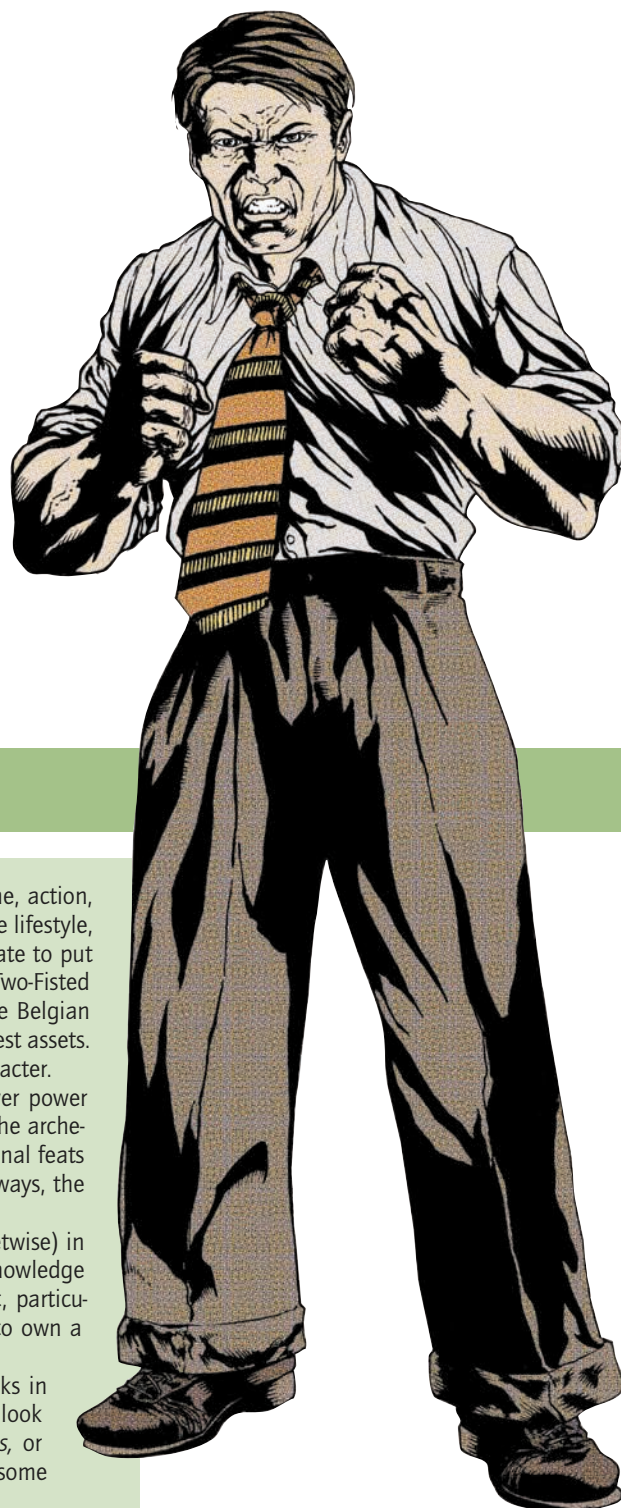| TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3	+5	+5	+6

Skills: Bluff 4 (+6), Climb 4 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Drive 4 (+7), Escape Artist 4 (+7), Gather Information 4 (+6), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+6), Pilot 4 (+7), Ride 4 (+7), Search 4 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+7), Survival 4 (+6), Swim 4 (+6)

Feats: All-out Attack, Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Equipment 5, Improved Block, Luck, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Well-Informed

Equipment: cargo plane with hidden compartments feature, heavy pistol, choose 2 EPs of additional gear

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +7, Damage +4 (heavy pistol), +2 (unarmed), Defense +5, Knockback –2, Initiative +3

Abilities 26 + Skills 20 (80 ranks) + Feats 15 + Combat 20 + Saves 9 = 90

The Two-Fisted Adventurer circles the globe in search of fame, fortune, action, and dames, though not necessarily in that order. Despite his expatriate lifestyle, the Two-Fisted Adventurer is still on the side of right and won't hesitate to put up his dukes to help out a needy underdog. Because of this, the Two-Fisted Adventurer has friends in every corner of the globe, from Tibet to the Belgian Congo to Antarctica, and—next to his wits and mitts—they're his greatest assets. In short, if adventure has a name, it's the one you bestow on this character.

Customization: The Two-Fisted Adventurer is best suited for a lower power level series. For a higher power level game, in addition to improving the archetype's combat scores, consider investing some power points in additional feats or in Devices like those of the Masked Adventurer (who is, in many ways, the Two Fisted Adventurer's higher power level cousin).

Some Adventurers drop skills like Intimidate and Knowledge (streetwise) in favor of other Knowledge or Profession skills, particularly scientific knowledge for heroic scientists and scholars. Others may have more equipment, particularly in a group of adventurers; after all, only one guy really needs to own a plane, right?

A real Two Fisted Joe Palooka type might reduce or eliminate ranks in certain skills in order to pick up some more fighting feats. Take a look at the boxing fighting style on page 65 of *Mutants & Masterminds,* or the expanded martial arts guidelines in the *Mastermind's Manual* for some ideas.

"DROP THE IDOL, NAZI, OR I'LL GIVE YOU A TASTE OF THE WHIP!"

WAR HERO

POWER LEVEL 6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+3	+1	+3	+3
14	16	16	12	16	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3	+5	+6	+5

Skills: Bluff 7 (+10), Climb 7 (+9), Drive 7 (+10), Intimidate 7 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 7 (+8), Notice 7 (+10), Profession (soldier) 7 (+10), Stealth 7 (+10)

Feats: Benefit: Military Rank (captain) 4, Combat Driver, Equipment 5, Improved Aim, Inspire, Leadership, Luck, Master Plan, Sneak Attack, Ultimate Effort

Equipment: binoculars, camo clothing, flashlight, hand grenades, submachine gun

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +7, Damage +4 (submachine gun), +5 (hand grenade), +2 (unarmed), Defense +5, Knockback –2, Initiative +3

Abilities 30 + Skills 14 (70 ranks) + Feats 17 + Combat 20 + Saves 9 = 90

The men who fought for freedom in World War II and in Korea were heroes, but there were among them an uncommon breed of warriors with superior courage and skills that drew the admiration of their fellows. A heroes' hero is truly a remarkable individual, and the War Hero archetype represents just such a man. Loyal to his multiethnic squadron (or commando unit, PT boat crew, or infantry company) and dedicated to winning the war before another good man dies, the War Hero is ready to risk life and limb to see things through to final victory. The War Hero and his men always draw the toughest assignments, but thankfully their skills are usually up to the task, even if it means not everyone comes back from a mission. But after all, there is a war on....

Customization: The War Hero is primarily a ground-pounder, but if a player would rather him be a fly-boy, simply trade the Drive skill for Pilot skill, swap Combat Driver for Combat Pilot, and lose five feats so you can bump Equipment up to 10 for a prop fighter plane.

With a quick change of uniform, the War Hero can serve as an Elite Enemy Soldier, of the sort that return every few issues to bedevil the title character. Such continuing villains can be roleplayed as near-mindless fanatics to their extremist ideology, or honorable soldiers fighting to defend their home countries.

"LET'S GO, CHARLIE COMPANY! IF WE CAN'T TAKE THAT HILL, THOSE KRAUTS ARE GONNA CARVE US UP LIKE A CHRISTMAS GOOSE!"

CHAPTER 4: GAMEMASTERING THE GOLDEN AGE

This chapter provides resources for busy Gamemasters, and describes how the classic and postmodern approaches incorporate the real-world events of Golden Age differently, as well as the common storytelling conventions of each. In an ongoing *Mutants & Masterminds* campaign, classic Golden Age style adventures, more postmodern fare, or some combination of the two are all possible. After reading this chapter, the Gamemaster and players can best decide which approach most closely matches the type of situations they wish to roleplay.

CLASSIC GOLDEN AGE ADVENTURES

The comic books published between 1938 and 1955 differ from the modern variety for a couple of important reasons. First is the simple fact that Golden Age books are the product of another time, catering to tastes and standards often markedly different than those of contemporary books.

Secondly, while some Golden Age and some modern books break established conventions, they do so for different reasons. Today, comic book creators do so in calculated attempts to be nontraditional or thwart the readers' expectations for dramatic effect. Golden Age comic books, on the other hand, take unconventional turns because in those days the rules hadn't been written yet, and creators were free to follow their muses wherever they might lead.

If the Gamemaster and players want to roleplay adventures straight out of the pages of 1940s comic books, this section outlines the trappings that go into creating authentic Golden Age stories. It uses modern comic books as a comparative baseline, so readers wholly unfamiliar with present-day super hero tales are advised to check out Chapter 10 of *Mutants & Masterminds* to learn about the state of the art before proceeding any further.

"HEROES"

Despite the wacky assertions of Dr. Wertham, superhero comic books of the Golden Age were never about instructing kids in anti-social behaviors. Granted, they weren't always about teaching *good* behavior either, but concern from parental, education, and religious groups soon changed this. By 1940, comic books had to be more than entertaining—they had to impart some positive moral lessons to their young readers.

POLISHING UP THE GOLDEN AGE

Since comic-book stories were already pretty much "Good always triumphs over Evil," getting them to a point where they'd please the pressure groups was largely a matter of making the distinction between Right and Wrong crystal clear. To that end, costumed characters stopped using lethal force, even against the vilest foes (though villains still could die because of their own heinous acts). Characters that had been vigilantes before, hunted and misunderstood by the police, suddenly became duly deputized agents of the law.

Dropping their former unsavory habits wasn't enough, however. Costumed characters also had to be good role models. Before long, even strange visitors from other planets and times were expounding on the virtues of democracy just like good patriotic Americans. Similarly, costumed heroes of all types were lecturing youngsters (both in the stories and the audience) on the dangers of juvenile delinquency, as well as respect for the disabled and tolerance for other religions and nationalities (and occasionally, races).

In this time period, there were no anti-heroes or sympathetic villains. Heroes were heroes, no matter what, and the villains were all either bad guys, or worse guys. Only supporting characters could switch sides, either because they were blackmailed or innocently duped by the villain into being bad, or they were a former ally of the villain who repented his evil ways at the last minute. Even in the latter case, the morality of Golden Age comics was so black and white that the character invariably died in the process, for only death could absolve him of his past misdeeds.

"HEROES" IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

This same absolutist world-view is essential in recreating true Golden Age stories. America, democracy, law enforcement, the military, and the government (both Federal and local) can do no wrong, and neither can the heroes. By deliberate contrast, foreign dictatorships, lawbreakers, the Nazis, the Fascists, the Japanese, and (later) communists represented every negative trait and characteristic imaginable. While it's important to keep in mind the actual history of the era, its many complexities should not be allowed to get in the way of true Good, pure Evil, and their chosen costumed representatives.

CHANGES

It's said there are comic-book readers around today who judge a story by how closely it adheres to the characters' past continuity. Not that any of *you* resemble that remark, gentle reader. Fans of such persuasion are well-advised to steer clear of Golden Age comic books entirely, because of the many genre conventions developed during that time, tight continuity wasn't one of them. Depending on the comic-book fan, that's either charming or maddening. In either case, it's doubtlessly a distinctive part of the era.

TURN AND FACE THE STRANGER

To be sure, comic-book characters have always been subject to changes, great and small. What made the Golden Age different was the total lack of explanation for such alterations, no matter how sweeping they might be. The character who used to wear a business suit and fight crime with the help of his sultry girlfriend can show up in the very next issue wearing purple and gold tights and aided by a kid sidekick without so much as a "by your leave." A character that used to leap tall buildings in a single bound can suddenly fly over them like a bird or a plane without a word to the readers as to how or why.

In addition, there were plenty of the sort of continuity errors that keep hardcore comic-book fans awake at night and on the 'net. In one character's adventures, the inhabitants of Venus might be peaceful, benevolent, and elfin in one issue, then show up as nasty, hostile insect-

like invaders a few months later. Another story might revolve around a scientist who's perfected a time machine, only to be followed a few issues later by *another* scientist with *another* time machine, with no explanation as to what happened to the first such machine, or why the lead character is surprised such a thing could exist.

All that said, some references to past continuity did appear in later Golden Age comic books, concurrent with the development of the super-powered villain. After a particular comic-book bad guy proved popular, his subsequent appearances usually made reference to his past misdeeds (and, more often than not, his miraculous return from seeming death).

THE STREAM OF WARM IMPERMANENCE

The reasons for this discontinuity were many and quite understandable. During the Golden Age, there were no back-issue dealers or comic-book conventions, so there weren't any obvious caches of past superhero lore for readers to pore over. In fact, wartime paper drives were the order of the day, and during them comic books (already considered the most disposable form of literature) were sacrificed in great heaps in order to defeat world fascism. This gave rise to the now universal tradition of moms throwing out everyone's comic-book collections, and with them went the physical evidence (if you will) that might remind readers of any past discontinuity.

Moreover, discontinuity wasn't a problem back then, because people just didn't care. Comic-book readers—overwhelmingly children—savored each issue on its own merits, as radical a notion as that might be. If they took notice of any disconnects with older stories, Golden Age readers never let them get in the way of the simple fact that comics are supposed to be fun to read.

Golden Age creators fully understood this, as well as the nature of their audience. Given they were already burdened trying to meet tight deadlines, please pressure groups, and make ends meet on unspectacular pay, comic-book pioneers focused on making entertaining books rather than building a canon.

CHANGES IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

Gamemasters striving for the authentic Golden Age experience can let this same commitment to fun above all animate their *Mutants & Masterminds* games. Rather than focus on long, drawn-out scenarios and complicated, angst-ridden back stories, each session can stand alone on its own terms. There may be thrilling villain bashes, outlandish mysteries, or some combination thereof, but in any case, Gamemasters can just let their imaginations run free, unfettered by modern comic-book storytelling conventions.

This style of play isn't for everyone, but for today's busy Gamemaster whose playing and planning time is limited, it can be just the ticket. Likewise, it can be just as much fun for players. Anyone who gets bored with their character can just go ahead and change them between adventures; no explanations needed. There's also no need to worry when real life intrudes and a player has to miss a session, since each week the adventure begins anew.

POWER OUTAGES

It seems to go without saying, but a big part of being a superhero is being all super and doing super stuff with superpowers. However, during the nascent days of comic books, most costumed characters wouldn't think of using their powers far above those of mortal men when a simple sock to the jaw would suffice.

The reason for this was twofold. First, remember that comic books drew heavily on the pulp magazines of the period, where two-fisted manly men were the name of the game. While the early comic-book creators grew accustomed to dreaming up fantastic characters with out-

landish powers, they often went with what they knew when it came to plotting out stories, and that meant fistfights—a lot of them.

PUT 'EM UP!

Partly, the plethora of fisticuffs was a dramatic conceit. Most Golden Age stories involved gangsters, thugs, goons, and assorted other criminals of the sort a superhumanly powered individual should be able to put down in a page or so. Not only does that not make for good reading, though, but one-page stories also don't pay their creators terribly well.

A good old-fashioned pier-sixer, on the other hand, evens the odds between the mooks and the demigods. It creates the rudimentary tension necessary for any story to work, and can put the costumed hero in the jeopardy required to generate some suspense and interest for the reader. Let's face it: dramatically speaking, fistfights just *work*. They don't require pages of set up and explanation for the readers to understand what's going on. Likewise, bare-knuckle brawls allow writers and artists facing tight deadlines to wrap up stories without undue expenditures of time and imagination.

The other reason for the prevalence of Golden Age slugfests is more fundamental. In that era, colorful costumes alone made the characters; superhuman abilities were an option, not a necessity. Many costumed characters had no fantastic powers to use, and a good left hook was all they really had going for them other than their rainbow-colored long johns.

MYSTERIOUS POWERS AT WORK

As a final note on Golden Age superpowers, keep in mind the era long predates the modern trend of trying to explain in detail how a character's outlandish powers are supposed to work. Comic-book readers of the day simply didn't demand that much attention to detail, and probably wouldn't have liked it had they gotten it. By the same token, comic-book creators didn't rely on the more arcane points of a character's powers to resolve stories.

Costumed characters simply had whatever unlikely abilities they needed to make them interesting and stand out in the crowded marketplace. As to how the character might've come by his amazing powers, the explanations were often tenuous at best, when they were provided at all.

SECRET ORIGINS

Most commonly, costumed characters were masters of a particular skill, and got to the superhero equivalent of Carnegie Hall through "practice, practice, practice." Such characters were of ultra-keen mind, super-sharp wit, the master of an archaic weapon, or the like. At any rate, costumed-but-not-superpowered heroes were close enough to the real world that any needed explanations were easy and fairly self-evident.

Beyond that, there was any number of vague justifications for people being superpowered, and nothing seemed out of bounds. The cutting-edge technology of the day often figured in (however tenuously): wonder drugs, atomic power, radio waves, exotic chemicals like heavy water, and the like. At the outbreak of World War II, heartfelt patriotism was cause enough alone, and a little pep talk from a nearby national monument was all it took to make a woman super.

SCIENCE & MAGIC

The burgeoning science-fiction genre also figured prominently in many character's origins, which was hardly surprising given how many comic-book creators were also literary sci-fi authors and editors. Thanks to their influence, Golden Age comic books featured their share of strange visitors from other planets, time travelers from utopian futures (or pasts), and even hyper-evolved mutants.

Truly extraordinarily superpowered characters were said to be supernatural or magical in nature. Any costumed hero who was tossing planets around like medicine balls was almost certainly explained away as a ghost or a sorcerer, and in such stories almost anything was possible in terms of what they could do or what opposition they might encounter.

As a last resort, a superpowered character might debut *in media res* with his amazing abilities already established without explanation. It was rather a gamble, as the character had to be so gee-whiz cool the awed readers would never stop to think how it all came to be. Those who weren't landed in quick obscurity, but many of the ones able to pull it off are still being published today.

OLD CHUM

Most every Golden Age costumed hero of note had a constant companion of some sort. They were not just part of the background supporting casts like in modern comic books, but a full-fledged sidekick sharing all the danger and excitement right alongside the feature's title character.

Depending on the sidekick in question, they may or may not have been aware of the main character's secret identity. Along similar lines, they may have been a willing, active participant in the hero's exploits, or a constant bystander who time and again gets inadvertently involved in each issue's particular dangers.

THE ROLE OF SIDEKICKS

Comic-book creators of the day used sidekicks as sounding boards for the main character. The internal monologue had yet to come into vogue in comics, and that meant the costumed hero needed someone to explain his actions to for the sake of the audience. So sidekicks were around in large part because of the audience identification factor (which accounts for why so many of them were kids, just like most of the readers).

Sidekicks were also a handy plot shortcut. When all else failed, a writer could just have the bad guys capture the hero's pal, and *voila*—instant dramatic twist! As plot points went, coming up with new ways of menacing the mundane companion required a lot less brain-sweat than figuring out how to put the superpowered lead character in jeopardy, especially back when run-of-the-mill mobsters were largely it in terms of villains.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Of the many types of constant companions seen during the Golden Age, a young boy as a crime-fighting sidekick was the most popular option. The aforementioned young-reader interest factor was too great for comic-book publishers to ignore, and it was a choice validated by sales. It wasn't until Dr. Wertham forever implanted his unsavory conclusions about bachelor men hanging out with adolescent boys in tights into the public consciousness that the enthusiasm for kid sidekicks began to wane. Thus, they remain an enduring symbol of Golden Age comics.

SIDEKICKS IN SKIRTS

For heroes who wanted to steer well clear of Dr. Wertham's imaginative accusations, teaming up with a gorgeous gal was a good choice. More than a few comic-book duos emulated Nick and Nora Charles from the popular series of *The Thin Man* movies, sharing a little romance and a lot of adventure. It was important, of course, that it only be *a little* romance—no point in ruining a perfectly good comic with a lot of mushy stuff.

Female sidekicks of the Golden Age had much in common with each other. They were all usually gorgeous, independent, and capable, but not so capable they didn't need to be rescued at least once every issue. Likewise, they were also smart, but not so smart as to connect the lead character to his secret identity. In any case, it didn't ever prevent lady sidekicks from getting involved in the hero's exploits—their overriding curiosity and amazing coincidence were all it took to get them into the thick of things.

GOOD BOY!

Of course, not every hero had a way with the ladies. As every single guy eventually learns, though, they can still get a dog. Or a parrot. Or an owl. Or a robot dog. As you can see, the options were limitless during the Golden Age.

Whatever the genus and species, heroic pets of the Golden Age were smarter than the average bear (dog, bird, what have you), and prone to showing up at the most opportune times, like when their costumed masters were in dire need of rescue. Since the bad guys never seemed to take pet sidekicks all that seriously, they were always left free to be "Spot on the spot" in times of trouble.

Gamemasters interested in duplicating this effect in their own Golden Age games can either allow characters with the Summon power, for "conjuring up" their faithful sidekick at the most opportune time, or simply let heroes with the Sidekick feat spend a hero point to bring their sidekick into play at the most opportune time, much like an "on-hand" piece of equipment or a use of inspiration, other well-established uses of hero points.

THE FUNNIES

Finally, there was the least palatable type of sidekick (at least to modern tastes), the comic relief. They are the ultimate "you had to be there" aspect of Golden Age comic books, and frankly, if you weren't there, they can provide as much relief as eating a whole pile of rusty razor blades.

Even if you were there, there are a lot of obvious things to hate about comic-relief sidekicks. They're often insultingly derivative knock-offs of classic comedians (like the Three Stooges), copying everything but the "actually being funny" part. Their appearances tend to grind the plot to a screeching halt, as the thrilling adventure goes on hold until the alleged comic relief is finished saying something really obvious, really dumb, or both. Or perhaps the action has to wait until the comic relief is finished falling down. Oh man, how comic-relief sidekicks *loved* to fall down...

COMIC RELIEF IN GOLDEN AGE CAMPAIGNS

What it ultimately boils down to is that, to contemporary comic fans, Golden Age comic relief characters just aren't funny. On the contrary, they're painfully *unfunny*, and not even in the "so not funny it's funny" way.

This is not much of a surprise, really. Golden Age comic books were aimed at kids, so comic relief characters were meant to be amusing to them. Therefore, comic-relief sidekicks spout out little-kid jokes, engage in base slapstick gags, and are intended to be hilarious just because they're really tall, fat, skinny, or have a cheesy stereotypical foreign accent.

None of this obviates the fact that comic relief sidekicks were everywhere during the Golden Age, and any gamer seeking the true 1940s comic-book experience may want to consider having at least one doofus with an exaggerated physical characteristic around.

If the entire gaming group is ready to let the would-be funny-man in its midst, he functions much like any other sidekick type. He too winds up a frequent hostage, plot advancer, and last-minute rescuer of the title character, but with the difference being the comic-relief sidekick does so out of his own (supposedly hilarious) abject clumsiness and stupidity.

COMIC RELIEF AND STEREOTYPES

A final cautionary note about incorporating authentic Golden Age sidekicks in campaigns: steer clear of the era's casual racism. Depicting Asians as buck-toothed monkeys and blacks as Stepin Fetchit clones was considered funny back in the day. It isn't, so don't go there, even in the name of historical accuracy. Just don't.

ENCOURAGING AUTHENTIC GOLDEN AGE CONVENTIONS

So how does the Gamemaster make sure that his *Golden Age* games have some actual Golden Age feel to them? The same way he gets his players to jump through hoops just like trained seals: offer them precious hero points in exchange for acting like mid-century funny-book characters.

Before making the players sit up and beg for their treats, it's important to clearly define what Golden Age tropes are being encouraged. As noted earlier in this chapter, they each have their quirks, and not all are suitable for all types of roleplayers. Use with caution.

Depending on what the group has mutually agreed to encourage, the Gamemaster can award hero points for in-character patriotic speeches, using punches instead of powers to take down bad guys, or rescuing your bumbling sidekick from the bad guys (and his own stupidity) with good humor. As always, the Gamemaster is the final arbiter as to what deserves a reward and what is merely greedy hero-point grubbing.

THE POSTMODERN GOLDEN AGE

The Golden Age of comic books, as with any "golden age," eventually reached its end. Yet even as it came to a close, time drew both readers and creators ever nearer to its eventual rediscovery. When costumed super-heroes reappeared at the dawn of the Silver Age, so did most Golden Age storytelling conventions, with many of the era's most popular characters following suit, albeit often as shiny new Silver Age revamps. Science fiction was all the rage in comic books' second great era, and the Golden Age greats re-emerged covered in sci-fi trappings: aliens, weird science, mutants, and just generally more space-y all around.

The process of revisiting and revising comic books' first great era repeated itself throughout the ages that followed, as creators viewed the primal majesty (and magnitudes-greater sales) of the Golden Age with envious eyes. Today's comic books are no exception, as Modern Age writers and artists interpret the kid-centered comic books of the '40s for the adult audience of the 21st century.

These efforts have yielded some of the very best stories and titles of the Modern Age, and have shaped our contemporary understanding of what constitutes a "Golden Age book" as much as the titles that were actually published back in the 1940s. It's useful to take a look at the various ways these "Postmodern Golden Age" tales differ from the Real McCoy.

DECONSTRUCTING THE HERO MYTH

Since the early 1960s, it's been *de rigueur* to depict costumed heroes as having the same real-world problems as we non-superpowered folk. This trend has produced many fine, popular stories over the years, and their success led to the inevitable envelope-pushing, which reached its zenith in the mid-to-late 1980s. Just as unavoidably, the boundary-stretching continued well past this point, until costumed heroes weren't all that heroic anymore.

This grim & gritty re-invention drove postmodern Golden Age stories as well. Just as characters introduced in the 1940s reappeared as typical smiling, happy Silver Age characters during the 1960s, in the 1990s they became dour, humorless vigilantes like seemingly everyone else in comics of that time.

"ANTI-HEROES"

The '90s aesthetic dictates that anyone who puts on a costume to fight other people wearing costumes (whether ostensibly a hero or a pro-fessed villain) is to some degree insane. In fact, the degree and intensity of their craziness is often the only way to tell the putative good guys from the bad guys. The costumed protagonists are prone to obsessive⁄compulsive manias, and putting on a mask and a cape are just a manifestation of their particular type of craziness. By some degree of contrast, the antagonists are brutal killers, rapists, pederasts, or a com-bination thereof.

Creating characters for a postmodern Golden Age style campaign is a matter of selecting classic costumed-character archetypes and putting dark spins on them. In this fashion, flag-costumed characters become ultra-nationalist zealots, blind to the flaws of their home country as well as the virtues of any other nation.

Similarly, masked avengers become bloodthirsty vigilantes, executing scores of criminals as part of a bloody war on crime in which no target is off limits for either side. Other types of costumed characters cease to fight lawlessness and tyranny out of a sense of justice or higher obliga-tion, but instead coincidentally do the right thing while battling their own psychological quirks and defects.

With heroes like that, the villains have to be real pieces of work. Forget bank robbers and juvenile delinquents in this style of campaign. It takes serial murderers, mutilators, genocidal racists, and the sleaziest sexual deviants to make the protagonists seem like heroes.

THE NOT-SO-GOLDEN AGE

Naturally, characters such as these cannot live in the generally opti-mistic world depicted in Golden Age comics. In the name of "realism" (always a tricky term to use in regards to superhero comic books), stories inevitably focus on the most sensationalistic, violent, and lurid aspects of life in the 1940s. When the era itself disappoints in any of these criteria, exaggeration and outright fabrication step up to close any per-ceived gaps.

To be sure, the world depicted in Golden Age comic books wasn't real-istic, but then again it was never intended to be. Indeed, the very notion of "realism" in stories about flying men of steel from alien planets was considered utterly laughable at the time. By the same token, playing up any sort of alleged "realism" is every bit as ridiculous at face value, but not without its appeal to many comics fans and gaming groups. It's simply worth noting for accuracy's sake that putting a serial-killer super-villain into a story set in the 1940s is by no measure more "realistic" than any actually published during that time period.

THE BEST OF TWO WORLDS

If the players are neither sticklers for authentic Golden Age comic-book details nor diehard fans of grim-and-gritty stories, Gamemaster are free to choose whatever elements are going to create the most fun in their campaigns. In many ways, this is the best approach, because it satisfies the players' likely affinity for modern storytelling conventions while leaving the Gamemaster free to create the widest possible range of stories.

The eclectic approach can encompass the tighter continuity and greater emphasis on superpowered feats found in modern comics, while at the same time avoiding the oft-preachy moralizing common to both the Golden Age and postmodern eras. Stories can be lighthearted without the lowbrow comedy of the Golden Age, or they can be serious without the nastiness of the postmodern era.

It's a bit of a contradiction to go into great detail about how to create a unique mix-and-match style of campaign, but many of the guidelines for running Modern Age campaigns in *M&M*, pages 193–194, are applicable here. This is true even of unlikely elements such as the Modern Age's sense of history, as it's not unheard of for Golden Age superheroes (who are, after all, supposed to be the originals) make reference to their costumed forebears in the pulps.

Ultimately, the specifics must be left to each individual Gamemaster. Thankfully, doing so is a natural process. Simply read over the tropes of each approach, and go with whatever elements are going to be the most fun for all.

RACISM, SEXISM, & HOMOPHOBIA

In addition to ramping up the grim and gritty, postmodern Golden Age tales require a healthy sampling of the era's very real and open prejudices. The heroes themselves are usually above such things, but almost everyone else they encounter is not nearly as enlightened.

During the 1940s, large numbers of people casually believe a dame's proper place is serving her man, blacks, Asians, and Hispanics are naturally inferior to whites, Jews are a source of social ills, and homosexuals are perverts akin to rapists and pedophiles. Consequently, minority characters subjected to the depredations of segregation, harassment, racial or ethnic slurs, and hate crimes are regular plot points.

These elements are usually included in comic-book stories to highlight the era's perceived hypocrisy (and reassure the reader how much more enlightened the writer is), and to show how much more "realistic" (again, a slippery term) his storytelling is. More commonly, the bigotry is there simply to shock the supposedly jaded readers.

In a roleplaying game, prejudiced characters can serve more constructive dramatic purposes. Reminding players just how far cultural attitudes have progressed in the intervening decades is a good and healthy thing, and it can fun for them to confront and triumph over racism, sexism, and homophobia. It's even more fun for them to beat a racist, sexist, and / or homophobic villain senseless. Never forget the point of a roleplaying game is to have fun, no matter how grim & gritty the campaign.

ENCOURAGING POSTMODERN GOLDEN AGE CONVENTIONS

Historical trappings aside, postmodern Golden Age campaigns differ very little from Iron Age campaigns. Sure, there are fewer tattooed heroes in sunglasses, but there are just as many heroes blazing away with guns, a greater emphasis on "realistic" superpowers, and more than a few ninjas (or ninja-like) characters running around. Gamemasters can incorporate the guidelines for Iron Age campaigns found in *M&M*, on pages 192–193, without much alteration.

SUPPORTING CAST ARCHETYPES

This section provides some new Supporting Cast Archetypes typical of those found in Golden Age comic books. In addition to these, several Supporting Cast Archetypes in *Mutants & Masterminds* (see pages 226–229 in that book) show up in Golden Age campaigns with just a little adjustment. The Gang Leader, for instance, makes a nice simulacrum for a Juvenile Delinquent. Any hero with a crime-fighting animal sidekick can find the stats for their heroic pet in *M&M* on pages 230–231, with dogs, hawks, and owls being popular Golden Age choices.

Of course, the existing modern Archetypes need some adjustments to their Equipment before they are usable back in the 1940s, such as the Police Officer's concealable vest and the Reporter's digital recorder. Just set them up with some period-appropriate substitutes and they're good to go.

AIRMAN					POWER LEVEL 3
Str 10	Dex 13	Con 12	Int 13	Wis 13	Cha 12

Skills: Bluff 2 (+3), Intimidate 2 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) 3 (+4), Notice 2 (+3), Profession (airman) 6 (+7), Pilot 6 (+7), Swim 3 (+3)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Combat Pilot, Benefit (military rank) 3, Equipment 12

Equipment: heavy pistol, leather jacket (+1 Toughness), prop fighter, choose 1 EP of additional gear

Combat: Attack +1, +3 (ranged), Grapple +1, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +1, Knockback –1 (–0 without leather jacket), Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +2 (+1 without leather jacket), Fortitude +1, Reflex +3, Will +3

Abilities 13 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 18 + Combat 4 + Saves 4 = 45

This archetype covers the average World War II fighter pilot. He's not yet an ace, but he has gained some valuable experience—enough to give him some hope of making it home from a mission.

SIDEKICK, COSTUMED		POWER LEVEL 4/SIDEKICK RANK 12			
Str 12	Dex 14	Con 14	Int 12	Wis 12	Cha 12

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+6), Bluff 4 (+5), Disable Device 4 (+5), Escape Artist 4 (+6), Gather Information 4 (+5), Investigate 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+5), Search 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+6), Swim 4 (+5)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Equipment 3, Improved Block, Power Attack

Powers: Device 4 (20 power point version of partner's signature gadget; easy to lose)

Combat: Attack +3, Grapple +4, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +3, Knockback –1, Initiative +2

Saving Throws: Toughness +2, Fortitude +2, Reflex +3, Will +3

Abilities 16 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 12 + Combat 12 + Saves 3 = 60

This archetype represents the typical "kid wonder" Golden Age sidekick, who is essentially a junior version of her older crime-fighting partner. Like all good sidekicks, she's got just enough ability to get in over her head and need rescuing, and also to help out her partner in a pinch.

SIDEKICK, NON-COSTUMED — POWER LEVEL 2 SIDEKICK RANK 6

Str 8	Dex 12	Con 10	Int 12	Wis 12	Cha 12

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Gather Information 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (select one) 8 (+5), Search 4 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+5)

Feats: Attractive, Beginner's Luck, Equipment 2, Set-Up, Taunt

Equipment: sedan, 4 points of job-related gear

Combat: Attack +1, Grapple +0, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +1, Knockback –0, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +1, Reflex +2, Will +2

Abilities 6 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 6 + Combat 4 + Saves 4 = 30

This archetype represents the prevalent prewar sidekick, which tended to be of the "nosey girlfriend" or "bumbling man-child" varieties. Like all good sidekicks, this type's got just enough ability to get in over their head and need rescuing, and also to help out their partners in a pinch.

SOLDIER — POWER LEVEL 3

Str 13	Dex 12	Con 14	Int 10	Wis 10	Cha 10

Skills: Climb 3 (+4), Intimidate 2 (+2), Knowledge (tactics) 2 (+2), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (soldier) 5 (+5), Stealth 3 (+4), Survival 3 (+3)

Feats: Combat Driver, Equipment 6

Equipment: camo clothing, knife, steel helmet (+1 Toughness), service rifle, hand grenades, choose 2 EPs of additional gear

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +6, Damage +6 (service rifle), +5 (hand grenade), +2 (knife), +1 (unarmed), Defense +5, Knockback –1, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +3 (+2 without helmet), Fortitude +3, Reflex +1, Will +1

Abilities 8 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 7 + Combat 20 + Saves 4 = 45

This archetype covers the typical infantryman or enlisted soldier during World War II and the Korean War. Unlike the modern-day version in *M&M*, this dogface is a lot less high-tech and gets left to survive on his own much more often. His officers and specialist comrades in arms have appropriate additional training (and skills).

FIFTH COLUMNIST — POWER LEVEL 3

Str 12	Dex 11	Con 13	Int 12	Wis 10	Cha 13

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Craft (chemical) 4 (+5), Craft (mechanical) 4 (+5), Disguise 2 (+3), Drive 4 (+4), Gather Information 4 (+5), Intimidate 2 (+3), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 2 (+3), Profession (choose one) 4 (+4), Search 2 (+3)

Feats: Equipment 3

Equipment: light pistol, plus 9 points worth of other equipment

Combat: Attack +3, Damage +1 (unarmed), +3 (pistol), Defense +4, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +2, Fortitude +4, Reflex +3, Will +3

Abilities 11 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 0 + Combat 14 + Saves 10 = 46

This archetype represents a fairly capable Nazi sympathizer and spy operating on American soil. Fifth Columnists, in addition to passing along useful information, also acted as saboteurs; the classic Golden Age scenario involves a group of Fifth Columnists plotting to blow up some important locale like a dam, military base, shipyard, or the like.

MECHANIC — POWER LEVEL 2

Str 14	Dex 12	Con 14	Int 10	Wis 10	Cha 9

Skills: Craft (mechanical) 7 (+7), Drive 6 (+7), Intimidate 4 (+3), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+3), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+4), Profession (mechanic) 4 (+4)

Feats: Equipment 2

Equipment: Leather jacket (+1 Toughness), tools, up to 9 points of other equipment (usually a vehicle of some sort).

Combat: Attack +2, Damage +2 (punch), +3 (wrench), Defense +2, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +2, Fortitude +4, Reflex +1, Will +0

Abilities 9 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 0 + Combat 8 + Saves 2 = 28

Various grease-monkeys are common sidekicks and supporting characters in the Golden Age, whether they're dogfaces working in a military motor-pool, home-front types with a garage working on hot-rods, or airplane mechanics out on a field. In particular, mechanics tend to show up as helpers for heroes with gadgets (or heroes who *are* gadgets, like the occasional robot) and support staff for heroic headquarters.

O.S.S. AGENT — POWER LEVEL 3

Str 10	Dex 12	Con 13	Int 15	Wis 14	Cha 10

Skills: Diplomacy 3 (+3), Drive 4 (+5), Gather Information 4 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+4), Investigate 6 (+8), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 3 (+5), Knowledge (civics) 2 (+4), Knowledge (current events) 2 (+4), Knowledge (streetwise) 2 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (government agent) 4 (+6), Search 6 (+8)

Feats: Defensive Roll, Equipment 2

Equipment: pistol (+3 damage), 4 points in miscellaneous equipment

Combat: Attack +3, Damage +0 (unarmed), +3 (pistol), Defense +4, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +2 (+1 flat-footed), Fortitude +4, Reflex +1, Will +6

Abilities 14 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) Feats 3 + Combat 14 + Saves 7 = 49

This archetype can serve as an agent of the Office of Special Services (OSS) in the United States as well as government agents from other nations, including the British MI-5 and German spies operating abroad. Agents may have more equipment than listed here; the OSS in particular was always coming up with new gadgets, and a comic book OSS is almost certain to have even more unusual ones.

PARTISAN — POWER LEVEL 3

Str 10	Dex 11	Con 10	Int 11	Wis 12	Cha 10

Skills: Bluff 6 (+6), Climb 4 (+4), Craft (chemical) 4 (+4), Gather Information 6 (+6), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+6), Notice 4 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Stealth 4 (+4)

DER FÜHRER — POWER LEVEL 5

Str 10	Dex 9	Con 10	Int 12	Wis 10	Cha 12

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Intimidate 10 (+11), Knowledge (arcane lore) 2 (+3), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+7), Knowledge (history) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Perform (oratory) 10 (+11), Sense Motive 4 (+4)

Feats: Fascinate (Perform), Inspire, Ultimate Effort (Perform)

Combat: Attack +1, Grapple +1, Damage +0 (unarmed, or by weapon), Defense +3, Knockback –0, Initiative –1

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +1, Will +10

Abilities 3 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 3 + Combat 8 + Saves 14 = Total 41

Adolf Hitler, *Der Führer* himself! Although the Nazi dictator is more likely to function as a plot device in most Golden Age campaigns, he *did* show up in more than a few comics of the period, usually to get socked in the jaw by some star-spangled hero. His game traits are provided here for Gamemasters who might want them for such occasions.

Note that these traits are an approximation of the historical Hitler, as seen by the Golden Age comics. They assume Hitler did *not* possess any superhuman abilities. If you decide *Der Führer* in your campaign has Enhanced Charisma, Mind Control, is an initiate of the dark arts of sorcery, or the like, modify the stats given here accordingly. His vaunted "charisma" is almost completely absent in interpersonal contact, so it's handled here as high Intimidate and Perform bonuses for swaying crowds and a few related feats rather than a high Charisma score. Also note that these stats don't take into account Equipment, Minions, and such; in a Golden Age campaign, Hitler basically has as much of both as he wants (and the GM wishes to assign).

Feats: Connected, Contacts, Equipment 2, Well-Informed

Equipment: pistol (+3 damage), 4 points in miscellaneous equipment

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed), +3 (pistol), Defense +4, Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +4, Will +4

Abilities 4 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 0 + Combat 12 + Saves 9 = Total 40

Partisans of the French Resistance operated in secret to pass information on the Allies from Occupied France and did all they could to thwart their Nazi oppressors. This archetype is a fairly skilled and experienced partisan; most were ordinary men and women willing to risk their lives to help liberation their country (use the Bystander archetype with 8 to 12 extra skill ranks).

SOLDIER, ELITE — POWER LEVEL 5

Str 13	Dex 14	Con 14	Int 10	Wis 12	Cha 10

Skills: Climb 4 (+5), Intimidate 5 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 5 (+5), Notice 2 (+3), Professional (soldier) 4 (+5), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 7

Equipment: assault rifle (+4 damage), pistol (+3 damage), grenades, plus 3 points of equipment

Combat: Attack +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), +5 (rifle), Defense +6, Initiative +2

Saving Throws: Toughness +4 (+2 flat-footed), Fortitude +6, Reflex +6, Will +3

Abilities 13 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 0 + Combat 24 + Saves 10 = 63

This archetype is a seasoned veteran or an elite trooper, with abilities, skills, and equipment to match. It's useful for US Army Rangers and Paratroopers, British SAS and Commandos, German Brandenburgers and Fallschirmjäger, and so forth.

WONDER DOG — POWER LEVEL 2/SIDEKICK RANK 6

Str 15	Dex 15	Con 15	Int 6	Wis 12	Cha 6

Skills: Notice 4 (+5), Search 4 (+2), Survival 4 (+5), Swim 4 (+6)

Feats: Elusive Target, Evasion, Improved Trip

Powers: Speed 1, Super-Senses 3 (scent, track, ultra-hearing)

Combat: Attack +3, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +3, Initiative +2

Saving Throws: Toughness +2, Fortitude +5, Reflex +5, Will +1

Drawbacks: Mute (very common, moderate, 4 points), No Hands (very common, moderate, 4 points)

Abilities 9 + Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 4 + Combat 12 + Saves 6 – Drawbacks 8 = 30

This faithful canine companion has some real smarts, able to help a heroic master out in a jam or at least run and get help if the hero gets trapped (say, in a well). The Wonder Dog might just as easily be an Amazing Owl, Faithful Steed, or some other animal companion; use the animal stats from the *M&M* rulebook (pages 230-232) as a starting point, providing some extra Intelligence (+4 is a good guideline) and appropriate skills and feats.

VILLAIN ARCHETYPES

The Golden Age was an era where gangsters and alien saboteurs were feared above all. The villain archetypes on the pages following reflect these crime- and subversion-conscious times. In addition to them, several of the villain archetypes in *Mutants & Masterminds* work well in this setting with very little modification.

For instance, the Armored Megalomaniac only needs to be tweaked into being a Fascist Armored Megalomaniac to make him Golden Age-ready. Corrupt Sorcerers were also fairly common, both in service to the Axis and working on their own evil schemes. The Kung Fu Killer is a perfect fit as an agent of Imperial Japan, and the Hulking Brute, Mad Scientist, Master of Disguise, and Master of Energy are all just as much at home in the 1940s as they are in the modern era.

Readers with access to the *Villainous Archetype* products available from Green Ronin can also find usable Golden Age villains in their pages. The Arrogant (read: Nazi) Paragon, Cthuloid Horror, Dead Man Walking, Great Hunter, and Master Thief archetypes are particularly well suited to the Golden Age era.

ALIEN INVADER   POWER LEVEL 9

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+8	+1	+5	+6	+6	+0
26	12	20	22	22	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+9	+8	+1	+6

*without suit

Skills: Computers 8 (+14), Concentration 8 (+14), Craft (chemical, electronic, mechanical) 8 (+14), Disable Device 8 (+14), Intimidate 8 (+8), Knowledge (physical sciences, tactics, technology) 8 (+14), Notice 8 (+14), Pilot 8 (+9)

Feats: Eidetic Memory

Powers: Communication 11 (mental, Area, Selective), **Comprehend 2** (languages), **Device 8** (death-ray gun, easy to lose), **Growth 8** (huge, Permanent, Innate), **Immunity 5** (aging, critical hits, suffocation)

Death-Ray Gun: **Disintegration 9** (Accurate 3, Reversible)

Combat: Attack +2 (includes –2 due to size), +8 (death-ray gun), Grapple +20, Damage +8 (unarmed), +9 (death-ray), Defense +6 (includes –2 due to size), Knockback –5, Initiative +1

Drawbacks: Vulnerability or Weakness (Gamemaster's choice, –3 points)

Note: The Alien Invader should also have or share access to (with others of his kind) a space cruiser (*M&M*, page 144), although this is generally more of a plot device in Golden Age adventures and not accounted for in the archetype's stats.

Abilities 29 + Skills 24 (96 ranks) + Feats 1 + Powers 71 + C... Saves 8 – Drawbacks 3 = 146

The little green men are here, straight from the sci-fi pulps and into the comic books. They're not so little, but they brought along all the expected genre tropes with them, including death-rays, flying saucers, and intellects cold and vast, much evolved beyond our own. These hostile aliens are a challenge for multiple Golden Age heroes acting together. The planet is in definite peril until the invaders' one weakness is discovered.

Capers: An adventure may start off with a lone alien invader, operating in relative secrecy. The heroes investigate a series of unusual sightings and events, suspecting foreign agents, and discover the threat is quite "foreign" indeed! Either the heroes have to deal with the lone scout (or a small group of them) and convince them or their race that Earth is off-limits, or the initial invaders are just a prelude to a full-out assault!

Some alien invasion stories skip the prelude and go right to flying saucers landing on the White House lawn or hovering over Times Square, announcing their demands to the leaders of the world. For a twist, the "alien invaders" can turn out to be a home-grown threat or a hoax, either by Axis forces or con-men with sophisticated equipment, special effects, and costumes.

"WE HAVE COME TO CONQUER YOUR PLANET. SURRENDER NOW, PUNY EARTHLINGS."

EVIL MENTALIST

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+1	+3	+7	+7	+2
10	12	16	24	24	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3	+3	+1	+7

Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Concentration 5 (+14), Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (behavioral sciences, current events, life sciences, streetwise) 5 (+12), Medicine 5 (+12), Notice 5 (+12), Profession (psychologist) 5 (+12), Search 5 (+12), Sense Motive 5 (+12)

Feats: Distract, Eidetic Memory, Fascinate (Intimidate), Master Plan

Powers: Animal Control 10 (Mental Link, Sensory Link), **Comprehend 2** (languages), **Concealment 6** (visual and auditory, Limited to intelligent creatures), **Mind Shield 8**, **Shield 8**, **Telepathy 10** (Alternate Powers: **Illusion 6** [all senses, Phantasms], **Mental Blast 5**, **Mind Control 10** [Conscious, Hearing-Dependent], **Stun 5** [Alternate Save (Will), Perception Range])

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed), +5 (Mental Blast), Defense +10, Knockback –1, Initiative +1

Abilities 40 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 73 + Combat 8 = 140

The Evil Mentalist was once a psychiatrist who probed too deeply into the mysteries of the human mind, unleashing both its untapped power and his own ruthlessness. Now he craves power and wealth, using his superior mind to commit crimes aimed at giving him lots of both. Sure, he can't take a punch, but the heroes are going to have a devil of a time finding him and stopping him when they can't trust their own senses or thoughts.

Capers: The Evil Mentalist is great for psychological mind-games where the heroes start to doubt their sanity much less what their senses are telling them. Some classic Evil Mentalist schemes include mind-controlling various important people (typically over the phone or radio) and using them to commit crimes; who'll believe the victims' stories afterwards? A variation is the mentalist commanding pets or wild animals to do his bidding (a real "cat burglar" in a Senator's home, for example).

The Evil Mentalist might attempt to capture and brainwash the heroes into serving the Axis, either through brute force mental power (backed up by drugs or other technology) or subtle manipulation. For example, an Evil Mentalist might set up a psycho-drama wherein the heroes are told they're inmates in an asylum, or Nazi "sleeper agents" being returned "home" to Berlin so their "true memories" can be restored.

"YOU CANNOT RESIST THE UNLEASHED POWER OF THE MIND!"

MALEVOLENT MAGICAL ENTITY

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+4	+6	+4	+9	+5
18	18	22	18	28	20

| TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+6	+4	+9

Skills: Craft (artistic) 12 (+16), Intimidate 12 (+17), Knowledge (arcane lore) 16 (+20), Sense Motive 8 (+17)

Feats: Artificer, Attack Specialization (Magic) 3, Fearsome Presence, Master Plan, Minions 10 (1,000 Zombies, see *M&M*, page 235), Ritualist

Powers: Immunity 9 (life support), **Magic 12** (choose 24 Alternate Powers as spells), **Protection 6** (Impervious)

Combat: Attack +6 (melee), +12 (Magic), Grapple +10, Damage +4 (unarmed), +12 (Magic), Defense +6, Knockback –6, Initiative +4

Abilities 64 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 17 + Powers 68 + Combat 24 + Saves 6 = 191
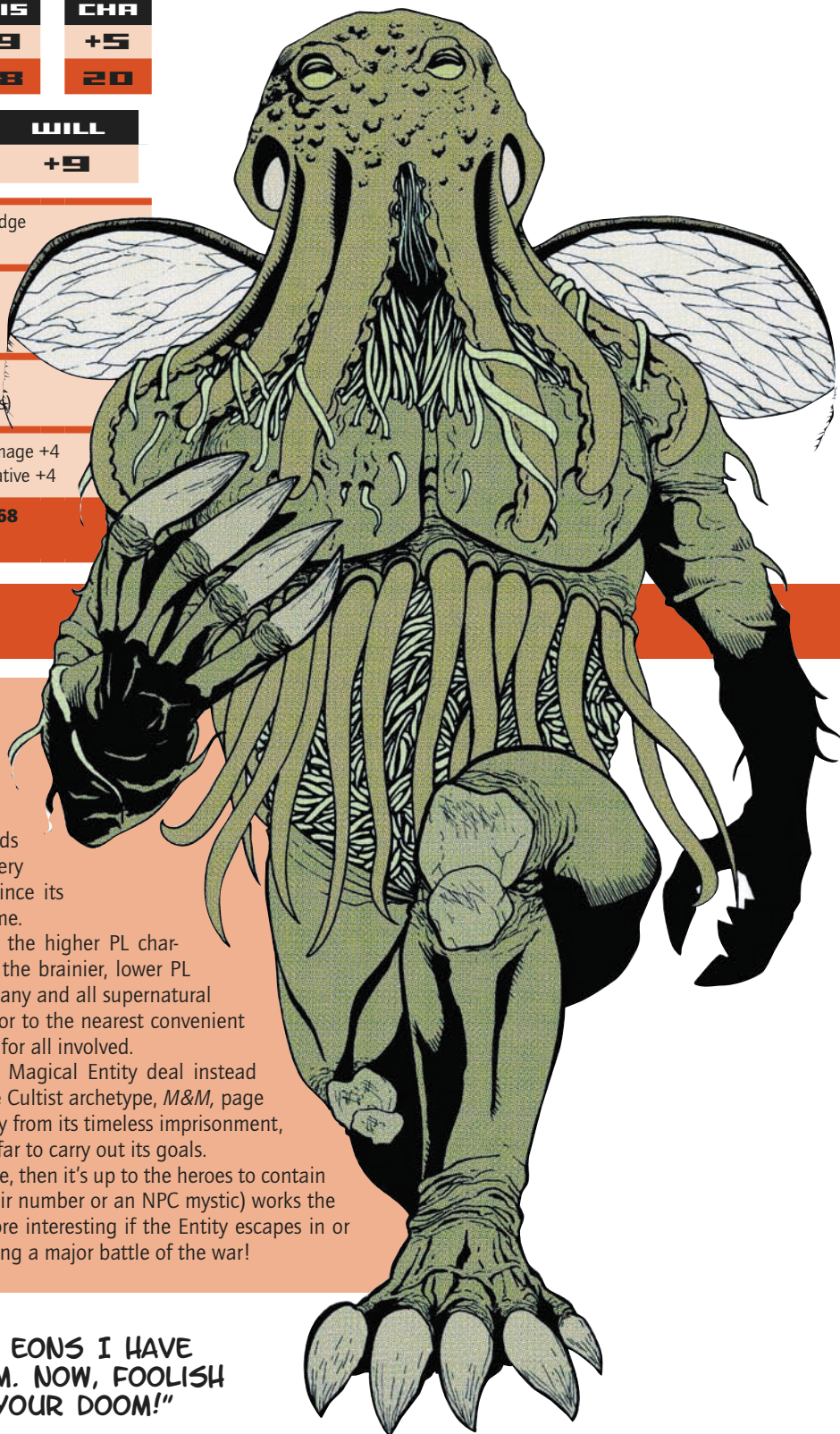
Sooner or later, one of your more foolhardy villains (Nazis, anyone?) is going to open our dimension's front door and let something ancient, evil, and very powerful in, then realize too late that it's not here to obey commands. That's when a group of heroes (or one near-omnipotent one) needs to step up. The Malevolent Magical Entity is very tough to beat in a straight-up fight, especially since its undead legions can keep heroes busy for a long time.

A battle against an Entity like this challenges the higher PL characters to stay alive and keep it busy. Meanwhile, the brainier, lower PL characters try to figure out a way to make it cease any and all supernatural activity and return forthwith to its place of origin or to the nearest convenient parallel dimension. It should be a fun, full evening for all involved.

Capers: Many capers involving the Malevolent Magical Entity deal instead with its followers. Heroes may thwart cults (see the Cultist archetype, *M&M,* page 226) and evil sorcerers seeking to release the Entity from its timeless imprisonment, and the Entity may manipulate such pawns from afar to carry out its goals.

On some occasions, the Entity manages to escape, then it's up to the heroes to contain the rampaging monster while someone (one of their number or an NPC mystic) works the ritual necessary re-imprison it. Things get even more interesting if the Entity escapes in or near a major city, near a military base, or even during a major battle of the war!

"FOR A THOUSAND EONS I HAVE AWAITED MY FREEDOM. NOW, FOOLISH MORTALS, FACE YOUR DOOM!"

MASTER SPY

POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+3
16	16	16	18	18	16

| TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+3*	+4	+4	+4

*flatfooted

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Disable Device 8 (+12), Disguise 8 (+11), Drive 8 (+11), Escape Artist 8 (+11), Gather Information 8 (+11), Investigate 8 (+12), Intimidate 8 (+11), Language (select four), Notice 8 (+12), Pilot 8 (+11), Search 8 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Sleight of Hand 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+11), Swim 8 (+11)

Feats: Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Distract, Equipment 5, Fascinate (Bluff), Hide In Plain Sight, Improved Block, Improved Critical (unarmed), Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Improvised Tools, Instant Up, Jack of All Trades, Master Plan, Precise Shot, Power Attack, Sneak Attack, Well-Informed

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +8, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +5, Knockback –2, Initiative +3

Abilities 40 + Skills 33 (124 ranks) + Feats 26 + Combat 20 + Saves 4 = 123
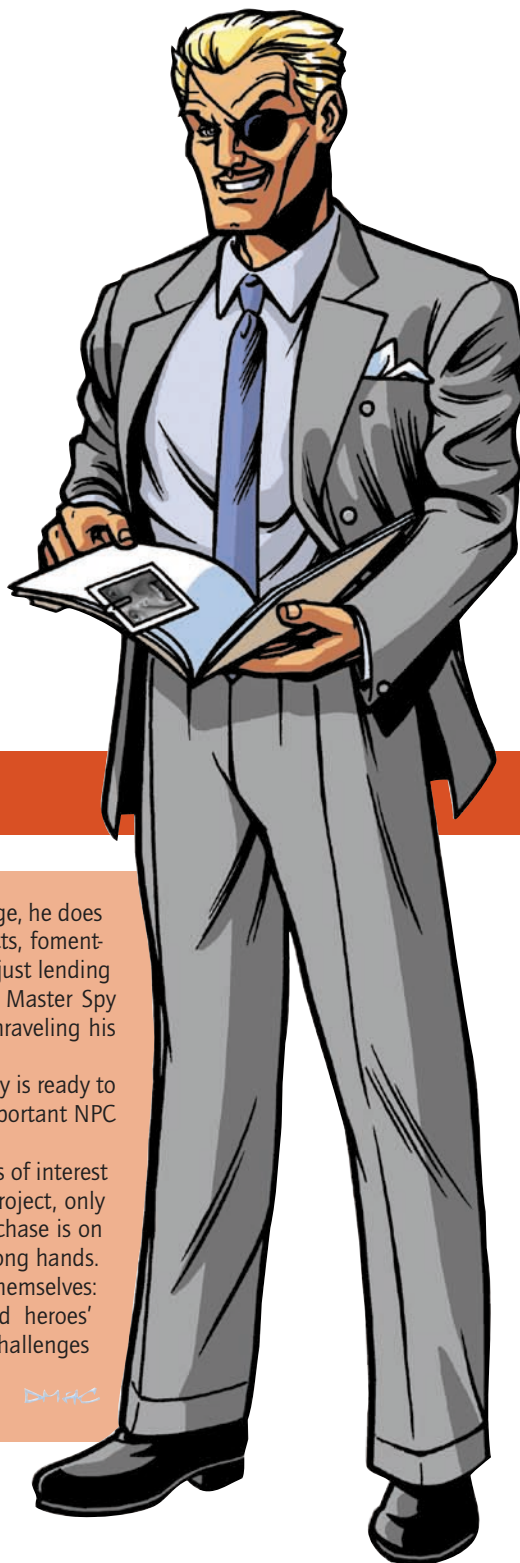
He's the best of the best at what he does—and when it comes to subterfuge, he does it all. From stealing classified documents from high-level research projects, fomenting labor unrest, acts of sabotage, assassination of important figures, or just lending a helping hand to homegrown subversives, he's a multiple threat. The Master Spy has the tools necessary to outsmart almost any player character, and unraveling his schemes and his whereabouts should test the heroes' wits to the utmost.

Customization: All it takes is a change of allegiance and the Master Spy is ready to go to work for the Allied cause. In this capacity, he can appear as an important NPC or player character in a military campaign.

Capers: Anything that's of value to the Axis (or to the highest bidder) is of interest to the Master Spy. The heroes may be told of some new Allied plan or project, only to discover shortly thereafter that security has been breached. Then the chase is on to recover whatever the Master Spy has stolen before it can reach the wrong hands.

Of course, it's possible the Master Spy's target might be the heroes themselves: certainly the Axis would be very interested in information on Allied heroes' strengths and weaknesses. A spy-master might set up a series of bogus challenges (armed robberies, sabotage attempts, etc.) in order to compile information for his masters back home.

"THESE TOP-SECRET FILES WILL BE OF GREAT INTEREST TO DER FUHRER."

MOB BOSS

POWER LEVEL 5

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+1	+3	+2	+2	+3
12	12	16	14	14	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3	+4	+4	+5

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Gather Information 8 (+11), Intimidate 8 (+11), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+10), Notice 8 (+10), Profession (gangster) 8 (+10), Search 8 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+9)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Equipment 4, Improved Block, Inspire, Minions 7 (50 thugs—see *M&M*, page 229), Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Well-Informed

Combat: Attack +6 (melee), +8 (ranged), Grapple +5, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +6, Knockback –2, Initiative +1

Abilities 24 + Skills 20 (80 ranks) + Feats 23 + Combat 24 + Saves 8 = 99

"I'M RUBBIN' YOU OUT, HERO!"

Gangster bosses were different back in the Golden Age: a little more hands-on, a little less high-tech, and a much greater threat to the superhero set. The nasty fellow above is typical of the "Lucky" Luciano wannabe's who filled up 1940s comic books. He's got an army of muscle to back him up and is pretty good in a scrap by himself. Plus, he's above the law in his home city, thanks to the dirty money he puts in all the right hands. There's little going on in the city he doesn't know about, thus he can be a threat to heroes in or out of costume.

Depending on the gangster in question, the heroes may find themselves working alongside a Mob Boss once World War II breaks out. His influence over the longshoremen's unions can make him indispensable in fighting potential Axis sabotage of American shipping. If he views himself as an American crook (rather than just a crook), he may be willing to extend some help to the heroes in exchange for some sort of clemency from them for the duration of the war.

Capers: With the Mob Boss, it's all about the rackets. If heroes get in the way of the "family business," then they need to be taken care of. Crime-busters can easily get a Mob Boss' attention by breaking up any illegal operation and turning his goons over to the cops.

Some heroes may look to root out corruption that has taken hold of the local government. If the Mob Boss has the police and attorney general in his pocket, then who else can stop him? This may involve finding evidence of wrongdoing or corruption and using it to bring down the old order.

For a change-of-pace adventure, the Mob Boss himself might be a victim of a crime, such as a kidnapping of a loved one or theft of some ill-gotten gains. Then the heroes are in the middle of a mob war as the Boss goes out looking for blood or maybe even turns to the masked types for a favor.

CHAPTER 5: THE GOLDEN AGE OF FREEDOM

The previous chapters of *Golden Age* provide an overview of the period and the genre. This chapter takes a specific look at the Golden Age era of the Freedom City setting (as described in the *Freedom City* sourcebook). It provides a ready-made Golden Age background for *M&M* adventures, or just an example you can use when creating your own Golden Age characters, adventures, and settings.

While much of the material in this chapter—particularly the characters—are usable on their own, the background and other material assumes you have access to the *Freedom City* sourcebook for details on the World of Freedom as a whole. The focus of this chapter is on the Golden Age period and how things differ from modern-day Freedom City.

HISTORY

The Golden Age of *Freedom City* roughly spans two decades, from the mid-1930s until the HUAC hearings and the disbanding of the Liberty League in the mid-1950s. This section looks at the highlights of those years, hitting the major and pivotal events. A comprehensive and detailed history of the Golden Age of the World of Freedom could take up an entire book in and of itself; this section is just intended to provide an overall look at the "big picture."

Good comprehensive summaries of the events of the Second World War and the years preceding and following it are available from history books as well as online. This section focuses on events involving the superpowered heroes and villains of the World of Freedom during the Golden Age, allowing you to integrate them into the major events of the actual war (or not) as you see fit.

While the earlier chapters of this book cover the years including the Korean War, this chapter focuses primarily on World War II, with some general information on the years immediately following it. Superhuman involvement in Korea (if any) is left to the Gamemaster's discretion, as best suits the particular series. Like the mainstream comic books, *Freedom City* assumes superheroes and villains had little, if anything, to do with the Korean War, apart from the struggle against Communism at home and abroad.

1935

Archeologist Adrian Eldrich discovers the lost Temple of Sirrion and accidentally awakens Malador the Mystic. Imbued with reawakened memories of Atlantis by the Secret Circle, Eldrich becomes Earth's new Master Mage.

Wilhelm Kantor becomes an initiate of the Thule Society and begins studying black magic.

1936

Germany seizes the Rhineland.

Wilhelm Kantor rises to a position of authority within the Thule Society, showing aptitude for both the occult and the elimination of his rivals.

The Green Dragon Society of occultists rises to greater power and influence in Imperial Japan. Some tentative contact established between them and the Thule Society.

Olympic Games are held in Berlin. American athlete Jesse Owens takes a gold medal, defying expectations and Hitler's doctrine of "Aryan superiority."

1937

Members of the Order of Light, magicians dedicated to the responsible use of the mystic arts, note a rising "dark tide" in the magical realms and the mystic currents of the world. The appearance of a new Master Mage is generally seen as a reaction to the sinister forces unleashed by the awakening of Malador and the rites of Nazi and Japanese occultists.

1938

Germany assumes control over Austria.

Centurion first appears, preventing a robbery at the First National Bank in Freedom City by lifting the getaway car off the ground with his bare hands, bullets bouncing harmlessly off him.

Germany and the Soviet Union sign a non-aggression pact, safeguarding the western front and allowing the Germans to focus their attention eastward. Portions of Czechoslovakia are ceded to Germany to appease the Nazis.

Midnight prevents a robbery by bogus "Martians" (actually men in rubber suits) during Orson Wells' broadcast of *War of the Worlds*.

The Thule Society makes contact with the superhuman inhabitants of Ultima Thule, who erase their memories of the encounter after rejecting the notion of "Aryan superiority." However, one rogue Ultiman named Kal-Zed chooses to initiate contact with the Nazis, posing as a "sport" superhuman.

Japan controls most of the populated areas of China by the end of the year.

1939

The Freedom Eagle first appears, thwarting attempts by spies to steal his flying harness.

Germany seizes the rest of Czechoslovakia, and the Thule Society begins its pogrom of systematically eliminating rival occultists and looting their resources. Many members of the Order of Light flee or go underground to escape the Nazi purge.

The first non-American "mystery man" debuts when *der Übermensch* (Kal-Zed) appears in Germany. A number of German supers follow.

Germany invades Poland and the Second World War begins. Hitler announces the formation of the Nazi *Übersoldaten,* "super-soldiers," led by *Übermensch* and possessed of superhuman powers.

1940

The first Bowman makes his public debut in Freedom City, followed by Johnny Rocket. Lantern Jack also makes his first confirmed appearance in the modern era.

Denmark falls to the Nazi advance. The British evacuate their troops in France at Dunkirk. Belgium, France, and Norway all fall to the Nazi *Blitzkrieg.* Guillotine and Renard Rogue begin operating with the French Resistance.

A coup in Atlantis results in the death of the king and leaves crown prince Thallor in exile, leading a rag-tag band of loyal followers. Atlantis seeks to isolate itself from the surface world, although certain factions favor alliance with the Axis.

President Roosevelt institutes the draft in the United States and begins preparations for war.

1941

A new Lady Liberty makes her first appearance in Washington D.C. The Germans begin their Balkan campaign: Greece falls and German forces take Crete.

Nazi mastermind Wilhelm Kantor grants Nacht-Krieger his shadow-powers and lures a group of heroes operating in Europe into an ambush in Poland. Three—Golemeth, Guillotine, and the Mehire—are killed, but the survivors go on to form the Allies of Freedom.

With the destruction of Golemeth and the elimination of many Jewish mystics by the Thule Society, the Nazis begin implementing their "Final Solution" to "the Jewish problem."

Germany violates its non-aggression pact and invades Russia. The Russian hero Bogatyr arises to help repel the Nazis.

A German U-boat torpedoes and sinks a European luxury liner. American singer Lynn Sidon is among those missing and presumed dead. She actually finds help from an unexpected source: Prince Thallor of Atlantis.

The Japanese stage a surprise attack on the American Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The following day, Dr. Tomorrow arrives from the future with the prediction that the Axis will win the war if history as he knows it remains unchanged.

President Roosevelt announces the formation of the Liberty League. The newly formed League attempts to end the conflict with Japan with a surprise attack of its own; the plan fails spectacularly due to the intervention of the time-traveling Dr. Geistmann. The brainwashed heroes are narrowly prevented from kidnapping both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, and FDR institutes a policy of keeping the League close to the home front thereafter.

1942

The Doolittle Raids demonstrate even the Japanese islands are not beyond the Allies' reach.
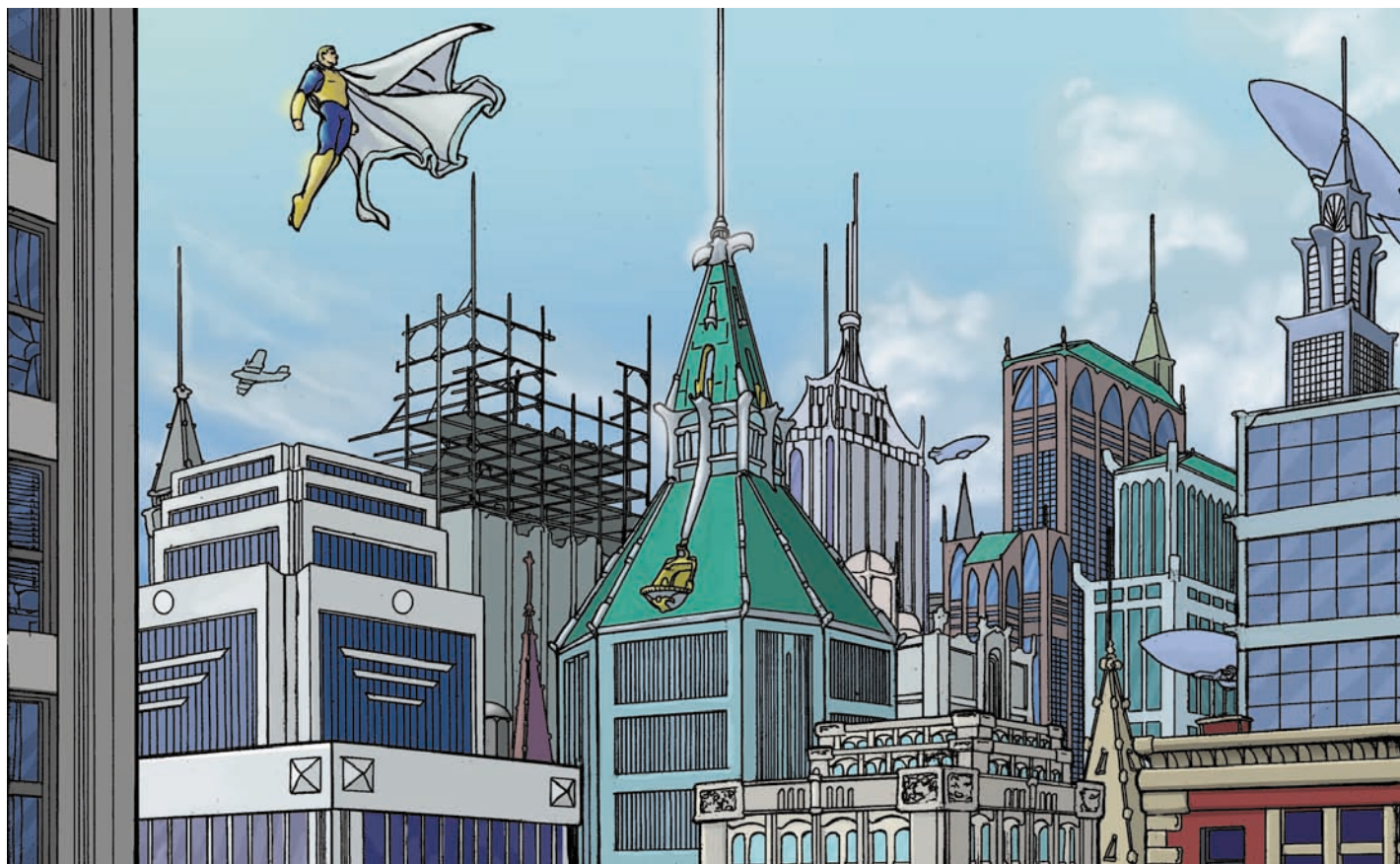
CHANGING HISTORY

In keeping with comic book convention, the timeline and the *Freedom City* setting assume the activities of the Liberty League, Allies of Freedom, and Axis super-soldiers didn't significantly alter the course of World War II as we know it. The general ideas behind this are discussed in detail in **Chapter 2**, and some of them apply here. In particular, the propaganda and morale value of superheroes to the Allied nations tended to keep the most famous of them close to home, in order to prevent the capture or death of a popular hero and the crushing blow to morale it would cause.

It's also important to note that in the World of Freedom, superhumans technically *did* change the course of the war: they just changed it into the history with which we are already familiar! After all, were it not for Dr. Tomorrow's intervention, it's quite possible things would have gone differently and the Axis powers would have won WWII, exactly as they did in his timeline. So folks who wonder why heroes like the Liberty League didn't have more of an effect on the course of the war can consider: how much worse would it have been if not for those brave heroes?

FREEDOM CITY IN THE GOLDEN AGE

The *Freedom City* sourcebook describes the modern era of the setting. The Golden Age was a simpler time, with a smaller city only beginning to show the majesty it would achieve in its later years.

For starters, the boundaries of Freedom City in the 1940s and '50s are smaller. The neighborhoods of Ashton, Grenville, and Lincoln, haven't been built yet. Southside is smaller, as is Bayview, and most of the outlying areas south of the downtown area are more lightly populated.

While the layout of the downtown area is largely the same, there's no Sentry Statue, and Heroes' Knoll hasn't been dedicated in Liberty Park yet (that happens in the 1960s). Modern Freedom Hall is replaced with the Beaumont Mansion headquarters of the Liberty League, described in the following section.

The Boardwalk area in Southside is thriving in the decades following Prohibition. The hotels and casinos are fairly new, built with Mob money, and offering opportunities for crime busting heroes to take on organized crime.

Several new heroes and heroines appear across America and Europe: The Patriot first appears in Boston and joins the Liberty League. Siren shows up along Freedom City's waterfront. She works with the League and with her Atlantean allies. The Human Tank and Gunner appear in Port Regal and soon fight overseas in Europe, joining the Allies of Freedom.

Formation of the first Crime League in Freedom City made up of costumed criminals threatened by the activities of the Liberty League.

The Manhattan Project begins. Both Dr. Atom and Allen-Wrench are involved, along with many of America's other finest minds.

1943

The Nazis are pressed hard along the Western and African Fronts. Germans are forced to retreat after an ill-conceived plan to take Dakana and its stores of daka crystals.

German forces lose Stalingrad.

The Allies invade Sicily and Italy.

1944

The Allies take Rome and, in June, launch a massive invasion of occupied France.

A conspiracy by his own officers to assassinate Hitler fails.

Wilhelm Kantor makes arrangements for his own escape as the Allies advance on Berlin. *Übermensch* clashes with Centurion before abandoning the Nazis to their fate.

1945

Nacht-Krieger kills many of the members of the Allies of Freedom while covering Kantor's escape from Europe. White Rose and White Thorn imprison him at the bottom of the ocean near Freedom City.

Adrian Eldrich is able to cancel many of the spells of the Thule Society and Green Dragon Society, de-powering or greatly weakening many Axis super-soldiers.

The "death" of Dr. Geistmann reveals to the time-traveling Nazi his ability to possess other bodies in other time periods.

Hitler commits suicide. Dr. Tomorrow thwarts a last-minute attempt by Zeitgeist to possess the *Führer*. Germany surrenders to the Allies.

Prince Thallor's forces win the civil war in Atlantis and seize the throne once again. The newly crowned King Thallor proposes to Siren, asking her to be his wife and queen.

The United States drops two atomic bombs on Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrenders, ending the Second World War.

1946

Crimson Katana murders the Human Tank and Gunner in occupied Japan.

Siren marries Thallor of Atlantis and leaves the surface world for her new kingdom.

1947

Several UFO sightings reported as a result of a Grue/Lor skirmish in Earth's solar system. A Grue scout ship crashes near Roswell, New Mexico. The wreckage and the bodies of the crew are taken into government custody.

1948

The Central Intelligence Agency founded in the United States.

Kantor's initial cloning experiments using Nazi and stolen Ultima technology begin to bear fruit in the jungles of South America.

1950

A group of Grue scouts begin infiltrating and spying on the United States government.

North Korea invades the Republic of South Korea. U.S. and Chinese involvement in the conflict stretches out into a stalemate. President Truman decides against any superhuman involvement, due to doubts cast by Grue infiltration and privately expressed concerns of many superheroes over the horrors of war.

1954

Hepcat, beat poet and vigilante, begins operating in the Fens area of Freedom City.

Heroes thwart a secret Grue invasion of Earth, rooting out extensive Grue infiltration. The government covers up the true nature and extent of the "secret invasion."

1955

The HUAC hearings force the conscientious disbanding of the Liberty League. Most of its members choose to retire their costumed identities and quietly return to civilian life.

After stopping King Cole and his Blackbirds, Midnight goes underground and is never heard from again.

THE LIBERTY LEAGUE

America and the world's premier team of heroes in the Golden Age is the Liberty League, assembled by the intervention of Dr. Tomorrow and the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The League will inspire generations of heroes to come, but during World War II they're just starting their own careers, taking part in the adventures that will become so famous.

Although the Liberty League was formed by Presidential order and serves the cause of America, the team is not beholden to the government. Its members are patriotic and gladly follow the directives of their President, but later years clearly show that the Liberty League doesn't answer to either him or the U.S. government—something that will cause concern in the U.S. Congress and other departments. Patriot is a government agent because of the way in which he acquired his powers, but other members of the League are not.

LIBERTY LEAGUE MANSION — HEADQUARTERS

Size: Large, *Toughness:* 10, *Features:* Communication, Gym, Infirmary, Laboratory, Living Space, Workshop

Cost: 9 equipment points

As one example of its independence from government control, the Liberty League meets not in a government or military facility, but primarily in Freedom City, in a downtown mansion "donated" to them by wealthy publisher Fletcher Beaumont (secretly the Bowman). The three-story turn-of-the-century home provides the League with all the material comforts they need, along with a central place to gather when the call goes out for action.

Unlike later superhero headquarters, Liberty League HQ doesn't feature much in the way of technical sophistication. The team's crime files are literal filing cabinets with manila folders holding written and typed notes and photos. The mansion does have a large basement laboratory and workshop used by members like Bowman, Freedom Eagle, and Dr. Tomorrow to maintain and improve their equipment. The sitting room also has a radio and one of the few television sets in Freedom City in the 1940s.

The first-floor drawing room of the mansion has been converted over into the Liberty League's main meeting room, including the round table where the group conducts business. Dr. Tomorrow, as chairman, presides over meetings, and Lady Liberty routinely takes minutes for the team's files. The Liberty League tries to meet at least once each month, but frequently does so more often, particularly during the war.

After Dr. Tomorrow's departure in 1945, Freedom Eagle assumes the role of chairman until the team disbands in 1955.

THE STEEL EAGLE — VEHICLE

Strength 50, Flight Speed 6, Defense 6, Toughness 11, Size G; *Features:* Immunity 9 (life support, Affects Others), Navigation System, Super-Senses 7 (blindsight [radar], extended 3)

Cost: 34 equipment points

Designed and constructed by Freedom Eagle with some assistance from other technically inclined members of the League, the Steel Eagle is one of the most advanced aircraft of its time, the first jet-powered craft in use. The Liberty League uses the Eagle as its primary mode of transportation when traveling great distances. The vehicle is usually stored in a hangar at Freedom City's Jordan Airport, or occasionally at the Lonely Point Naval Base, accessible to the League when they need it.

Note that the equipment ranks required for their team headquarters and vehicle do not appear in the individual stats of the Liberty League members. You can assume each has donated a power point toward a shared Equipment feat for these things.

BOWMAN
POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Fletcher Beaumont	
Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Newspaper publisher
Base of Operations: Freedom City	**Affiliation:** Liberty League
Height: 5'11"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 175 lbs.	**Hair:** Red

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+6	+2	+1	+3	+4
14	22	14	13	16	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+5/+2*	+6	+8	+6

*flat footed

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+14), Bluff 8 (+12), Climb 8 (+10), Craft (mechanical) 8 (+9), Drive 4 (+10), Gather Information 6 (+10), Intimidate 6 (+10), Investigate 4 (+5), Knowledge (history) 4 (+5), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+9), Notice 8 (+11), Pilot 4 (+10), Search 8 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+14)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Attack Specialization (bow), Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 3, Evasion 2, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (bow), Precise Shot, Ranged Pin, Ricochet Attack, Quick Draw, Seize Initiative, Ultimate Aim

Powers: Device 3 (bow and arrows, easy to lose)

Bow and Arrows: **Blast 5** (Alternate Powers: **Obscure 5** [visual, Continuous, Fades], **Snare 5, Stun 3** [Ranged], **Super-Movement 1** [swinging], **Trip 5**)

Combat: Attack +9 (melee), +10 (ranged), +13 (bow), Grapple +11, Damage +2 (unarmed), +5 (bow), Defense +13 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +8

Abilities 37 + Skills 25 (100 ranks) + Feats 20 + Powers 9 + Combat 38 + Saves 9 = Total 138

Newspaper publisher Fletcher Beaumont grew up respecting the power of the free press as well as admiring his childhood hero, Robin Hood. He became publisher of the *Freedom Ledger* and dedicated himself to being a community leader as well as a good businessman. Unfortunately, even the freedom of the press was threatened by criminal elements in Freedom City. The Mob was a powerful force in Southside, and papers that tried to uncover their dirty dealings suffered "unfortunate accidents."
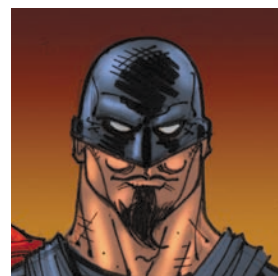
One such incident took place during a charity costume ball, which Beaumont attended as his bow-wielding idol. After using some well-placed arrows to deal with the crooks, Beaumont chose to put his talents as an investigator and an archer to use. Wearing his costume and mask, he flushed out criminals in Freedom City even as his newspaper carried stories of the exploits of the mysterious "Bowman," the city's newest hero. His adventures quickly honed an innate talent for archery, and Fletcher found he enjoyed the freedom his costumed persona gave him.

Not long after he began his costumed career, Beaumont took in an orphaned boy named Tim Quinn. He revealed his dual-identity to Quinn and agreed to train the boy as his junior partner. Tim adopted the identity of Arrow, and soon the Daring Duo became famous throughout the city and the country. They were among the first to volunteer to join the Liberty League and help fight the Axis and protect America. Despite their relative lack of powers, Bowman and Arrow were steadfast members of the League throughout the war. The Beaumont family fortune served the League well in providing a headquarters and financial resources, securing their independence.

The same independence Fletcher Beaumont helped provide, however, turned into a drawback for the Liberty League in the post-war years. An increasingly suspicious U.S. government grew mistrustful of the team since it could not exert control through material resources. Bowman was a strong advocate of the League's independence, considering it as important as a free and independent press. After the HUAC hearings forced the Liberty League to disband, Fletcher Beaumont decided to hang up his mask. He focused his attention on his newspaper; the *Freedom Ledger* was one of the most vocal and powerful critics of Senator McCarthy.

Note: Although Arrow is Bowman's sidekick, his value is not included in Bowman's game stats. If Bowman is used as a player character and Arrow remains his regular sidekick as a non-player character, add the Sidekick 22 feat to Bowman's stats and increase his point value to 160.

ARROW   POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Timothy "Tim" Quinn

Identity: Secret | **Occupation:** Superhero

Base of Operations: Freedom City | **Affiliation:** Liberty League

Height: 5'2" | **Eyes:** Blue

Weight: 120 lbs. | **Hair:** Brown

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+4	+1	+1	+2	+3
10	18	12	12	14	17

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4/+1*	+4	+7	+5

*flat footed

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+10), Bluff 6 (+9), Climb 8 (+8), Craft (mechanical) 4 (+5), Drive 4 (+8), Investigate 4 (+5), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+5), Notice 8 (+10), Pilot 4 (+8), Search 4 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+8), Stealth 6 (+10

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Attack Specialization (bow), Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 4, Evasion, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (bow), Precise Shot, Ranged Pin, Ricochet Attack, Quick Draw, Ultimate Aim

Powers: Device 3 (bow and arrows, easy to lose)

Bow and Arrows: **Blast 5** (Alternate Powers: **Obscure 5** [visual], **Snare 5, Stun 3** [Ranged], **Super-Movement 1** [swinging], **Trip 5**)

Combat: Attack +7 (melee), +9 (ranged), +11 (bow), Grapple +7, Damage +0 (unarmed), +5 (bow), Defense +12 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –2, Initiative +4

Abilities 23 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 19 + Powers 9 + Combat 30 + Saves 9 = Total 106

Tim Quinn's father was Matt "The Mighty" Quinn, a middleweight boxer considered a contender for a national title. Matt Quinn raised his son alone after Tim's mother died of influenza, the family too poor to afford medical care. Young Tim grew up in and around gyms and boxing rings in the Southside of Freedom City, watching his father's matches when he wasn't running around playing stickball or Cowboys and Indians.

The Mighty Quinn did well in his bouts—a little too well, in fact. When Tim was twelve, his father was up for a big title fight. The Freedom City Mob approached Matt with an offer he couldn't refuse: throw the fight and make some money, or else. Matt found he just couldn't throw the fight with his son cheering him on, looking up to him as an example. He fought hard and won, and the Mob lost a lot of money. They took it out of Matt Quinn's hide. Even he couldn't block a bullet, and was gunned down in an alley.

The battling Bowman took down the killers, although he couldn't link the murder back to their boss. Upon learning that young Tim had no

other family, Bowman "made arrangements" and wealthy newspaper publisher Fletcher Beaumont took Tim in as his ward. Sensing in the boy a tremendous drive and a thirst for vengeance, Beaumont revealed his secret identity to Tim and agreed to train him as his partner, channeling his anger toward constructive purposes. Tim became Arrow, the boy-bowman, and proved as handy with his fists as he was with a longbow.

Despite his youth, Arrow was a valued member of the Liberty League, and the envy of every boy in America. Among other things, it was Bowman's junior partner who invented their famous "boxing glove arrow," originally using one of his father's gloves (later an inflatable capsule built into an arrowhead). He also became a capable pilot (before he was even old enough to have a driver's license) and mechanic working with his mentor, Freedom Eagle, and Johnny Rocket.

Tim Quinn was in his twenties when Fletcher Beaumont retired as the Bowman following the HUAC hearings and the disbanding of the Liberty League. Unwilling to see the legacy of the Bowman die or to knuckle-under to paranoia and suspicion, Quinn adopted the Bowman name and costume with his mentor's blessing. He eventually trained Fletcher's son, Fletcher II, as the new Arrow.

CENTURION   POWER LEVEL 12

Real Name: Mark Leeds

Identity: Secret | **Occupation:** Student, superhero

Base of Operations: Freedom City | **Affiliation:** Liberty League

Height: 6'1" | **Eyes:** Blue

Weight: 200 lbs. | **Hair:** Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+4	+1	+1	+2	+3
10	18	12	12	14	17

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4/+1*	+4	+7	+5

*flat footed

Skills: Concentration 4 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (history) 5 (+6), Language 1 (Latin), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 8 (+10)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Focus (melee) 2, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Ultimate Effort (Strength checks)

Powers: Immunity 8 (aging, cold, disease, heat, poison, radiation, pressure, starvation), **Impervious Toughness 10**, **Leaping 8**, **Speed 4** (100 mph), **Super-Senses 3** (extended vision, low-light vision, ultra-hearing), **Super-Strength 8** (800 tons)

Combat: Attack +7 (+9 melee), Grapple +32, Damage +15 (unarmed), Defense +9, Knockback –12, Initiative +5

Abilities 73 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 49 + Combat 32 + Saves 9 = Total 178

Although some masked "mystery men" have appeared before him, the Centurion is Freedom City's first true superhero. He was born on a parallel Earth where the Roman Empire never fell, a far more technologically advanced civilization than any on twentieth-century Earth.

Invading forces from the Terminus were on the verge of conquering that Earth when one of its leading scientists placed his infant son in an experimental dimensional capsule and sent it across dimensions to

another world to save his life. Exposure to powerful cosmic energies changed the infant, giving him the potential for tremendous powers.

A "shooting star" seen above Freedom City streaked westward and came quietly to rest in Wharton Forest. Tom Leeds found the capsule with the baby boy inside. Concealing the life-pod, Leeds and his wife Mabel turned the child over to the Danvers Orphanage in the city and adopted him soon thereafter, naming him Mark.

The Leeds raised Mark and, as his powers matured, taught him to use his gifts responsibly. Young Mark Leeds later learned the truth about his origins, the existence of the Terminus, and the world from which he came from a recording device in his life-pod. Fashioning a Romanesque costume to conceal his true identity, he adopted the sobriquet "Centurion" and used his powers to fight crime and injustice. In his secret identity, Mark Leeds is a grad student studying history at Freedom City University (specializing in the Roman Empire, naturally enough).

The Centurion was among the first heroes to respond to President Roosevelt's call to form the Liberty League. He was also quick to turn down any offer to lead the team, deferring to Dr. Tomorrow and Freedom Eagle. Instead, he is a stalwart supporter of the team, looking out for those of his teammates less impervious than he (which is to say, all of them).

Centurion is an earnest man, raised with belief in American values of justice and fairness. He takes the responsibility that comes with his considerable power seriously. Dr. Tomorrow has observed that Centurion would probably jump in front of a bullet to save one of his teammates even if he *wasn't* invulnerable. Visitors from the future can see in him the potential for the great hero he will become.

Note: The traits given here reflect the Centurion in the 1940s, rather than his traits later in life (as given in the *Freedom City* sourcebook).

Feats: Assessment, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Dodge Focus 2, Eidetic Memory, Elusive Target, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Inventor, Jack of All Trades, Leadership, Precise Shot, Quick Draw

Powers: Device 1 (ray gun, easy to lose), **Device 3** (jet-pack and space suit, hard to lose)

Ray Gun: **Blast 5**
Jet Pack: **Flight 3** (50 MPH)
Space Suit: **Immunity 9** (life support)

Combat: Attack +11, Grapple +15, Damage +4 (unarmed), +5 (ray gun), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +8

Abilities 66 + Skills 34 (136 ranks) + Feats 16 + Powers 15 + Combat 38 + Saves 12 = Total 181

Like the Centurion, Tomas Morgen came from an alternate Earth—one where the Axis powers won World War II. Born in 1971 and raised as a "poster boy" of the long-established Nazi regime, Tomas grew up as the shining hope of his government, the Nationalist States of America. Few who knew him ever learned he was the product of an advanced eugenics program to breed the perfect Aryan.

Tomas was a tremendous success: athletic, handsome, brilliant, and genetically perfect in every way. Fortunately, he was also smarter than his Nazi creators gave him credit for. Tomas encountered the underground American Resistance to the Nazis and learned the truth about atrocities his creators committed. He joined the Resistance and helped them to survive against the Nazi commandants of America. In 2002 on his Earth, Tomas led a raid on a Nazi lab and stole an experimental time-travel device, using it to go back into the past, to the day before the attack on Pearl Harbor, to prevent the Axis from winning the war. Nazi scientist Dr. Ernst Geistmann attempted to stop Morgen and was apparently disintegrated, atomized into the time stream.

Tomas arrived in Freedom City the day *after* the attack on Pearl Harbor. He became Thomas Morgan to hide his German background and adopted the code name "Dr. Tomorrow." In this identity, he met with Franklin Roosevelt and convinced the President of the dangers of the Nazis and their plans for the world. Of all of Doc's allies, only FDR, Centurion, and the Freedom Eagle ever learned his true origin. Within 24 hours of his arrival back in time, Dr. Tomorrow forged the Liberty League with the president's blessing to fight the Axis.

What Doc didn't initially know was the Dr. Geistmann was not killed in the activation of the time-device. The doctor *was* atomized, but his consciousness survived somehow, cast adrift on the currents of time, until eddies created by Tomas Morgen's wake drew him to the early 1940s (see **Dr. Geistmann** later in this chapter for details). His Nazi counterpart neutralized a great deal of the advantage Dr. Tomorrow's foreknowledge offered the Allies, and kept the Liberty League out of much of the action in the European and Pacific Theatres of war.

Dr. Tomorrow ("Doc," "Doc Morrow," or occasionally "Tom" to his friends) is literally a man out of time. He carries a heavy responsibility, to prevent his own history from coming to pass. He truly doesn't know enough about temporal mechanics at this point in his career to say whether or not his actions will cause him to cease to exist, one of the reasons he prefers to keep his true history secret (the other being shame at his Nazi origins and upbringing). Doc is awed by the historic figures looking to him for leadership, and he has sworn to do right by both them and the future.

DR. TOMORROW — POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Tomas Morgen/Thomas Morgan	
Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Superhero
Base of Operations: Freedom City	**Affiliation:** Liberty League
Height: 6'1"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 190 lbs.	**Hair:** Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+4	+4	+7	+7	+7
18	18	18	24	24	24

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+4*	+7	+10	+10

*flat footed

Skills: Bluff 4 (+11), Climb 4 (+8), Computers 8 (+15), Concentration 7 (+14), Diplomacy 6 (+13), Disable Device 8 (+15), Drive 8 (+12), Escape Artist 8 (+12), Investigate 8 (+15), Knowledge (history) 9 (+16), Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 (+15), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+15), Language 5 (French, German, Japanese, Latin, Russian), Medicine 4 (+11), Notice 5 (+12), Pilot 8 (+12), Ride 4 (+8), Sense Motive 8 (+15), Stealth 8 (+12), Survival 4 (+11), Swim 4 (+8)

Note: Dr. Tomorrow's anachronistic Computers skill is listed, although it's largely useless to him in the 1940s. His futuristic equipment uses the Device power in the Golden Age era. His original time-travel device is a plot device during the Golden Age, since it doesn't function again until Doc uses it to return home after the war.

ENVOY   POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Sarlyn

Identity: Secret. The general public is not aware Envoy is a Utopian.

Occupation: Envoy, diplomat

Base of Operations: Freedom City

Affiliation: Liberty League

Height: 6"

Eyes: Blue

Weight: 180 lbs.

Hair: Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+6	+5	+6	+3	+4	+3
22	20	22	16	18	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+7/+6*	+10	+10	+7

*flat footed

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+11), Climb 4 (+10), Concentration 6 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+9), Knowledge (technology) 4 (+7), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+7), Language 4 (English, French, German, Russian), Medicine 2 (+6), Notice 4 (+8), Pilot 2 (+7), Ride 2 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+10), Stealth 4 (+9), Survival 6 (+10), Swim 4 (+10)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Attractive, Blind-Fight, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll, Dodge Focus 2, Eidetic Memory, Evasion, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Set-Up, Stunning Attack, Teamwork, Trance

Powers: Device 1 (orichalcum staff, easy to lose), **Immunity 2** (aging, disease, Limited to half effect), **Super-Strength 1** (heavy load: 1,040 lbs.)

Quarterstaff: **Strike 2** (Mighty, Thrown, Feature: collapsible for easy concealment).

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +17, Damage +6 (unarmed), +8 (staff), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +9

Abilities 54 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 19 + Powers 6 + Combat 36 + Saves 12 = Total 143

Sarlyn was born and raised in an advanced, peaceful, and isolated culture on Utopia Isle (detailed in the *Freedom City* sourcebook). Like most Utopians, he grew up vaguely aware of the outside world, but also knowing its inhabitants were dangerous and primitive, and better left to their own devices.

As a young adult, Sarlyn encountered some of the first outsiders ever known on Utopia, when some American planes were lost in the Bermuda Triangle and found their way into the dimensional rift to Utopia. The Utopians learned of war developing in Europe and the Pacific, a war that threatened to engulf the entire world, and that might, in time, even threaten their hidden island. When the Utopians decided to send an envoy to investigate and learn more, they held a series of tests to decide who was most worthy. Sarlyn competed and won.

Sarlyn made his debut helping save American lives in Pearl Harbor, immediately after the Japanese attack. The name "Envoy" stuck when he explained who he was to the surprised soldiers. Although the War Department was frustrated by Envoy's consistent refusal to reveal exactly where he came from, he earned the respect and trust of America and the Allies with his willingness to risk his life to protect freedom and democracy. In turn, Sarlyn has come to care for and respect the people of the outside world.

There's little doubt the Envoy is a stranger in a strange land. He comes from an idyllic world where there is no crime, hatred, prejudice, or war, into a wider world filled with all these things—and people in need of his help and guidance. While Sarlyn might not always know to cross with the green or appreciate a "great set o' gams," he's an earnest and sincere champion of the ideals of his people. On the rare occasions when he needs to adopt a civilian guise, he uses the name "Hans Arlyn" and pretends to be a European refugee (to explain his slight foreign accent).

FREEDOM EAGLE   POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Michael O'Connor

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Engineer

Base of Operations: Freedom City

Affiliation: Liberty League

Height: 5'10"

Eyes: Green

Weight: 175 lbs.

Hair: Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+3	+2	+2
15	16	14	16	15	15

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+2*	+6	+9	+6

*without suit

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Climb 4 (+6), Concentration 4 (+6), Craft (mechanical) 8 (+11), Craft (structural) 6 (+11), Drive 6 (+9), Knowledge (business) 4 (+7), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+11), Notice 8 (+10), Pilot 8 (+11), Profession (engineer) 8 (+10), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Stealth 8 (+11)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, Attack Focus (melee) 2, Defensive Attack, Dodge Focus 2, Elusive Target, Evasion, Favored Environment (aerial) 2, Improvised Tools, Move-by Action, Redirect, Set-Up, Teamwork

Power: Device 5 (flight-suit, hard to lose)

Freedom Eagle Flight-Suit: **Flight 5** (250 MPH), **Protection 4** (Impervious), **Strike 4** (gravity-gauntlets, Mighty), **Super-Strength 2** (Limited to only while flying, heavy load: 800 lbs.)

Combat: Attack +8 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple + 10 (+12 flying, +14 with favored environment bonus), Damage + 6 (unarmed), Defense + 10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback – 3, Initiative +3

Abilities 31 + Skills 23 (92 ranks) + Feats 16 + Powers 20 + Combat 28 + Saves 14 = Total 132

Although he went to school and learned to build airplanes, what Michael O'Connor most wanted to do was fly. He was fascinated by avionics and the development of flight from the time he was a boy, and

quickly became a respected, if somewhat maverick, young designer of aircraft. O'Connor worked to push the envelope, dreaming of jet-rockets, ornithopers, and more, but never dreaming of the opportunity that would find its way to him.

At first, he thought the old folio from the junk shop was a reproduction of a da Vinci or similar Renaissance model of flight, but it didn't match any known drawings. The technical specifications also involved ideas unknown in da Vinci's day, particularly certain rare-earth elements. On the other hand, the physical design was almost primitive, albeit ingenious, little more than feathers affixed to frameworks with wax. Mike immediately set about seeing if he could improve upon it.

It was little more than a hobby, an affectation on the part of a curious engineer. It became more than that when O'Connor discovered the design really worked! An individual flight system, with speed and maneuverability exceeding most planes. It was the discovery of a lifetime. Unfortunately, certain fifth columnists thought so, too. When they discovered Mike O'Connor's discovery, they attempted to steal it, and then to extort it from him when that failed. Donning a costume to hide his identity, O'Connor captured the criminals as the Freedom Eagle.

Although the incredible rarity of the element that made the flight-suit work made it impossible to produce in quantity, O'Connor kept his invention a secret to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. He used the power of flight to capture criminals and save people in distress, and responded to the President's call for mystery men to safeguard the nation when the United States entered the war.

It wasn't until many years later that Mike O'Connor discovered the notes he built his design from originally belonged to Daedalus (an improvement on the wax-bound wings he built in Ancient Crete). The flight-suit's gravity-defying element was a small quantity of daka crystal from Africa.
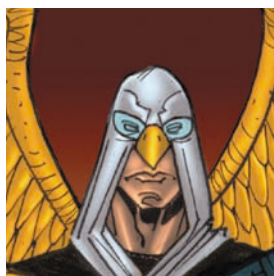
Powers: Super-Speed 8 (2,500 MPH, Alternate Powers: **Air Control 8, Strike 8** [Mighty], Wall Run, Water Run)

Combat: Attack +9 (melee), +7 (ranged), Grapple +10, Damage +9 (unarmed), Defense +14 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –2, Initiative +43

Abilities 20 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 43 + Combat 34 + Saves 17 = Total 139

Johnny Wade loved cars from the moment he first saw one. As a teenager in Freedom City, he became a skilled mechanic with dreams of opening up a garage of his own eventually—dreams that were cut short unexpectedly.

Johnny was driving—dangerously, as he often did—along Bayview Heights when a big truck came barreling the other way. Both vehicles crashed, spilling the experimental rocket fuel the truck carried. Soaked in chemicals and choking for air, Johnny managed to pull himself from the wreckage. There was a spark and a ball of fire blossomed from the fuel tank . . . in slow motion.

Running from the blast as fast as he could, Johnny Wade found himself well over a mile away before the blast rose into the sky and the dull boom caught up with him. He initially allowed the criminals to believe he'd been killed, following the other car at the scene to their hideout, where he used his new super-speed to apprehend them. The crooks heard the "mystery man" call himself "Johnny" and one said, "He moved like a rocket!" The Freedom City press quickly joined the two up and headlines wondered about this new hero "Johnny Rocket."

Johnny responded to the President's call for heroes to join the Liberty League and was the League's youngest official member (second-youngest after the team's "mascot," Bowman's junior partner Arrow). He fought alongside his teammates and quickly earned a reputation for "moving faster than he can think," as Dr. Tomorrow once put it. More than once, the Liberty League hauled Johnny's fat out a fire when he ended up in some Nazi deathtrap or the like. Still, exasperating as his exploits sometimes were, the Leaguer's considered Johnny Rocket a true hero and friend.

John Wade retired from super-heroing not long after the Liberty League disbanded, finally realized his dream to become a full-time mechanic and business-owner. He married and, although his son demonstrated no evidence of having inherited his powers, his grandson and namesake John did, carrying on the family legacy as a member of the modern Freedom League (see the *Freedom City* sourcebook for details).

JOHNNY ROCKET — POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: John Wade	
Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Mechanic
Base of Operations: Freedom City	**Affiliation:** Liberty League
Height: 5'10"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 165 lbs.	**Hair:** Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+2	+1	+1	+2
12	16	14	12	12	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4/+2*	+6	+12	+5

*flat footed

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+7), Bluff 6 (+8), Craft (mechanical) 6 (+7), Disable Device 6 (+7), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+5), Notice 6 (+7), Search 8 (+9)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee) 2, Defensive Roll 2, Dodge Focus 4, Elusive Target, Evasion, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Quick Change, Taunt

LADY LIBERTY — POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Donna Mason	
Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Secretary
Base of Operations: Washington, DC	**Affiliation:** Liberty League
Height: 5'9"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 140 lbs.	**Hair:** Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+10	+3	+2	+1	+3	+4
30/12	16	14	12	17	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+10	+8	+6	+11

Skills: Concentration 8 (+11), Diplomacy 8 (+12), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+6), Notice 6 (+9), Profession (secretary) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 9 (+12)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Endurance, Inspire, Quick Change, Teamwork

Powers: Enhanced Strength 18, **Flight 5** (250 MPH), **Light Control 10** (Alternate Powers: **Deflect 10** [all ranged attacks], **Healing 10**, **Nullify 10** [all binding and imprisoning effects at once]), **Protection 8**, **Super-Strength 6** (50 tons)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +26, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +10, Knockback –5, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Power Loss (all powers, when bound or imprisoned, –5 points)

Abilities 29 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 71 + Combat 40 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 5 = Total 169

Donna Mason, daughter of Virginian Senator William M. Mason, could have found a life of luxury simply by marrying well. Donna was her father's daughter, however, with a keen mind and a desire to do some good in the world. She became a secretary working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, assigned to the dashing agent Dan Bradley.

Although she was careful not to upstage her boss, Donna's keen investigative skills helped Agent Bradley crack many a case. One such involved a cell of fifth columnists in the nation's capitol, where Donna deduced that their target was in fact the Bureau itself. She tried to warn Agent Bradley that he was walking into a trap, but she only succeeded in being shot and left for dead as the spies abducted her boss.
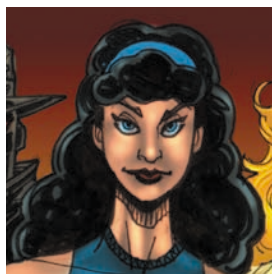
While lying there, close to death, Donna experienced a vision in which the Spirit of Liberty came to her and offered her a choice: save herself or Agent Bradley. She chose another's life over her own without hesitation and the Spirit of Liberty proclaimed her worthy. Donna awakened healed and filled with newfound power, dressed in the red, white, and blue of Lady Liberty!

Lady Liberty saved Agent Bradley and busted up the spy-ring. She continued to show up from time to time when Dan Bradley was in danger or needed her help—and he never noticed that his whip-smart secretary, Donna, was never around when Lady Liberty was on the scene. The Damsel of Democracy was quick to sign-on with the Liberty League, offering to serve as its first recording secretary, despite being one of its most powerful members. This humility was a hallmark of Lady Liberty's career.

Lady Liberty remained active after the war for longer than any Leaguer except Centurion, her lifespan and vitality maintained by her powers. Even her amazing powers eventually faded, though, and with them her heroic career. Donna Mason eventually retired from the hero game, her ultimate fate a matter for *Freedom City* Gamemasters to decide (as detailed in **Chapter 9** of *Freedom City*).

MIDNIGHT   POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Travis Hunter

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Chemist
Base of Operations: Freedom City	**Affiliation:** Liberty League
Height: 6'	**Eyes:** Brown
Weight: 185 lbs.	**Hair:** Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+2	+2	+4
14	16	14	15	15	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+2*	+6	+8	+7

*flat footed

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+7), Bluff 8 (+12), Climb 6 (+7), Concentration 8 (+10), Craft (chemical) 12 (+14), Diplomacy 4 (+8), Disguise 4 (+8), Drive 6 (+9), Escape Artist 4 (+7), Gather Information 6 (+10), Intimidate 8 (+12), Investigate 8 (+10), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+10), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+10), Medicine 2 (+4), Profession (chemist) 8 (+10), Search 8 (+10), Sense Motive 12 (+14), Sleight of Hand 8 (+11), Stealth 12 (+15), Swim 4 (+5)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee) 2, Blind-Fight, Chokehold, Contacts, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 2, Elusive Target, Equipment 5, Evasion, Fascinate (Intimidate), Fearsome Presence 4, Power Attack, Quick Draw (draw), Redirect, Startle, Well-Informed

Powers: Device 1 (midnight mask, hard to lose), **Device 4** (night gun, easy to lose)

Midnight Mask: **Immunity 2** (gases, midnight mist), **Sensory Shield 2** (vision), **Super-Senses 1** (infravision)
Night Gun: **Obscure 3** (visual, Continuous, Fades, Drawback: Cannot reposition, countered by air and wind powers), **Stun 5** (Area Cloud, Touch Range). One use of the night gun's Obscure effect creates a cloud of dark gas that fades at a rate of 1 power point per round, diminishing in size until it is gone.
The Night Cruiser: Use the limousine stats on page 143 of *M&M*.
Midnight Manor: Use the underground lair on page 148 of *M&M*.

Combat: Attack + 12 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple + 11, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +3

Abilities 32 + Skills 37 (148 ranks) + Feats 28 + Powers 19 + Combat 36 + Saves 14 = Total 166

Chemist Travis Hunter hadn't planned on becoming a crime-fighter. His invention of "midnight mist," a chemical gas able to efficiently block out light, was an accidental discovery. Travis first intended to show it off at a Halloween party, dressing up in a dark suit with a cloak and wide-brimmed hat, along with a compact gas mask fitted with infrared lenses that allowed him to see through the mist.

The partygoers heard Orson Wells and the Mercury Theatre broadcast of "War of the Worlds" and, like many that night, mistook it for evidence of an actual alien invasion. Their fears were confirmed when Martians showed up to take seize everyone's valuables! Travis slipped away under the cover of darkness and confronted the Martians as the mysterious Midnight. He showed they were nothing more than thugs dressed up in costumes, taking advantage of the broadcast to carry out their crimes.

Once he saw the potential of his discovery, Travis chose to continue using it as Midnight, fighting against organized crime in Freedom City. The more he saw, the deeper his dedication to justice became, and Midnight quickly became known as the scourge of the underworld. Travis Hunter dedicated himself to police work and forensics in his daylight hours, spending his evenings wielding his famous "night gun" and wearing his featureless mask. Midnight's muffled and filtered voice struck fear into the hearts of criminals and saboteurs everywhere as it emerged from the shadows, just before it seemed to reach out and engulf them in darkness.

Midnight served with the Liberty League from the team's formation until its dissolution, although he tended to keep to himself and revealed fairly little to his teammates. Midnight was among those who refused to retire following the HUAC hearings. He continued to operate as Midnight even as the Freedom City Police Department branded him a vigilante.

Months after the disbanding of the Liberty League, Midnight vanished from the public eye, never to be seen again. The ultimate fate of Travis Hunter and his dark-clad alter ego are left as mysteries for the Gamemaster—and perhaps the heroes—to solve.

PATRIOT

POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Jack Simmons		**Identity:** Secret	
Occupation: Police officer, later government agent			
Base of Operations: Boston, Massachusetts		**Affiliation:** Liberty League	
Height: 6′		**Eyes:** Blue	
Weight: 185 lbs.		**Hair:** Black	

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+6	+6	+6	+1	+2	+2
22	22	22	12	14	15

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6	+10	+10	+7

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+12), Bluff 6 (+8), Climb 4 (+9), Drive 4 (+10), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Notice 6 (+8), Pilot 4 (+10), Search 4 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 6 (+12)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Connected, Defensive Attack, Inspire, Leadership, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Set-Up, Takedown Attack

Combat: Attack + 10, Grapple + 15, Damage +6 (unarmed), Defense + 10 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +6

Abilities 47 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 9 + Combat 40 + Saves 14 = Total 125

Boston police officer Jack Simmons was among the many men who volunteered for Project Patriot, a secret government program to produce a super-soldier. The Patriot Serum included an extract of manaka root, a rare North American plant. Simmons was the program's only successful subject. The serum apparently activated a latent genetic potential within him, making Simmons a near-perfect human specimen. Combined with the training he received, the Patriot became a formidable foe of fascism everywhere.

Patriot served nobly alongside his teammates in the Liberty League. Although not as powerful as Centurion or Lady Liberty, nor as brilliant as Dr. Tomorrow or Freedom Eagle, his never-say-die attitude and devotion to the cause made him a valuable asset to the team. Patriot's devotion to the U.S. government and the Patriot Program were never issues during the war. After all, what hero *wasn't* devoted to the American Way?

It wasn't until after the war that Patriot's loyalties came into conflict. When the U.S. government began investigating the Liberty League, Patriot was expected to report any "suspicious activities" on the part of his teammates. He did so reluctantly, but was willing to do what was necessary to safeguard his country. When the rest of the Liberty League discovered this, it created a rift between them. Patriot chose to resign from the team not long before the League was forced to disband.

Patriot continued working behind-the-scenes as an agent of the United States government, his aging somewhat slowed by his enhanced physiology. When the government founded AEGIS, Jack Simmons was named its first Director, a role he filled for decades before passing his duties on to Harry Powers (as detailed in the *Freedom City* sourcebook).

SIREN

POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Lynn Sidon

Identity: Secret | **Occupation:** Singer

Base of Operations: New York City | **Affiliation:** Liberty League

Height: 5′8″ | **Eyes:** Green

Weight: 110 lbs. | **Hair:** Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+1	+1	+0	+2	+4
10	12	12	10	15	19

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+5/+1*	+4	+6	+7

*flat footed

Skills: Bluff 6 (+10), Concentration 4 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 4 (+4), Knowledge (popular culture) 6 (+6), Language 2 (Atlantean, French), Notice 6 (+8), Perform (singing) 8 (+12), Profession (singer) 8 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Swim 12 (+12)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 3, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 2, Environmental Adaptation (aquatic), Fascinate (Perform), Inspire

Powers: Immunity 2 (cold, drowning), **Sonic Control 9** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 9**, **Blast 9** [Area Burst, Touch Range], **Blast 9** [Area Cone, Touch Range], **Nauseate 6** [Ranged], **Stun 6** [Ranged]), **Swimming 6** (Alternate Power: Flight 4 [Gliding]), **Super-Movement 1** (Water Walking), **Super-Senses 3** (direction sense, low-light vision, mystic awareness)

Combat: Attack + 6 (melee), +9 (ranged), Grapple +6, Damage + 0 (unarmed), +9 (blast), Defense + 12 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –2, Initiative + 1

Abilities 18 + Skills 17 (68 ranks) + Feats 12 + Powers 37 + Combat 32 + Saves 13 = Total 129

Lynn Sidon worked as a lounge-singer in clubs and bars in New York City. Like many attractive young women, she came to the city with dreams of fame. Unlike most, she achieved them, at least for a time. People flocked to hear her sultry torch songs; there was talk of recordings and radio gigs. Her career was blossoming when she was invited on-board an Atlantic cruise as a guest and headline performer.

Her dreams of stardom were further away than she realized, though. A German U-boat targeted and torpedoed the ship, which quickly sank. Although many on-board managed to reach the lifeboats, Lynn was not among them. She quickly grew numb in the icy waters and sank into darkness. The last thing she saw was a strange light and a handsome face looking curiously at her from the depths.

Although she didn't expect to awaken, Lynn did, on a fine bed in a palatial chamber… underwater. To her great shock, she discovered she was able to breathe. The handsome stranger from her vision entered the chamber and explained he was Prince Thallor of the lost city of Atlantis. Often curious about the surface world, he observed the ship and heard Lynn's singing. He rescued her and recognized in her an ancient prophecy about a siren of the surface world. He took her to a deep-sea cave, a hidden Atlantean temple where the prophecy was fulfilled and the power of the Sirens infused her body.

Although grateful to Thallor, Lynn wished to return to the surface world. The Atlantean prince faced difficulties in his own kingdom—civil war raged in Atlantis—so they were forced to part. Sidon returned home with a story of a miraculous rescue at sea and began using her powers to fight crime and saboteurs as the sultry Siren.

THE ALLIES OF FREEDOM

While the Liberty League battled the Axis on the home front, the Allies of Freedom operated primarily in the European Theatre of war from 1942 through 1945.

Le Guillotine and la Renard Rogue led French Resistance cells in central and southern France. Golemeth fought to free his fellow Jews from amidst the Polish ghettos. Der Weiße Dorn and die Weiße Rose—White Thorn and White Rose—fought a rebel action against the Hitler Youth and the Nazi propaganda machine within Germany. Spitfire Jones and Lady Celtic battled the Blitz over London, and the Mehire fought against Romany persecution, despite being an outcast from his own gypsy tribe.

Wilhelm Kantor brought the Allies of Freedom together in December of 1941. As part of a plot to exterminate all resistance to the Third Reich in Europe in a single stroke, Kantor leaked intelligence to a number of European heroes of a new Nazi super-weapon being tested in the port town of Utska, Poland. Eight heroes took the bait, and Kantor's *Übersoldaten* ambushed them. Golemeth, le Guillotine, and the Gypsy hero Mehire died during the battle, but their sacrifice allowed the other five heroes to regroup and escape.

The survivors made it back to London, where they learned America had joined the war effort after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Allied commanders brought in a sixth member for the team, the American Sarge Shrapnel. The six, while initially wary, grew into a tight-knit unit effective at harassing German holdings in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. When the Human Tank and Gunner joined the team in June of '42, they had the strength and the unity that allowed them to make strikes deep into Germany and Poland.

The Liberty League operated independently throughout the war on Doctor Tomorrow's "secret intelligence sources" (namely his knowledge of the future), while the Allies of Freedom worked directly with the European Theater's central command and often supported allied advances. This difference proved key in how their fame grew as well. The League was well known in America for its newsreel-ready exploits. The AF, however, grew famous in the eyes of the European people (especially the French Resistance) and the soldiers with whom they served. While rumors and footage of their exploits reached American shores, it wasn't until after the war was over that most Americans back home heard of the heroism of the Allies of Freedom. Unfortunately, most of the heroes never lived to see it.

The AF's darkest days were the end of March 1945. Wilhelm Kantor fled Germany as the Reich fell around him. He ordered his protégé Nacht-Krieger to slay any Allied superhumans he could and prevent his

capture. The Allies discovered this plan and intercepted their nemeses, though they unwisely split up their forces to tackle a number of different ongoing threats. With newly enhanced powers, Nacht-Krieger cut a terrible swath through the Allies: only the Human Tank and Gunner and the light-bearers White Rose and White Thorn survived, the latter giving their lives to imprison Nacht-Krieger beneath the ocean near Freedom City. The Human Tank and Gunner perished in occupied Japan shortly after V-J Day, murdered by the Japanese super-soldier Crimson Katana.

The Allies of Freedom remain renowned heroes in Europe, particularly honored by twelve-foot high statues in a park in Lourdes, France, for their role in aiding the French Resistance and freeing the nation from Nazi tyranny.

THE HUMAN TANK — POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Henry "Hank" Griffin

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Soldier

Base of Operations: Freedom City

Affiliation: Allies of Freedom

Height: 6'3"

Eyes: White (no pupils, originally grey)

Weight: 350 lbs.

Hair: Dark silver (originally brown)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+12	+2	+10	+0	+2	+1
34	14	30	10	14	13

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+12	+4	+5

Skills: Craft (mechanical) 8 (+8), Drive 6 (+8), Intimidate 8 (+9), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+4), Profession (mechanic) 6 (+8), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Assessment, Attack Focus (melee) 2, Endurance, Interpose, Power Attack, Takedown Attack

Powers: Alternate Form 7 (metal, **Density 4** [+8 Str, Immovable 2, Impervious Protection 2, Super-Strength 1], **Immunity 9** [life support], **Impervious Toughness 6** (8 total), **Super-Strength 4** [5 total, heavy load: 44 tons]; Permanent), **Super-Senses 1** (radio, via metallic resonance)

Combat: Attack +8 (melee), +6 (ranged), Grapple +25, Damage +12 (unarmed), Defense +8, Knockback –10, Initiative +2

Abilities 47 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 36 + Combat 28 + Saves 7 = Total 134

Hank was the second child of Margaret and Henry Griffin. When they died in a car accident, the eleven-year-old Hank and his six-year-old brother Tommy went to live with their older sister Shelly and her husband, metallurgist Dr. Michael MacLain, in Freedom City. Hank became obsessed with cars and a skilled mechanic and driver, which made him useful in Michael's lab filled with mechanical inventions and the fact that "Doc" had poor depth perception and didn't drive.

When Fifth columnists in Freedom City sabotaged the lab, Hank, Tommy, and Doc were caught in the initial explosion. Hank tackled Tommy and used his own body to shield his brother from the spray of liquid super-metal. Hank threw off the rubble and found his skin, organs, and muscles were now all metal. Tommy, who'd been trapped under him, could pull the metal out of the air, just as he breathed in the super-metal in the air from the lab. Their sister and her husband were both dead.

The Human Tank and Gunner captured the saboteurs and turned them over to the military at Lonely Point. Despite his little brother's age, Hank accepted a request to volunteer their powers for the war effort. The brothers immediately went to Europe to join other allied superhumans in the Allies of Freedom, a team under the command of the Allied military commanders. Their main liaison was Major Richard Monroe of the O.S.S.

Hank, as the Human Tank, was the powerhouse of the team, yet his humility and quiet humor belied his metallic power. Still, shortly after arriving in Europe, he fell in love with Lady Celtic. They were married on New Year's Day 1943, their twin children born in mid-1944.

Hank was seriously wounded by Nacht-Krieger when he attempted to prevent the Nazi's escape from Europe. His wife, Lady Celtic, was killed. After weeks grieving for her and his other lost comrades, Hank placed his children in the safekeeping of his wife's younger sister and he and Tommy returned to duty.

Human Tank and Gunner helped end the war with Japan and stayed to help the allies restore the country. Both of them fell in love with Japan and its culture, and the Human Tank began making plans to have his children brought to Osaka to live. Before that could happen, however, on October 17, 1946 the Crimson Katana murdered the Human Tank and Gunner in their sleep.

GUNNER — POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Thomas "Tommy" Griffin

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Superhero, partner of the Human Tank

Base of Operations: Freedom City

Affiliation: Allies of Freedom

Height: 5'3"

Eyes: Green

Weight: 105 lbs.

Hair: Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+4	+1	+2	+1
12	16	18	12	14	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4	+7	+6	+5

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+7), Bluff 6 (+7), Climb 4 (+5), Drive 2 (+5), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Pilot 2 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+8)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Attack Specialization (blast), Beginner's Luck, Dodge Focus 2, Move-by Action, Precise Shot, Set-Up

Powers: Blast 7 (metal slugs, Autofire), **Physical Absorption 8** (Healing, Limited to metal projectiles, –2)

Combat: Attack +5 (melee), +7 (ranged), +9 (blast), Grapple +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), +7 (blast), Defense +12 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –2, Initiative +3

Abilities 24 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 37 + Combat 30 + Saves 9 = Total 117

Tommy Griffin and his brother Hank lived in one of two apartments above Doctor Michael MacLean's laboratory in Port Regal. Their sister, Shelly, and her husband lived in the other apartment. Tommy swept the floors in the laboratory where "Doc" worked on forging an experimental
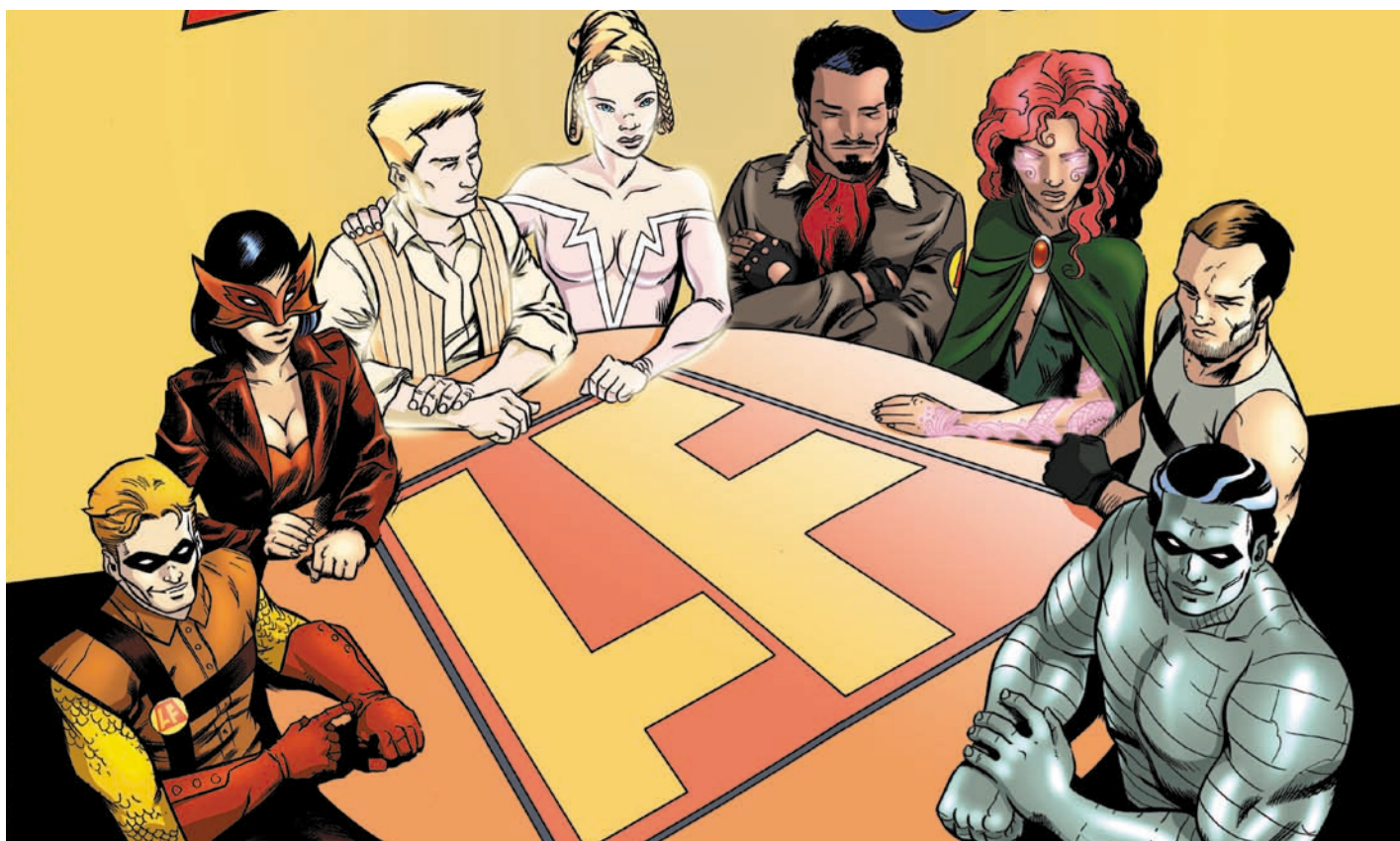
super-metal for lighter and stronger ships and planes.

On May 20th, 1942, some Fifth columnists in Freedom City sabotaged the building. Tommy, Hank, and Doc were in the lab when the explosions occurred. Doc died instantly, while Hank tried to shield Tommy from the explosion and the spray of liquid super-metal. Secondary explosions around the building's support columns brought it all down on them, and Shelly died when the upper floors crashed to the ground. Hank shrugged the rubble off of them and he and Tommy crawled from the wreckage, vowing revenge for their family's death. The liquid super-metal changed both of them. Hank's skin and muscles transformed into "living metal," Tommy gained the power to absorb metals and project sprays of metallic projectiles.

Hank and Tommy became the Human Tank and Gunner. They captured the saboteurs who killed Doc and Shelly and turned them over to the military authorities at Lonely Point. Both of them volunteered to use their powers for the war effort and were almost immediately sent to Europe. Once there, Major Richard Monroe assigned them to work with other allied superhumans in the Allies of Freedom, a team under the command of the Allied military commanders.

Tommy was the youngest member of the Allies, and remained a member until its dissolution in 1945. He and Hank both were seriously wounded in the final battle against Nacht-Krieger. Before he passed out from shock, Gunner boasted, "You wouldn't last a minute against the Liberty League, Ratzi…" When he regained consciousness, he learned of Lady Celtic's death. He and Hank left England soon after her funeral.

The Human Tank and Gunner helped end the war with Japan and stayed to help the allies restore the country. Both of them fell in love with Japan and its culture, and Gunner actually started developing his powers to project metallic stars like Japanese *shuriken* instead of just "bullets." The Japanese super-agent Crimson Katana murdered both Gunner and his brother in their sleep. Tommy Griffin was only 19 years old.

LADY CELTIC — POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Amanda Phipps-Gordon

Identity: Public	**Occupation:** Archeologist, mystic
Base of Operations: Freedom City	**Affiliation:** Allies of Freedom
Height: 5'6"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 106 lbs.	**Hair:** Red

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+1	+3	+4	+3
12	14	12	16	18	17

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+11/+1*	+5	+5	+8

*without force field

Skills: Concentration 8 (+12), Knowledge (arcane lore) 8 (+11), Knowledge (earth sciences) 4 (+7), Knowledge (history) 8 (+11), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 (+11), Language 6 (French, Gaelic, German, Italian, Polish, Russian), Investigate 2 (+5), Notice 4 (+8), Profession (archeologist) 8 (+12), Search 4 (+7), Sense Motive 4 (+8)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 3, Move-by Action

Powers: Flight 3 (50 MPH), **Force Field 10** (Impervious), **Magic 10** (Mystic Blast, Spells (Alternate Powers): **ESP 5** [all senses], **Healing 10**, **Obscure 5** [visual, auditory, scent], **Paralyze 6** [ranged], **Telekinesis 10**)

Combat: Attack +7 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +8, Damage +1 (unarmed), +10 (mystic blast), Defense +9, Knockback –10 (–0 without force field), Initiative +2

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Flight, Force Field, and Magic, if unable to speak and gesture to cast spells, –3 points)

Abilities 29 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 51 + Combat 32 + Saves 11 – Drawbacks 3 = Total 140

Amanda Phipps-Gordon was a privileged young woman of a socially prominent Oxford family. Much to her father's chagrin, she spent her time during and after university digging up peat bogs, searching for artifacts of Britain's Celtic past.

In 1938, she found more than she ever dreamed when she unearthed some human remains, possibly a druidic sacrifice, or so it seemed at first. When Amanda touched the mummified flesh, glowing Celtic knotwork design flowed up her hand and onto her. As they did, strange visions and voices flooded her mind, and she passed out.

She was in a coma for 49 hours, all the while learning magic and lore from the spirit of Aodh Cobhan, the druid whose body she had found. He taught her to wield magic that was ancient before the Romans came to British Isles, and told her of her destiny to help protect the land and its people. She awoke in an Oxford hospital, Celtic tattoos running up her arms to her face and neck; her first sight was her father glaring down at her disapprovingly. His staunch Anglican upbringing left no room for a daughter covered in pagan symbols, and he disowned her once she obviously had her health back.

Only days later, Lady Celtic saved her colleagues at the dig site from Aodh's ancient foe, "Blackthorn" Domhnull, an evil sorcerer Aodh had imprisoned in death. Amanda's former fiancé, Roger, had found Blackthorn's black iron torc and was possessed, his head wreathed in mystic flames. Amanda had to kill Roger to separate him from the torc and Blackthorn's evil. Grieving for her lost love, she secretly buried the torc in a Scottish bog to keep its evil contained for another millennium (though Blackthorn would actually arise again in only a few years to plague the Centurion).

Lady Celtic won the hearts of the British people by saving Princesses Elizabeth and Anne from harm when German kidnappers tried to abduct them from Balmoral Castle. She gladly joined the war effort and remained with her newfound friends in the Allies of Freedom despite their losses at Utska. When the Human Tank and Gunner joined the team in 1942, she initially struck some sparks with the metallic American. They fought well together, however, and it was not long before Amanda fell in love with her American "knight of shining armor." They were married by 1943 and had twins, Avril and Troy, in 1944. While Amanda hated her time away from her adopted family and her husband, she was relieved at being ordered out of action for six months before and after her children's birth. She also managed to reconcile with her estranged family.

Lady Celtic rejoined the Allies, but most of their missions by that time were liberating death camps and trying to catch fleeing members of the Nazi high command. Lady Celtic died healing her severely wounded hus-

band and brother-in-law, not realizing Nacht-Krieger's newly enhanced powers would allow him to slash through her mystic shields. She was given a state funeral at Westminster Abbey and laid to rest in the family plot in Oxford.

LA RENARD ROGUE   POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Amelie Dutemps

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Spy and secret agent
Base of Operations: Europe	**Affiliation:** Allies of Freedom
Height: 5'4"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 118 lbs.	**Hair:** Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+3	+2	+4
14	16	15	16	15	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+2*	+6	+9	+6

*flat footed

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+11), Bluff 8 (+12), Climb 4 (+6), Craft (chemical) 4 (+7), Diplomacy 12 (+16), Disable Device 6 (+9), Disguise 8 (+12), Drive 4 (+7), Escape Artist 4 (+7), Gather Information 12 (+16), Intimidate 4 (+8), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+11), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+11), Language 2 (English, German), Notice 4 (+6), Pilot 4 (+7), Search 4 (+7), Sleight of Hand 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+11), Survival 4 (+6)

Feats: Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 2, Elusive Target, Endurance, Equipment 2, Evasion, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Inspire 2, Leadership, Master Plan, Precise Shot, Sneak Attack, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Taunt, Uncanny Dodge (hearing)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +12, Damage +2 (unarmed), +3 (pistol), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +7

Abilities 34 + Skills 31 (124 ranks) + Feats 26 + Combat 36 + Saves 14 = Total 141

Amelie Dutemps learned to hunt and shoot and fight from her father, who wanted her to be as capable as any boy. He also raised her to have pride in her French heritage and history, telling her stories of the Revolution and past heroes. Amelie's parents died after France fell to the Blitzkrieg, when they refused to give up their house to an arrogant Nazi officer, who shot them on the spot. Amelie escaped and swore her revenge.

Amelie Dutemps built the reputation of *la Renard Rogue* and her resistance cell by masterminding daring acts of sabotage against the Nazis and the Vichy collaborators. She worked infrequently with another French hero, the knife-wielding Guillotine, but preferred to rely on herself and those who followed her orders. Although many Nazi's attributed her superhuman powers, la Renard Rogue relied solely on a combination of skills, wits, trickery, and luck, along with her impressive tactical insights.

She smelled a trap at Utska, but could not get enough of the team to listen to her over the respected but arrogant Guillotine. In fact, the only reason any Allies of Freedom survived that day was the noble sacrifice of Golemeth and the Mehire and the Rogue Fox's strategies. Despite

being the only member without superpowers, Amelie earned and kept the respect of her teammates.

Indeed, the Renard Rogue had a fearsome reputation among the Nazi occupiers of France. She was known as a mistress of disguise, able to come and go by a hundred secret ways. Some of this was due to Amelie's Resistance agents acting in her name, but the reputation was well deserved nonetheless.

A workaholic before the term was even coined, Amelie drove herself beyond exhaustion in the waning days of the war. The day they heard of Kantor's flight out of Germany, she stayed on her feet despite a 102-degree fever. She split the team up to deal with potential threats at three different air bases in hopes of catching the fleeing Kantor and Nacht-Krieger. When she and Jones and Sarge confronted Kantor, she could hardly stand. The Rogue Fox had outwitted herself, and Kantor shot her dead. She received the honors due a true heroine of the people of France, her name honored in her homeland to this day.

SERGEANT SHRAPNEL — POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Anthony "Tony" Gorman

Identity: Secret | **Occupation:** Soldier
Base of Operations: Europe | **Affiliation:** Allies of Freedom
Height: 5'11" | **Eyes:** Brown
Weight: 198 lbs. | **Hair:** Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+2	+4	+1	+1	+1
17	15	18	12	13	13

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+10	+11	+7	+8

Skills: Craft (mechanical) 6 (+7), Disable Device 4 (+5), Drive 4 (+6), Intimidate 8 (+9), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+7), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (soldier) 4 (+5), Search 4 (+5), Sleight of Hand 4 (+6)

Feats: Dodge Focus 2, Equipment 3 (field weapons), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack

Powers: Protection 6, Nullify 10 (all machinery, Nullifying Field), **Strike 10** (Area Explosion, shrapnel or exploding machinery)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +13, Damage +3 (unarmed), +10 (strike, vs. machines), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –5, Initiative +6

Abilities 28 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 46 + Combat 36 + Saves 19 = Total 150

Tony Gorman married his high school sweetheart and enlisted in the Army in 1935 due to the lack of jobs during the Depression. A career soldier, Tony never rose too high in the enlisted ranks due to his inability to play politics or put up with arrogant commanders. By September of 1941, he had made it to sergeant for his second time when he and his friend Sergeant Wallace Allen encountered a flying silver disk that "moved quicker than any plane and
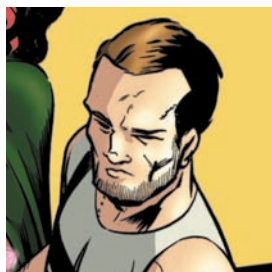
turned on a dime." The UFO, as it was later classified, enveloped both men with an energy beam. Another soldier found them unconscious with no signs of foul play. They woke up a day later in the base hospital.

When they left the hospital, Tony got into his car, only to have it promptly fell to pieces around him. Wally helped his friend out of the wreckage. When he touched the metal, however, the car flew back together and worked better than ever. After a long battery of tests, the Army concluded the two men possessed powers affecting machinery—one caused it to fail and fall apart, while the other improved it to the best of its designed ability . They soon learned to control their powers, though the nicknames they picked up in testing—Sarge Shrapnel and Allen Wrench—quickly stuck.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Wally got transferred to help Army engineers create better prototype planes and weapons (he eventually ended up on the Manhattan Project and died of radiation sickness from early experiments). Tony became the military's first enlisted super-human, shipped overseas to aid the British and be America's Ally of Freedom. The team, demoralized by their defeat in Poland, brightened with the gregarious Sarge in their midst. While there was a definable chemistry between Amelie (Renard Rogue) and Tony, neither acted on it, as Tony remained in love and faithful to his wife back at home.

Sarge Shrapnel died alongside other members of the Allies of Freedom confronting Wilhelm Kantor and Nacht-Krieger. His wife, Carol, discovered she was pregnant following her last all-too-brief reunion with her husband. Tony Gorman's son, Nicholas Gorman, also possessed super-powers. He worked as an agent for AEGIS in the 1960s using the code-name ShrapNick.

SPITFIRE JONES — POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Horatio David Jones

Identity: Secret | **Occupation:** Pilot, adventurer
Base of Operations: Europe | **Affiliation:** Allies of Freedom
Height: 5'8" | **Eyes:** Grey
Weight: 144 lbs. | **Hair:** Dark brown

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+4	+4	+0	+1	+4
16	19	18	10	12	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4	+7	+9	+5

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+12), Bluff 6 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 12 (+13), Pilot 6 (+10), Profession (soldier) 4 (+5), Search 8 (+8)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attractive, Dodge Focus 4, Evasion, Fast Overrun, Luck 2, Move-by Action, Taunt, Throwing Mastery 3, Uncanny Dodge (visual)

Powers: Flight 6 (500 MPH), **Immunity 1** (cold), **Sensory Shield 5** (all senses), **Super-Senses 4** (danger sense [visual], direction sense, extended vision, low-light vision), **Super-Strength 8** (Limited to while in flight, heavy load: 29 tons)

Combat: Attack +11, Grapple +14 (+22 in flight), Damage +3 (unarmed), +6 (thrown objects), Defense +14 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –2, Initiative +4

Abilities 33 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 16 + Powers 35 + Combat 42 + Saves 12 = Total 150

David Jones became an RAF flier out of necessity: it was the most exclusive and exciting military posting one could have, and Jones always fought to be the center of attention. During a training mission in late 1939 over the Irish Sea, David's plane flew through strange glowing fog that seeped into his cockpit but apparently had no ill effects.

Only when his plane got shot down by enemy bombers over London did he realize what had happened. He flew out of the burning cockpit and began ripping wings off of German planes. David could fly under his own power, leaving a glowing contrail behind him. While in flight, he possess tremendous strength, but it faded to normal levels when he slowed or touched down. He can also throw objects with greater than normal force.

After his public debut, David became "Spitfire Jones" and a media darling. Attempts to pair him with Lady Celtic worked to help London, but in private the pair barely tolerated each other due to class and personal differences. Despite his overbearing self-confidence and lothario nature, Spitfire Jones was a hero. He prevailed in the retreat from Utska, as his great strength while in flight allowed him to carry everyone inside one of Lady Celtic's force fields. When the Americans arrived to join the team, Jones embraced Gunner and Sarge Shrapnel, but struck sparks with the Human Tank at times.

Even though he respected his female teammates, Spitfire Jones was also a Casanova, the hero with a girl in every port. He had the dubious honor of being captured more times than any other Ally, as he fell for every Nazi *femme fatale* he met. His most tangled encounters involved the infamous Madame Blitz; the two of them struggled with having deep feelings for each other, despite their conflicting loyalties.

By 1945, even the ever-glib Spitfire Jones was sick of war and constant battle. Like Rogue Fox, Jones was ill the final day they flew to Wilhelm Kantor and the Nacht-Krieger. (This fact alone leads many to speculate whether Jones and the Fox had a romantic relationship at this point in the war, a rumor never corroborated but much debated.) His overconfidence finally got the better of him when Spitfire Jones tried to brush aside Nacht-Krieger to get at Kantor. The Nazi super-soldier's enhanced powers were more than a match for the British hero, and he dealt Jones a mortal injury with a single blow.

WHITE ROSE — POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Sophia "Sophie" Shaal	
Identity: Public	**Occupation:** Mystic
Base of Operations: Europe	**Affiliation:** Allies of Freedom
Height: 5'9"	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 108 lbs.	**Hair:** Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+4	+2	+2	+2	+3
13	18	14	15	14	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+10/+2*	+4	+6	+8

*without force field

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Bluff 6 (+9), Concentration 8 (+10), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Disable Device 2 (+4), Escape Artist 4 (+8), Gather Information 8 (+11), Notice 4 (+6), Search 4 (+6), Sleight of Hand 4 (+8)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Evasion, Improved Initiative

Powers: Flight 4 (100 MPH, Limited to while in contact with White Thorn), **Force Field 8** (Impervious), **Immunity 1** (her powers and her brother's), **Light Control 10** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 10**, **Create Object 10**, Limited: powers at rank 9 when not in contact with White Thorn), **Super-Senses 1** (mental communication link with White Thorn)

Combat: Attack +9, Grapple +10, Damage +1 (unarmed), +10 (blast), Defense +10, Knockback –9, Initiative +4

Abilities 30 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 43 + Combat 38 + Saves 10 = Total 137

Wolfgang and Sophia Shaal were born in 1925 to Gertrude and Helmut Shaal, a housefrau and a university professor of literature and folklore, respectively. As a highly educated intellectual, Helmut knew he and his family were in danger under Hitler's rule. He wanted to get his family safely out of Germany, and begin to plan their exit from the increasingly volatile country of their birth.

Like so many others, however, Helmut underestimated the amount of time he had in which to act. On November 9th, 1938, SS officers murdered Helmut and Gertrude Shaal during the *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass in English), a Nazi pogrom against the Jewish population. A Czech friend of Helmut's, Honza Krisovar, managed to escape with young Sophie and Wolfgang. Honza was a minor mystic and acquainted with the potential inherent in the Shaal children. He sacrificed his own life to see the twins safely placed in a sanctuary controlled by the Order of Light.

A mystic rite awakened the twins' potential and they became the new Light-bearers, wielders of an ancient and sacred power known since the dawn of history. Their powers were antithetical to the darkness commanded by Thule magician Wilhelm Kantor and his agent, Nacht-Krieger.

As teens, Wolfgang and Sophie fought battles all over occupied Europe against the Nazis and even ran a counter-propaganda campaign against the Hitler Youth brainwashing of Germany's children. Originally dismissed as legends, *die Weiße Rose* and *der Weiße Dorn*—White Rose and White Thorn—became implacable foes of the Nazi High Command, especially Himmler and his SS, and Wilhelm Kantor and the Thule Society.

The White Rose and Thorn did some work with resistance groups and were lured to Utska, Poland with other European heroes. The twins were forced to trust outsiders for the first time. The normally shy Sophie was able to convince her hot-tempered brother to accept the offer to join the Allies of Freedom, firmly believing they could do more together than apart.

White Rose fought valiantly alongside her teammates throughout the war. Her soothing presence helped to moderate her twin brother's fiery temper, which was never stronger than when Sophie's beauty and good nature lured would-be suitors like moths to a flame. She sacrificed her life in 1945 to create the mystic prison that held Nacht-Krieger in the ocean depths near Freedom City for decades.

WHITE THORN — POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Wolfgang Shaal

Identity: Public

Occupation: Mystic

Base of Operations: Europe

Affiliation: Allies of Freedom

Height: 6'3"

Eyes: Blue

Weight: 212 lbs.

Hair: Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+2	+3	+1	+2	+2
16	15	16	13	15	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+11/+3*	+8	+5	+7

*without force field

Skills: Bluff 4 (+6), Concentration 8 (+10), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Disable Device 4 (+5), Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 6 (+7), Language 2 (English, French), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 6 (+8)

Feats: Attractive, Favored Environment (aerial), Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Shot

Powers: Flight 4 (100 MPH, Limited to while in contact with White Rose), **Force Field 8** (Impervious), **Immunity 1** (his powers and his sister's), **Light Control 10** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 10**, **Create Object 10**, Limited: powers at rank 9 when not in contact with White Rose), **Super-Senses 1** (mental communication link with White Rose)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +13, Damage +3 (unarmed), +10 (blast), Defense +9, Knockback –9, Initiative +2

Abilities 29 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 43 + Combat 38 + Saves 13 = Total 139

White Thorn nearly died as a fourth casualty at Utska, Poland, when the Allies of Freedom first formed. Recognizing Wilhelm Kantor as the man who led the SS troops that murdered his parents, Wolfgang ignored all precautions and vowed to kill the SS officer immediately. Only the Mehire's intervention prevented Wolfgang from making what would have been a suicidal attack.

Wolfgang spent much of the war obsessing over destroying Kantor above all others. While the other Allies sometimes relaxed and enjoyed each other's company, Wolfgang's single-mindedness separated him from everyone except his sister. His hot temper sometimes clashed with other members of the Allies, particularly Spitfire Jones, on those occasions when it appeared Jones was getting too close to Sophie.

After the battle that decimated the Allies, the Light-bearers pursued Nacht-Krieger across the Atlantic and fought him off the coast of Freedom City. Only by combining their powers could they weave the cage of light to hold the Shadow Warrior prisoner. Sophie sacrificed herself to accomplish it, while Wolfgang spent decades imprisoned with his hated foe, unable to divert his power from the prison long enough to strike a final blow.

While the mystic powers coursing through the light-prison sustained Wolfgang, his sanity suffered. When Overshadow freed Nacht-Krieger

in the 1960s, White Thorn pursued him with single-minded fury. This brought him into conflict with the contemporary heroes Scarab and Beacon, who wielded Sophie's Light-bearer potential. Recognizing Beacon as the new Light-bearer, Wolfgang willingly sacrificed himself to help imprison Nacht-Krieger once more, passing on his remaining potential to Beacon. He was finally able to rejoin his beloved sister and friends in "the light beyond life."

OTHER ALLIED HEROES

Various other heroes operated in and for the Allied nations during World War II and later in the Golden Age, but were either not part of a regular team or not as prominent as the other heroes described in this chapter. They include the following notables:

BEACON

Langston Albright acquired the power and responsibility of the Light-bearer following the death of Sophie Shaal near Freedom City. He became a latter-day member of the Liberty League and was an active hero in Freedom City for many years. Later, Beacon became the sole inheritor of the Light-bearer legacy (gaining White Thorn's powers as well). As detailed in *Freedom City,* Beacon founded the Albright Institute after his retirement and is presently searching for a worthy successor to the powers and responsibility of the Light-bearer.

BRITANNIA

Anne Pennington was invested during the Blitz with the power of the Spirit of Britain, making her the latest to wear the mantle of Britannia, the defender of the isles. She operated in Britain and Europe during the war, helping to protect London and other vital sites as well as engaging German super-soldiers in battle. Eldrich once implied that Britannia and Lady Liberty's powers stemmed from a similar source, although, as usual, the Master Mage declined to elaborate. You can use the Golden Age Lady Liberty's traits as a model for Britannia's as well. Although she lost the power of Britannia decades ago, Anne Pennington remains surprisingly vital in her 90s, the grand-dame of the British super-set.

CODENAME KILROY

One of the most mysterious figures of Freedom City's Golden Age is the OSS agent codenamed "Kilroy." He is a master of disguise, able to take on almost any appearance, and he operates worldwide, although primarily in the European Theatre up until V-E Day. He's infamous for leaving "Kilroy was here" scrawled at the location of his mission after the fact.

Kilroy continued working for the U.S. government after the war. He is supposedly interred in the Tomb of the Unknown Hero in Riverside Park in Freedom City, although it's unknown if his body was moved to the tomb sometime after it was erected or if he died much later and was placed in the until-then empty tomb (a matter left for the GM to decide). You can use the Master of Disguise archetype on page 219 of *M&M* for Kilroy's traits.

DR. ATOM

Dr. Alexander Atom was a sometime ally of the Liberty League during the war and afterward, although a good portion of the doctor's time was taken up by his research and his own adventures in far-off and mysterious places. Dr. Atom spent some time in France as an American agent assisting the French Resistance in addition to working with scientists on the Manhattan Project during the later years of the war. For modern information on Dr. Atom and his grandchildren (the Atom Family) see the *Freedom City* sourcebook.

ELDRICH

Master Mage Adrian Eldrich was active during the Golden Age, although he was only a sometime ally of the Liberty League. Eldrich's arcane powers were somewhat weaker during the Golden Age period immediately following his initial defeat of Malador the Mystic; use Eldrich's modern-day traits, but lower his Magic power to rank 9 and his Force Field power to rank 7. Eldrich primarily contended with Axis magicians, including the Thule Society and the Green Dragon Society, behind the scenes, focusing on keeping arcane artifacts and secrets out of their hands.

LANTERN JACK

The spectral defender of Lantern Hill in Freedom City is essentially unchanged during the Golden Age era, active again after many years of obscurity. His lantern shines out as a becaon of hope to many in the dark days of the war years. Lantern Jack restricts his activities to Freedom City, particularly his haunts on Lantern Hill, but is known to thwart both mystic menaces and mundane threats to the city during the Golden Age. His traits remain unchanged from the *Freedom City* sourcebook.

DIE ÜBERSOLDATEN

The most feared foes of the Golden Age were the superhuman soldiers of the Axis powers. In particular, Germany's *Übersoldaten,* "super-soldiers," were renowned for their cruelty and sinister cunning. Naturally, the smartest and most ambitious of the Nazi super-soldiers also had agendas of their own. Their behind-the-scenes conflicts kept them at each other's throats as much as pitting them against Allied heroes like the Liberty League brought them together. The rest of the *Übersoldaten* were little more than super-powered brutes, doing as ordered by their superiors and lacking the motivation or dedication found among the Allied heroes.

Note that many *Übersoldaten* and other German agents in the field may have a squad or more of soldiers at their command and possibly access to equipment provided by the military. These resources are not reflected in their game information and are assigned as the Gamemaster sees fit.

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+7), Climb 13 (+18), Craft (electronic) 8 (+15), Craft (mechanical) 8 (+15), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 (+15), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+15), Notice 8 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+12)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Improved Pin, Inventor, Master Plan, Power Attack

Powers: Device 20 (easy to lose), **Growth 4** (Permanent, Innate), **Super-Senses 2** (low-light vision, scent)

Combat: Attack +8 (includes –1 due to size, Damage +5 (unarmed or by device), Defense +8 (includes –1 due to size), Initiative +2

Note: Assign Dr. Geistmann's 100 power points in Device powers to appropriate fiendish Devices of his own design, with save DC modifiers of up to +10 for his power level.

Abilities 43 + Skills 18 (72 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 75 + Combat 36 + Saves 16 = 190

DR. GEISTMANN — POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Oberst Geistmann | **Occupation:** Criminal mastermind

Identity: Public, but the general public isn't aware Geistmann is from the future.

Base of Operations: Germany | **Affiliation:** Nazi party (ostensibly)

Height: 6'4" (in ape body) | **Eyes:** Reddish-pink

Weight: 350 lbs. (in ape body) | **Hair:** White fur

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+5	+2	+5	+7	+4	+3
21	15	20	24	18	17

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+5	+8	+8	+8

Oberst Geistmann lacked many of the qualities of a "true Aryan." He was bookish, not at all athletic, and possessed of a thin build and dark hair, but he had a keen intellect and a cold disdain for others. Born and raised in a world where the Axis powers won the Second World War, Geistmann devoted himself to science for the greater glory of the World-Reich. He dreamed of taking his place in a pantheon of great minds who furthered the course of destiny.

Fate took a hand in Dr. Geistmann's future when the scientist was working on the development of a time-travel device. American Resistance fighters, aided by Nazi "wunderkind" Tomas Morgen, invaded the top-secret facility to steal the device. When Morgen attempted to use it, Geistmann—recovering from a blast that had momentarily stunned him—tried to intervene. He was caught in a wash of temporal energies and apparently disintegrated.

ZEITGEIST

After the fall of Nazi Germany, Dr. Geistmann discovers he is not in fact trapped forever in the body of an albino ape. When a final attempt to destroy Dr. Tomorrow fails and ends in Geistmann's apparent death, the Nazi scientist still manages to thwart both time and the Grim Reaper. His spirit is liberated from his ape body and cast out once again into the time-stream. There he becomes the Zeitgeist, a sinister psychic presence moving from time to time, able to possess different hosts in his attempts to manipulate history to suit his liking.

After being appointed Guardian of Time (in as much as the term "after" applies), Dr. Tomorrow once again becomes Zeitgeist's prime foe, traveling through time to thwart Geistmann's plans and send him spiraling back into the swirling time-stream. Dr. Tomorrow hopes to develop some means of eventually trapping and containing the Zeitgeist so he can do more than just treat the symptoms and thwart the former Nazi's plans when he shows up. Perhaps some player character heroes will need to lend Doc a helping hand in dealing with Zeitgeist's latest scheme.

Use Geistmann's mental traits for Zeitgeist, but give him **Concealment 8** (all but mental senses, Permanent), **Insubstantial 4** (incorporeal, Permanent, Innate), **Possession 10**, and **Super-Movement 3** (temporal 3) in place of his Golden Age powers.

In truth, Geistmann found himself—or at least his mind—adrift on the currents of the time stream. He flowed along with the wake left by Morgen's passage, focusing on thoughts of home, of the Fatherland, and found himself inexplicably drawn there.

Dr. Geistmann awakened from what seemed like a nightmare in the body of a great albino ape, captured in the depths of Africa and sent back to Berlin for study. It was 1941 and the temporally displaced scientist's mind somehow inhabited the ape's body! At first, the scientist thought their efforts to bestow enhanced intelligence on the creature were successful until Geistmann was able to convince them he was no mere animal, but truly a visitor from the future.

Seeing the opportunity fate had given him, Geistmann cultivated allies within the German High Command. In a matter of weeks, he was free and a valuable asset of the Reich. Although he was no historian, Geistmann knew enough. He was able to verify that he had arrived at an earlier point in history than the traitorous Tomas Morgen, who appeared the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, toward the end of 1941.

After his initial plot to brainwash the newly formed Liberty League, Geistmann became an implacable foe of Dr. Tomorrow and the Allies, the two visitors from the future engaged in a game of trans-temporal chess, trying to tug the fabric of history to suit their own designs.

One of the Thule Society's most ambitious occult workings involved certain ancient Germanic artifacts intended to draw upon the power of the *Aesir,* the ancient Norse gods, to assist the Third Reich in achieving victory. The two successes from these rites were die Walküre and the investment of a German soldier named Karl Reinhardt with the power of Donar, the god of thunder.

In a flash of lightning and clap of thunder, Reinhardt was transformed into a powerful, red-haired figure wielding a mighty hammer. Donar's personality became a blend of Reinhardt's and that of the imperious thunder-god, who was mystically bound to the Nazi cause. Unfortunately for the *Übersoldaten,* neither was overly bright. Donar was renowned for overconfidence and underestimating his foes, particular women, which led to his defeat by Lady Liberty on at least one occasion and did nothing to endear him to his teammate and "shield-maiden" Valkyrie.

Donar's remained a steadfast servant of the Third Reich to the very end, even after Wilhelm Kantor fled Germany and it was clear Berlin would fall. He intended to make a last stand against the Allied heroes, but Adrian Eldrich thwarted him by finally reversing the enchantment that bound the thunder-god to Earth's reality. Abandoned by his masters and his power, Reinhardt was easily captured. Although he claimed at his war-crimes trial that he was under the control of the thunder-god and the Thule Society, it did not prevent his conviction and execution (ironically, by electric chair).

Eldrich has said the Norse gods have since sworn a pact not to interfere in earthly affairs, relying on the Master Mage to help enforce it. Despite one neo-Nazi attempt to summon him again, the modern world has not seen the misused power of the Lord of Thunder for decades.

DONAR, LORD OF THUNDER — POWER LEVEL 11

Real Name: Karl Reinhardt
Occupation: Soldier, god of thunder

Identity: Public, although the general public does not believe Donar is a true god.

Base of Operations: Germany
Affiliation: Übersoldaten

Height: 6'4"
Eyes: Blue

Weight: 245 lbs.
Hair: Red

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+9	+1	+12	+0	+2	+2
28	12	34	10	15	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+12	+5	+6

Skills: Intimidate 8 (+10), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+4), Language 2 (English, Old Norse), Notice 2 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Specialization (hammer), Fearless, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Takedown Attack

Powers: Device 10 (hammer, easy to lose), **Impervious Toughness 6**, **Immunity 4** (cold, fatigue, heat, weather), **Super-Strength 8** (heavy load: 153 tons, Thunderclap, Shockwave)

Hammer: **Blast 12** (lightning, Alternate Power: **Strike 3** [Mighty, Ranged on Strike and Str damage]), **Weather Control 11** (cold, distraction, hamper movement)

Combat: Attack +8 (+10 with hammer), Grapple +25, Damage +9 (unarmed), +12 (hammer), Defense +9, Knockback –9, Initiative +1

Drawbacks: Normal Identity (claps fists together, free action, –3 points)

Abilities 53 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 58 + Combat 34 + Saves 8 – Drawbacks 3 = Total 161

DIE EULE (THE OWL) — POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Hans Graumach

Identity: Secret
Occupation: Spy

Base of Operations: Germany
Affiliation: Übersoldaten

Height: 5'11"
Eyes: Grey

Weight: 175 lbs.
Hair: Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+4	+3	+3	+4	+4
16	18	16	16	18	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+7/+3*	+6	+10	+10

*flat-footed

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+12), Bluff 8 (+12), Climb 6 (+9), Disable Device 8 (+11), Drive 6 (+10), Escape Artist 6 (+10), Gather Information 6 (+10), Intimidate 8 (+12), Investigate 8 (+11), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+9), Notice 8 (+12), Search 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Sleight of Hand 8 (+12), Stealth 10 (+14)

Feats: Defensive Roll 4, Equipment 4, Evasion 2, Jack-of-All-Trades, Power Attack, Skill Mastery (Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Stealth), Startle, Sneak Attack, Uncanny Dodge

Equipment: glider cape (Flight 1 [gliding]), goggles (Super-Senses 2 [low-light and infravision]), grapple gun (Super-Movement 1 [swinging]), Utility Belt (array): flash-bangs (Dazzle 3, Visual and Auditory, 15-ft. Burst), Alternate Powers: boomerangs, smoke bombs (Obscure 4, visual, 20-ft. Burst), stun grenades (Stun 3, Ranged, 15-ft. Burst)
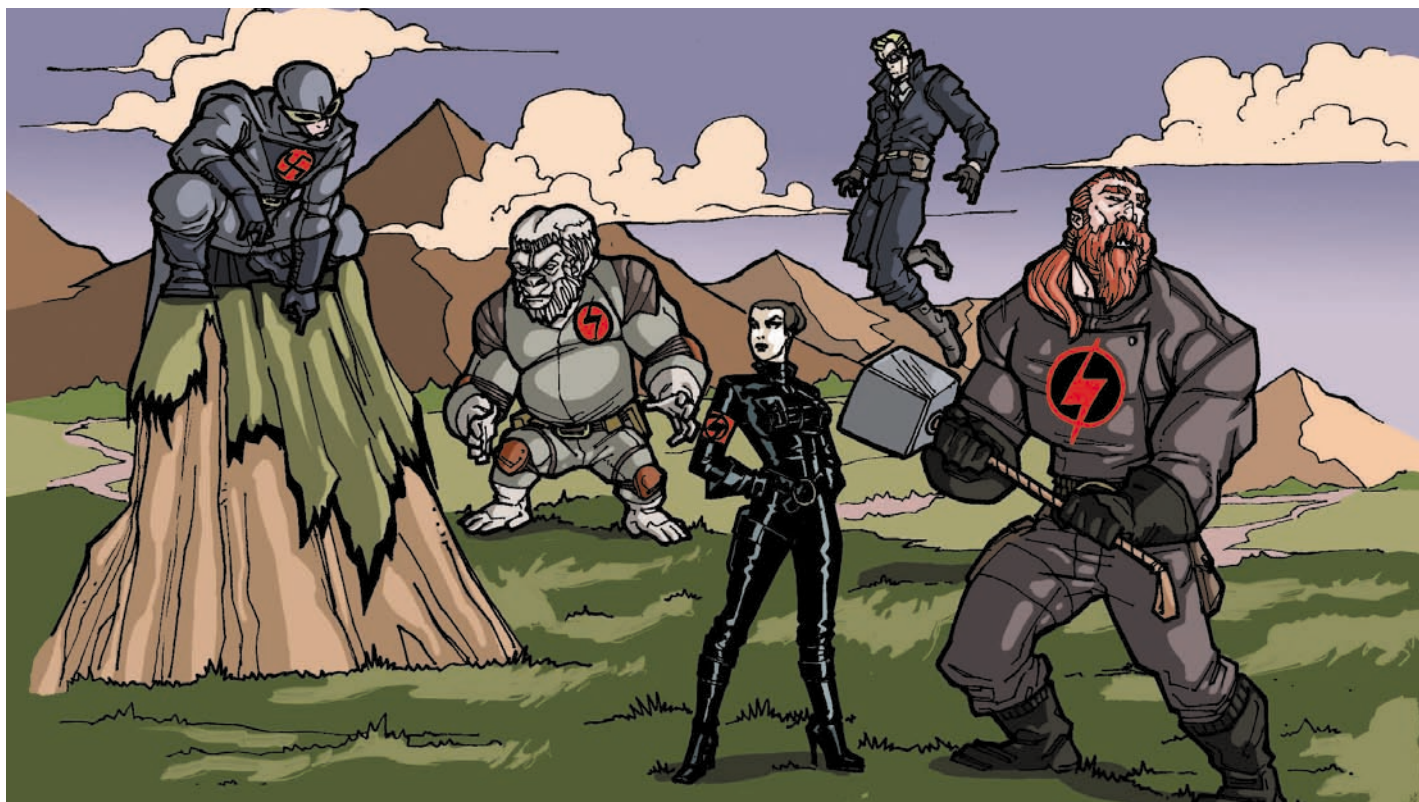
Combat: Attack +11, Damage +3 (unarmed), +5 (boomerang), Defense +11, Initiative +4

Abilities 42 + Skills 28 (112 ranks) + Feats 16 + Combat 44 + Saves 15 = 145

Coming from a wealthy and influential Austrian family, Hans Graumach would have had influence enough in the Nazi's new order if he chose. "Enough" was never enough for the ambitious Graumach, however, who fancied himself a man of adventure and a hunter as well as an amateur scientist and inventor. He understood better than most the importance of symbols over individuals. He decided he would create a symbol that would endure for as long as the Thousand Year Reich, a symbol that would strike terror into the hearts of its enemies and bring glory to his name and his legacy: the symbol of *der Eule,* dark-clad hunter of the night!

Using his wealth and personal connections, the Owl became a powerful and feared agent of the SS, a masked and cloaked figure lurking in the night, the ever-vigilant eyes and ears of the Reich. Die Eule was one of the most infamous Nazi spies and saboteurs, using a variety of disguises and cover identities to carry out his missions. He was active not only in Germany but also Occupied France and Poland. He even infiltrated the various Allied nations (particularly England and America), where he clashed with heroes like the Liberty League and the Allies of Freedom.

Die Eule was known for his sneering flirtation with the Rogue Fox, who despised him, and for his arrogant disdain of *Amerikaner* heroes. His arrogance was ultimately his downfall, with his most embarrassing defeat at the hands of Bowman's junior partner Arrow, whom the Owl considered nothing more than bait to lure Bowman to his doom. When it became clear that capture was inevitable, die Eule committed suicide rather than face trial and imprisonment. The legacy of terror and glory he hoped to create became one of infamy and cowardice. Many modern scholars consider the Owl a "minor figure" in the ranks of the infamous *Übersoldaten*.

MADAME BLITZ — POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Anna Segur

Identity: Secret | **Occupation:** Soldier

Base of Operations: Germany | **Affiliation:** Übersoldaten

Height: 5'7" | **Eyes:** Blue

Weight: 135 lbs. | **Hair:** Brown

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+2	+0	+1	+2
12	16	14	10	12	15

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+10/+2*	+6	+7	+5

*without force field

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Concentration 4 (+5), Language 1 (English), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+5), Sense Motive 5 (+6)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Defensive Attack, Precise Shot

Powers: Electrical Control 9 (Alternate Powers: **Dazzle 9** [visual], **Magnetic Control 9**, **Stun 6** [ranged]), **Flight 4** (100 MPH), **Force Field 8** (Impervious 5), **Immunity 10** (all electrical effects)

Combat: Attack +7 (melee), +9 (ranged), Grapple +9, Damage +1 (unarmed), +9 (blast), Defense +8, Knockback –7, Initiative +3

Abilities 19 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 52 + Combat 30 + Saves 12 = Total 123

Anna Segur was always a strange girl; prone to having strange things happen around her. By the time she was a teenager, she had survived being struck by lightning three times, although her childhood home and family did not survive the resulting fire from one of those lightning strikes. She was known for *poltergeist* phenomena: objects flying through the air, falling off shelves and walls, and so forth. Some—including Anna herself—believed she was cursed or possessed.

In truth, she was neither. Dr. Geistmann's experiments were able to bring out and enhance Anna's unique innate powers over electromagnetism. A massive jolt helped to "jump start" her power and turn "strange" Anna Segur into Madame Blitz, mistress of lightning! Her enhanced powers allowed Anna to hurl bolts of lightning, and fly through the air like a thunderbolt. She was proud to wield her power at the will of the Fatherland, but less pleased about her intended role as the mother of new Nazi "super-men," with suitable mates chosen for her by Dr. Geistmann and *der Führer.* Fortunately for her, Madame Blitz was considered too valuable to the war effort to encumber with pregnancy, at least not right away.

Although emboldened by her powers, Madame Blitz was uncomfortable in the company of most of the Third Reich's *Übersoldaten* and nursed a rivalry with Valkyrie, the sole other woman among their number. She was somewhat attracted to the dashing Roter Adler and, in a similar way, to the English hero Spitfire Jones. Their aerial battles were often like a complex dance of attraction and repulsion. Jones even once tried to convince Anna to leave Germany and defect to the Allies, but she could not betray her homeland.

Perhaps his obsession was a factor in the later development of his powers, although modern scientists believe Zoller was one of the first known super-powered mutants.

While training for the *Luftwaffe,* the German air force, Zoller's plane suffered a mechanical problem. He bailed out, *without* a parachute, but remained hovering in the air while his stricken plane fell. He floated down to the ground gently and safely, without any apparent means of support.

Quickly recruited and tested by the SS, Zoller was able to demonstrate his flight power again at will and could achieve speeds faster than any known aircraft. His flight also created a protective force field around his body and was preceded by a powerful shockwave he sometimes used as an offensive weapon. Awarded the code-name *Roter Adler*, or "Red Eagle," Konrad Zoller was inducted into the ranks of the *Übersoldaten.*

Red Eagle developed a rivalry with the American hero Freedom Eagle. Despite being able to fly faster, the German flyboy often found himself out-maneuvered, and certainly outwitted. The Nazi flier and the winged American fought on a number of occasions, and it was Freedom Eagle who finally clipped Roter Adler's wings and brought him down after the fall of Berlin, when the defeated super-soldier attempted to flee Europe. Konrad Zoller was tried for his war crimes and spent the rest of his life in a cage, only able to dream of the freedom of the skies that he once knew.

ROTER ADLER (RED EAGLE) POWER LEVEL 9

Real Name: Konrad Zoller

Identity: Public	**Occupation:** Soldier, airman
Base of Operations: Germany	**Affiliation:** Übersoldaten
Height: 6'	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 175 lbs.	**Hair:** Dark Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+1	+1	+3
15	17	15	12	13	17

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+2*	+5	+8	+6

*without force field

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+11), Bluff 6 (+9), Concentration 8 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Language 2 (English, Russian), Notice 6 (+7), Pilot 8 (+11), Search 4 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Survival 4 (+5)

Feats: Dodge Focus 2, Evasion, Fast Overrun, Favored Environment 2 (aerial), Elusive Target, Improved Overrun, Move-by Action

Powers: Flight 7 (1,000 MPH), Force Field 6 (Impervious, Limited to while flying), Strike 8 (shockwave, Cone Area, Limited to while flying)

Combat: Attack +8, Grapple +10, Damage +2 (unarmed), +8 (shockwave), Defense +10 (+8 grounded, +3 flat-footed), Knockback –7, Initiative +3

Abilities 29 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 28 + Combat 28 + Saves 13 = Total 122

Konrad Zoller's father was a German air-ace during the First World War and Konrad was obsessed with planes and flight from his youth.

SEA-WOLF POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Gustav Russov

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Soldier
Base of Operations: Germany	**Affiliation:** Übersoldaten
Height: 5'11"	**Eyes:** Green
Weight: 180 lbs.	**Hair:** Brown (fur)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+6	+4	+6	+0	+3	+1
22	19	22	10	16	13

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+6*	+10	+10	+8

*flat-footed

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+14), Intimidate 12 (+13), Notice 10 (+13), Search 12 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 12 (+16), Swim 8 (+14)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, All-out Attack, Animal Empathy, Defensive Roll 2, Endurance, Evasion, Environmental Adaptation (aquatic), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Rage, Sneak Attack, Startle, Uncanny Dodge

Powers: Immunity 3 (cold, drowning, pressure), **Leaping 2**, **Strike 2** (Mighty), **Super-Senses 5** (danger sense, darkvision, scent, ultra-hearing), **Swimming 5**

Combat: Attack +10, Damage +8 (strike), +10 (raging strike), Defense +12 (+10 raging, +6 flat-footed), Initiative +8

Abilities 42 + Skills 18 (72 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 18 + Combat 44 + Saves 15 = 151

Gustav Russov never believed much in magic, not even after an old gypsy woman placed a curse upon him when, as an officer in the SS, he was involved in rounding up Romany families for shipment to the prison camps. He scoffed when she said he would be afflicted by ancient

magic. He didn't believe when he was placed in command of a detail of troops assisting Thule magicians seeking the sunken city of Atlantis and its lost treasures. It was a waste of time, a journey to the depths of the ocean for what, a few ancient trinkets that belonged in a museum?

Russov became a believer amidst those ruins, when the power of the Deep Ones' dark magic transformed him into the Sea-Wolf! The Nazi officer became a feral wolf-man able to breathe underwater and survive its crushing depths, filled with a savage desire to hunt and to kill. The American heroine Siren aided the Atlanteans in driving off the Nazis, and Sea-Wolf returned to the Fatherland to become one of its *Übersoldaten*.

Russov wanted nothing more than to be rid of his curse, but the old gypsy woman was dead and the Atlantean artifacts lost. Wilhelm Kantor promised the curse could be undone, given time and provided that Sea-Wolf did as he was told. Once victory had been achieved, then there would be time and resources aplenty to undo what had been done. Faced with no other choice, the Sea-Wolf followed his orders. In between his missions, Russov learned what he could of the arcane secrets of Kantor and the Thule Society.

Toward the end of the war, Sea-Wolf abducted Siren and attempted to sacrifice her to dark and nameless gods in exchange for greater power and the ability to return to his human form. Prince Thallor of Atlantis and the Liberty League put a stop to his plans and Sea-Wolf—badly wounded by Thallor's orichalcum trident—was buried in the collapse of the undersea ruins, never to be heard from again.

More than a few of Dr. Geistmann's experiments to empower German soldiers were less than successful, or at least had unintended results. One such was an experimental invisibility serum. The High Command and the SS envisioned unstoppable, undetectable invisible commandos and assassins picking off Allied commanders and forces virtually at will. So the first test subject for the treatment was a "Death's Head" commando by the name of Johann Marz.

The serum had unexpected results: perhaps it was some quirk of Marz's physiology or an influence Geistmann could not have predicted, but the treatment only turned the man's flesh invisible: skin, muscles, and organs disappeared, and his hair fell out, leaving only his skeleton. Moreover, the treatment caused Marz's invisible flesh to secrete a deadly toxin, capable of killing virtually any living thing that came into contact with him. The victim's flesh shriveled and his hair fell out, causing the face to look like a grinning skull. The skeletal officer with the toxic "death touch" quickly became known as *der Totenkopf*, the Death's Head.

Some believed Totenkopf was unhinged by his transformation; others said he was already sadistic and cruel and his powers merely enhanced those qualities. He quickly became a ruthless and influential figure within the Nazi High Command. Although Dr. Geistmann and Wilhelm Kantor rivaled him, few others were willing to oppose the Death's Head. Even the Führer entrusted him with considerable power (and secretly feared him, it is said).

Totenkopf operated as the Third Reich's deadly hand, although he often worked behind the scenes with Fifth columnists and saboteurs. His "calling card" of withered corpses became quite familiar to the FBI and American authorities. He clashed with the Patriot more than any other member of the Liberty League, seeing a particular poetry in humbling America's super-soldier to demonstrate German superiority. Totenkopf fell to his death while fighting Patriot in a Nazi secret-weapons factory toward the end of the war.

TOTENKOPF (DEATH'S HEAD) POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Johann Marz

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Soldier and officer
Base of Operations: Germany	**Affiliation:** Übersoldaten
Height: 5'11"	**Eyes:** Pale blue
Weight: 170 lbs.	**Hair:** None

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3
14	15	15	16	16	17

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+2*	+6	+6	+7

*flat-footed

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Concentration 4 (+7), Diplomacy 6 (+9), Drive 5 (+7), Intimidate 10 (+13), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+9), Language 2 (English, French), Medicine 2 (+5), Notice 4 (+7), Pilot 5 (+7), Profession (soldier) 8 (+11), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Equipment 5, Evasion, Fearless, Fearsome Presence 4, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Pin, Leadership, Sneak Attack, Startle

Powers: Drain Constitution 8 (toxic, Aura, Permanent, Slow Fade 6: one point per day)

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Drain Constitution requires skin contact, –1 point)

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +12, Damage +2 (unarmed or Drain), Defense +10 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +6

Abilities 33 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 22 + Powers 22 + Combat 40 + Saves 12 – Drawbacks –1 = Total 147

DIE WALKÜRE (THE VALKYRIE) POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Ingrid Hildebrandt

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Soldier
Base of Operations: Germany	**Affiliation:** Übersoldaten
Height: 5'5" (as Ingrid), 6' (as Valkyrie)	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 100 lbs. (as Ingrid), 145 lbs. (as Valkyrie)	**Hair:** Brown (as Ingrid), Blond (as Valkyrie)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+7	+1	+6	+0	+3	+3
24	13	23	10	17	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+11/+6*	+11	+4	+6

*without armor

Skills: Handle Animal 4 (+7), Intimidate 8 (+11), Knowledge (arcane lore) 4 (+4), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 (+6), Language 1 (English), Notice 6 (+9), Ride 9 (+10), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Survival 4 (+7)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attractive, Fearless, Improved Critical (sword), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Weapon Bind

Powers: Device 1 (sword, easy to lose), **Device 2** (armor, hard to lose), **Summon 3** (Sturm, horse with **Flight 3** and **Protection 5** [Impervious]; Continuous, Fanatical, Heroic), **Super-Strength 5** (heavy load: 11 tons)

Sword: **Strike 4** (Mighty)
Armor: **Protection 5** (Impervious)

Drawbacks: Normal Identity (speaks an invocation, free action, –3 points)

Combat: Attack +9, Grapple +21, Damage +7 (unarmed), +11 (sword), Defense +9, Knockback –8, Initiative +5

Abilities 43 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 36 + Combat 36 + Saves 11 – Drawbacks 3 = Total 145

The shy but loyal Ingrid was the daughter of a high-ranking member of the Thule Society, offered up on the altar of the Reich's success to be invested with power—power only a woman could possess, according to Wilhelm Kantor. Within a ring of fire, Ingrid became *die Walküre,* host to the spirit and power of the shield maidens of the Aesir and the most powerful woman in Germany.

Ingrid found that power agreed with her, so much so that she was willing to return the favor to her father when the Thule Society needed another sacrifice. She was now a gatherer of souls, after all, and a warrior woman who would fight until she found the man worthy of her affections, worthy to father a new generation of Aryan super-men upon her. When *Übermensch* coldly rejected her, Valkyrie turned her attentions on Centurion, hoping to seduce him. He, too, rejected her advances.

Valkyrie had great power and beauty, but she was feared, not loved. Men sought to possess and control her. She took out her frustrations on her foes in battle and on any little men foolish enough to get in her way. She became more and more immersed in the identity of the Norse shield maiden, eventually taking Donar as a lover.

Valkyrie exercised her influence by recruiting her own circle of "shield maidens," women loyal to the Reich, trained to fight as well (or better) than any man and to serve her and *Der Führer* to the death. Valkyrie's followers didn't have any special powers: use Elite Soldier archetype from **Chapter 4** for their traits, giving them swords, spears, and medieval style armor in addition to their modern equipment. Valkyrie gains ranks in Minions for these followers when she recruits them in 1943.

When Berlin fell, Eldrich was able to reverse the spells of the Thule Society, stripping Valkyrie of her powers. The loss drove her over the edge into madness. She was judged unfit to stand trial and imprisoned in a mental institution for the rest of her life, save for a brief period where she assumed her powers again and fought Centurion and Lady Liberty in the 1960s.

SCHLASBRINGER   POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Hermann Karse

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Soldier
Base of Operations: Germany	**Affiliation:** Übersoldaten
Height: 5'10"	**Eyes:** Brown
Weight: 165 lbs.	**Hair:** Black (sparse)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+5	+3	+3	+2
13	14	15	17	16	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+2*	+8	+6	+7

*without armor

Skills: Craft (chemical) 12 (+15), Craft (mechanical) 8 (+11), Disable Device 6 (+9), Intimidate 10 (+12), Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 (+11), Knowledge (life sciences) 8 (+11), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+9), Medicine 6 (+9), Notice 4 (+7), Profession (scientist) 4 (+7), Search 4 (+7)

Feats: Endurance, Fearless, Fearsome Presence 2

Powers: Devices 7 (armor and gas-gun, hard to lose), **Immunity 5** (gases and toxins)

Armor: **Protection 6**
Gas Gun: **Nauseate 6** (Ranged, Alternate Powers: **Blast 4** [slow toxin, Disease, Fortitude save], **Blast 4** [rapid toxin, Poison, Fortitude save], **Obscure 8** [visual and scent, Continuous, Fades], **Paralyze 6** [Fortitude save, Ranged], **Stun 6** [Ranged]; all powers have Cloud Area)

Combat: Attack +8, Grapple +9, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +8 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –4, Initiative +2

Abilities 29 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 33 + Combat 32 + Saves 13 = Total 130

Hauptmann Hermann Karse was a Nazi officer in command of the research facilities a death-camp, where prisoners were shipped for implementation of the Nazi's "final solution." He was in charge of developing novel ways of carrying out mass murder while also gathering as much useful information as possible about physiology and chemistry. Karse carried out his job with cold and calculating efficiency, but allowed himself to become careless about his "sub-human" charges.

A berserk prisoner's death-throes snapped the valve off a tank of experimental gas. Karse was doused with the acrid fumes. He was hideously burned and disfigured by the acidic vapors and almost did not survive. Although he recovered physically, the scars to Karse's mind were far deeper. He took to wearing a gas mask and helmet to cover his disfigurement and displayed a remarkable resistance to toxic substances of all kinds. He began using them as his tools and weapons, drawing the attention of the Nazi High Command. He adopted the name ironic name Schlasbringer, "Sleep-bringer."

Schlasbringer was one of the most feared Nazi agents during the war, willing to poison and murder on a massive scale. His schemes often involved introducing deadly toxins in attempts to weaken Allied forces or to break morale back home. Although heroes thwarted Schlasbringer's schemes, the poisoner escaped capture during the war. The Liberty League apprehended Schlasbringer after the fall of Berlin. He stood trial for his war crimes and was executed by electric chair, his body ironically donated to science to learn more about his physiology and resistance to toxins.

WILHELM KANTOR — POWER LEVEL 7

Real Name: Wilhelm Kantor, Tan-Aktor

Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** SS Officer and occultist
Base of Operations: Germany	**Affiliation:** Thule Society
Height: 6′	**Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 185 lbs.	**Hair:** Blond

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+2	+6	+5	+5
14	14	14	22	20	20

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+5/+2*	+9	+8	+11

*flat-footed

Skills: Disable Device 12 (+18), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Drive 4 (+6), Gather Information 4 (+9), Intimidate 8 (+13), Investigate 8 (+14), Knowledge (arcane lore) 12 (+18), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+12), Knowledge (technology) 12 (+18), Notice 6 (+11), Pilot 4 (+6), Search 8 (+14), Sense Motive 8 (+13)

Feats: Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 10, Improvised Tools, Master Plan, Ritualist

Combat: Attack +9, Grapple +11, Damage + 2 (unarmed), + 3 (pistol), Defense +9 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –2, Initiative +2

Note: These are Kantor's traits during the 1940s, before his rise to power as Overshadow. See **Chapter 7** of the *Freedom City* sourcebook for Overshadow's modern-day traits. Assign Kantor's 50 equipment points as desired. He typically carries a German pistol as a sidearm (6 points).

Abilities 44 + Skills 25 (100 ranks) + Feats 16 + Combat 36 + Saves 19 = Total 140

Wilhelm Kantor was Austrian by birth, coming from a moneyed family with good breeding. He was assured a place in the new order of the Nazi Party. His keen intellect and thirst for power led him to study the arcane arts, particularly those related to his Aryan heritage, but Kantor sought power wherever he could find it.

As a young man, Kantor was initiated into the Thule Society, a group of occultists dedicated to the Aryan ideal of a "master race" and seeking the lost secrets of Aryan and Germanic culture and mysticism. Kantor rose quickly in the ranks of the Society, ruthlessly eliminating those who stood in his way. He was a part of the expedition seeking the fabled Ultima Thule, "the island at the edge of the world," which turned out to be a hidden city of advanced, superpowered beings. Although the Ultima rejected Nazi ideology and expelled the human explorers, the Thule Society introduced a serpent into their Eden; an Ultiman named Kal-Zed left him home to become *der Übermensch*, one of Hitler's super-agents.

As he continued to delve into the depths of the occult, Kantor experienced several past life regressions where he recalled a lifetime in ancient Egypt as the Tan-Aktor, priest of Set, and his conflict with Prince Heru-Ra. He helped plunder Egyptian mystical secrets from the African Front and further cemented his power within the Society. In particular, it was Kantor who curried favor with *der Führer* with the idea of sharing his mystic power, empowering potential super-soldiers for the Reich.

Initial experiments proved successful, yielding Schwarzpanzer and der Nacht-Krieger. Kantor used his influence to execute a plot to lure European heroes into a deadly ambush. Although partially successful, this scheme also led to the formation of the Allies of Freedom, Kantor's most dedicated foes during the war. They included White Rose and White Thorn, the light-bearers of legend, wielding the power of another of Tan-Aktor's ancient enemies, Pharos.

Kantor controlled what remained of the Thule Society by the end of the war. Able to see the writing on the wall and warned by his various divinations, the sinister magician arranged his escape from Nazi Germany with a substantial cache of gold, occult artifacts, and scientific secrets. Nacht-Krieger, his powers enhanced by forbidden rituals, accompanied his master and fought the Allies of Freedom to enable Kantor's escape. Vanishing into the jungles of South America, Wilhelm Kantor would emerge years later as the armor-clad Overshadow, master of the Secret Hierarchy of Agents for Domination Over the World. See **Overshadow** in **Chapter 7** of *Freedom City* for details.

OTHER GERMAN SUPERS

A number of other super-villains served the Nazis during World War II. Many of them were comparatively short-lived, either casualties on the battlefield or due to the harsh whims of their superiors, who were quick to punish infractions.

DOPPELGÄNGER

A mysterious Nazi spy and foe of Kilroy, *der Doppelgänger* was a master of disguise and a cunning and ruthless assassin. No one who saw his true face ever lived to tell of it, and he nearly compromised the Allied war effort on a number of occasions. Despite the best efforts of Kilroy and the OSS, Doppelgänger escaped justice for his war crimes. He disappeared in 1945 before the fall of Berlin and hasn't been seen since, although there are rumors of his ultimate fate (which is ultimately left to the GM to decide). Use the Master of Disguise archetype from **Chapter 11** of *Mutants & Masterminds* for Doppelgänger.

NOSFERATU

Count Varney Orloff was an Austrian vampire from 17th Century, resurrected by Thule Society magicians to serve the Third Reich. As *der Nosferatu,* Orloff used his supernatural powers as an assassin and spy as well as a sometime member of the *Übersoldaten.* The Light-bearers White Rose and White Thorn were particularly effective against Nosferatu, who shied away from their mystic light. He was believed destroyed towards the end of the war when Bowman shot a wooden arrow through his heart, although he has since returned on a few occasions. Use the Vampire Lord archetype from page 225 of *M&M* for Nosferatu's traits.

NACHT-KRIEGER

One of the most infamous Nazi super-agents, Nacht-Krieger was the loyal lieutenant of Wilhelm Kantor. The sacrifice of Schwarzpanzer—and, later, many surviving Thule cultists—enhanced the Night Warrior's power and further eroded his tenuous grip on sanity. Nacht-Krieger's traits given in **Chapter 7** of *Freedom City* accurately represent him at the very end of the war, except his Alternate Form was not yet permanent and he could switch out of it at will. Between 1941 and 1945, Nacht-Krieger lacked the Penetrating extra on his attacks.

SCHWARZPANZER

The "Black Tank" was empowered by an early ritual of the Thule Society, granting him tremendous strength and resistance to injury like his namesake. For a time, Schwarzpanzer was one of the most powerful Nazi super-soldiers, second only to Übermensch, and a terror on the battlefield.

Schwarzpanzer's usefulness to the Reich ended when Golemeth broke the super-soldier's back in Poland in 1941. Still, the crippled warrior was able to perform one last "service" for the Fatherland: Wilhelm Kantor sacrificed Schwarzpanzer in an occult ritual that transferred much of his life force to augment Nacht-Krieger's powers. Golden Age games taking place before Schwarzpanzer's death in 1941 can use the Powerhouse archetype from *M&M* to represent his traits.

ÜBERMENSCH

In the 1940s, Superior (see **Chapter 7** of *Freedom City*) was known as Übermensch, the poster-boy of Aryan superiority and champion of the Nazi regime. In truth, the Nazi's "super-man" was in fact not Aryan or even truly human. Kal-Zed is an Ultiman, one of an evolved race of cosmically powered superhumans living in the hidden city of Ultima Thule, above the Arctic Circle. Only a few in the Nazi high command knew Übermensch's secret during the war, and none of the Allies discovered it (although that may differ in your own Golden Age series).

Übermensch's traits are largely similar to those given in *Freedom City*: lower his power level to 13, dropping his attack, defense, Strength, and Toughness bonuses and his Cosmic Energy Control rank by 2 each.

HINOMARU: THE CIRCLE OF THE SUN

Superhuman agents of the Empire of Japan are fewer during the Second World War than their Nazi counterparts. For one thing, the Japanese lack the scientific expertise and insight of the infamous Dr. Geistmann and the secrets of the Ultima (doled out sparingly by Kal-Zed). For another, the mysterious Japanese Green Dragon Society is more sparing in its use of magic to empower super-soldiers, although most Japanese superhumans do have magical powers.

Although no one in the world knows it for certain (and only a few suspect), the strong mystical forces of the Japanese islands also limit the number of other types of superhumans there compared to the United States or Europe. See **Super-Population** on page 240 of *Freedom City* for details. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki changes the status quo: wiping out many Japanese mystics and forever altering the balance of supernatural forces there. As with other background elements of the World of Freedom, Gamemasters are free to ignore or exploit this one as they see fit.

The Japanese super-agents of the Empire are known collectively as *Hinomaru*, "the Circle of the Sun," also the name used for the Japanese rising sun flag. Despite the collective name, the Hinomaru rarely operate as a group and are more independent than their Nazi counterparts. Generally, they operate as spies and occasionally assassins, although some, such as Crimson Katana and Kamikaze, see action on the battlefield. Overall, their conflict with the Allies tends to be more of a chess game of espionage, move, and counter-move.

THE GREEN DRAGON SOCIETY

The prime mover behind the Hinomaru and Japanese superhumans is the mysterious Green Dragon Society, an alliance of Japanese sorcerers united behind the Emperor and the cause of Imperial Japan. The Green Dragons are strong supporters of Japanese traditionalism and the expulsion of *gaijin* and their ways from Japan. While the Society doesn't go so far as to disdain modern technology, they strongly favor the mystical, leaving technological matters to others.

Individual members of the Green Dragon Society do not possess the kind of power wielded by sorcerers like Eldrich or Malador; their magic is generally limited to that provided by the Ritualist feat and various elaborate arcane rituals. Still, working as a group, the Society is capable of accomplishing a great deal, and they are at least indirectly responsible for empowering most Japanese super-agents in the Golden Age, as well as recruiting and training them.

In addition to their own mystic rituals and the powers of the Hinomaru, the Green Dragon Society can also call upon members of the Yakuza (use the Thug archetype, page 229 of *M&M*) and a secret cadre of ninja (use the Ninja archetype, page 227 of *M&M*).

GREEN DRAGON SORCERER — POWER LEVEL 3

Str 10	Dex 11	Con 12	Int 13	Wis 15	Cha 13

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Concentration 8 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+7), Gather Information 4 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (arcane lore) 8 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 (+7), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (various) 6 (+8), Sense Motive 6 (+8)

Feats: Connected, Ritualist

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +3 (+1 flat-footed), Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +2, Reflex +2, Will +5

Abilities 14 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 2 + Combat 10 + Saves 6 = Total 47

CRIMSON KATANA — POWER LEVEL 11

Real Name: Asano Ranaga

Identity: Secret

Base of Operations: Japan

Occupation: Thief, later bodyguard and assassin

Affiliation: The Yakuza, later the Empire of Japan

Height: 5′7″

Eyes: Green (originally brown)

Weight: 145 lbs.

Hair: Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+4	+4	+0	+3	+2
14	19	18	11	16	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+4*	+8	+9	+6

*flat-footed

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+12), Bluff 4 (+6), Escape Artist 4 (+8), Gather Information 4 (+6), Intimidate 8 (+10), Language 1 (English), Notice 4 (+7), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 7 (+10), Stealth 8 (+12)

Feats: Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (melee) 4, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 4, Evasion, Improved Critical (katana), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick Draw (katana)

Powers: Device 2 (Three-Flames Katana, easy to lose)

Three-Flames Katana: **Strike 8** (Mighty, Alternate Power: **Fatigue 4**)

Combat: Attack +12 (melee), +8 (ranged), Grapple +14, Damage +10 (katana), Defense +14 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –4, Initiative +8

Abilities 32 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 21 + Powers 6 + Combat 36 + Saves 12 = Total 120

Asano Ranaga grew up in poverty in turn of the century Nagasaki, where he eventually became an accomplished thief working for the local Yakuza. He graduated from pick-pocketing and petty thievery to second-story work and burglary, relying on his natural athletic talents and an eye for valuables. He developed a taste for the finer things in life, although he only rarely had the money to indulge in them.

Things changed when Ranaga managed to steal the mystic Three Flames Katana and several other trinkets. The Katana found a potential wielder in him, and Ranaga decided to keep it. When his former Yakuza associates came to administer an object lesson, both they and Ranaga learned of the blade's powers first-hand. The former thief wisely sought the protection of the Emperor and was put to work by the military hierarchy of the Empire.

For almost a decade, the Crimson Katana was one of the most feared men in east Asia, the merciless hand of the Emperor and Prime Minister Tojo. He served a dual role as the Emperor's ceremonial bodyguard, but also as a spy and assassin. He also received many gifts from his patrons, not the least of which was a wife, whom he largely ignored (although they had one son, Toshiro). Crimson Katana served in the Pacific Theatre of war and was known for the merciless slaughter of soldiers and innocents alike. It seemed the longer he wielded the Three Flames Katana, the greater his bloodlust became. Some whispered that the sword was cursed, driving its wielder to greater and greater acts of brutality.

The Crimson Katana survived the fall of Japan and fled rather than commit *seppuku*. While fleeing occupied Japan, Asano Ranaga committed one last act of savagery. Using his mystic blade, the Crimson Katana murdered the Human Tank and Gunner in their sleep. He then fled to the Asian mainland and disappeared. Authorities later learned that he fled to Nepal, where he laid the foundations of what would later become the Katanarchist cult, led by his son Toshiro, the second Crimson Katana.

GEISHA — POWER LEVEL 8

Real Name: Keiko Ishido

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Spy and government agent

Base of Operations: Japan

Affiliation: Japanese government

Height: 5′4″

Eyes: Black

Weight: 100 lbs.

Hair: Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
–1	+0	+0	+2	+4	+7
9	11	10	15	19	25(17)

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+0	+4	+4	+8/+12*

*with Mind Shield

Skills: Bluff 8 (+15), Concentration 8 (+12), Diplomacy 8 (+15), Gather Information 8 (+15), Knowledge (art) 4 (+6), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 4 (+6), Knowledge (current events) 7 (+9), Language 1 (English), Notice 6 (+10), Perform (acting) 6 (+13), Profession (geisha) 8 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+12)

Feats: Attractive, Connected, Contacts, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 4, Fascinate (Diplomacy), Improved Initiative, Sneak Attack, Taunt, Well-Informed

Powers: Emotion Control 8 (pheromones, Area Burst, Scent-Dependent, Touch Range), **Enhanced Charisma 8**, **Mind Shield 4**, **Stun 4** (Area Burst, Scent-Dependent, Sleep)

Combat: Attack +5, Grapple +4, Damage –1 (unarmed), Defense +12 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –0, Initiative +4

Abilities 21 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 20 + Combat 26 + Saves 12 = Total 115

Keiko Ishido wanted to be a good wife to her husband, to keep a proper household and to please him, but Maseo Ishido was never satisfied and frequently took out his frustrations on his young wife. Keiko suffered in silence for as long as she could, but one night she lashed out at Maseo, berating him. His sense of shame was so overwhelming that he killed himself that night, leaving Keiko a young widow, with no means to support herself.

She found her way into working as a "hostess" for the Yakuza, where her unusual talents came to the fore. Keiko discovered a talent for manipulating people. She realized that Maseo felt terrible shame because she wished him to, and that her clients also felt as she wanted. Initially uncertain, Keiko found herself using his talent more and more, until she all but ran local organized crime behind the scenes.

That was when her gifts came to the attention of the Green Dragon Society, men protected against her manipulation by mystic wards. They offered Keiko the opportunity to serve Nippon. She became the mysteri-ous "Geisha," a shadowy and manipulative secret agent. Few could deny her anything; she operated behind the scenes, finding the challenge exciting and the power intoxicating.

Although confronted by Allied agents on occasion, Geisha was never captured during the war. After the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, she disappeared into the Japanese underworld, becoming an almost mythic figure and operating behind the scenes of the Yakuza clans for decades. Her last known appearance to anyone was in the 1980s during some dealings with AEGIS, although it remains possible she is still alive and secretly pulling strings in Japan or elsewhere.

IREZUMI	POWER LEVEL 8
Real Name: Tadashi Aoyama	
Identity: Secret	**Occupation:** Criminal, government agent
Base of Operations: Japan	**Affiliation:** Empire of Japan
Height: 5'9"	**Eyes:** Brown
Weight: 160 lbs.	**Hair:** Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+2	+3	+0	+1	+1
16	14	17	10	13	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+7	+7	+6	+5

Skills: Climb 4 (+7), Intimidate 6 (+7), Knowledge (streetwise) 8 (+8), Notice 4 (+5), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 8 (+9), Stealth 6 (+8)

Feats: Connected, Dodge Focus

Powers: Protection 4, **Summon 10** (tattoos, Fanatical, General Type, Progression 2; use the various animals and monsters from **Chapter 11** of *M&M* as examples)

Combat: Attack +8, Grapple +11, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +9 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +2

Abilities 22 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 46 + Combat 32 + Saves 12 = Total 124

Tadashi Aoyama grew up in the ranks of the Yakuza, joining a gang as a teenager and serving as a thug and enforcer during his initial years. He drew the attention of a member of the Green Dragon Society. They offered him power, which Tadashi accepted without reservation. As he progressed in the ranks of the Yakuza, certain rituals were arranged, involving the lengthy traditional tattooing process used by the syndicate. Tadashi's mentor and patron ensured these rituals included certain secret ingredients and chants, and promised that the pain Tadashi endured was a small price to pay.

Not long after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war between Japan and the United States, the work was complete. Tadashi was covered in elaborate tattoos, a man of influence within the ranks of the Yakuza, and the rites of the Green Dragon Society were finished. The Yakuza found himself with the power to "awaken" his tattoo designs, summoning creatures from within to obey his commands. He used that power in the service of the Emperor and the Green Dragon Society, taking the name *Irezumi* from the traditional tattooing practice.

Irezumi's criminal connections served him well as a spy and agent for the Empire. He even operated on American soil on a few occasions, maintaining an uneasy cooperation with Geisha (who disliked his chauvinist and superior attitude) until the two of them were driven off and their operations disrupted by the Liberty League. Despite the power of his mystic tattoos, Irezumi was no match for most of the western heroes in a direct confrontation, and so avoided them whenever possible.

After Japan surrendered to the Allies, Irezumi made arrangements to flee the country. He could not escape his erstwhile mentors in the Green Dragon Society, however. The Hinomaru's flayed body was discovered sometime later, alongside the corpses of some Society acolytes. Irezumi's tanned and preserved skin became a tool and artifact of the Katanarchist cult, still retaining its mystic properties. It was later bound into the pages of a mystic book of summoning that now resides in the safekeeping of the mystics of the Shambala Temple.

KAMIKAZE

POWER LEVEL 10

Real Name: Miko Ishikawa

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Government agent

Base of Operations: Japan

Affiliation: Empire of Japan

Height: 5'4"

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 110 lbs.

Hair: Black

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+3	+2	+1	+3	+2
10	16	14	12	17	15

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+2*	+5	+8	+6

*without force field

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+13), Concentration 8 (+11), Language 2 (Chinese, English), Notice 6 (+9), Search 4 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Stealth 4 (+7)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged), Attack Specialization (blast), Dodge Focus 2, Luck, Uncanny Dodge (tactile)

Powers: Air Control 9 (Alternate Powers: **Blast 9**, **Obscure 9** [visual, fog], **Suffocate 9, Weather Control 9** [distraction]), **Flight 5** (250 MPH), **Force Field 6, Immunity 3** (cold, suffocation), **Super-Senses 4** (tactile blindsight, air currents)

Combat: Attack +8 (melee), +9 (ranged), +11 (air blast), Grapple +8, Damage +0 (unarmed), +9 (blast), Defense +12 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –4, Initiative +3

Abilities 24 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 45 + Combat 36 + Saves 11 = Total 132

Although Miko Ishikawa's father was a military man, she did not expect to be a soldier. Still, her father considered it important for his daughter to know how to protect herself in a dangerous world. Miko studied martial arts at a young age, and she was perhaps more forceful than was proper for a young girl in Japanese society at the time. She also loved the outdoors and in particular the wind: climbing hills and mountains to enjoy the heights, visiting isolated Shinto shrines, and watching storms from the shelter of her family's porch, feeling the electric tingle across her skin.

That her parents had no other children was a misfortune, Miko knew. Although her father adored his daughter, she also knew that he would have liked a son to follow in his footsteps and carry on the family name. She was always faintly aware of a family legacy kept by her father and hidden from her and her mother. Only after her father's death in battle and her mother's by her own hand did Miko learn of it. Her father was associated with the Green Dragon Society, and carried a legacy from the ancient *kami*, the spirits of nature.

Miko sought out the Society and claimed the rights to her father's legacy. Although they balked initially, she would not be denied. The rites were all prepared; Ishikawa's death left them with no other choice. The magicians agreed and invoked the power of the *kami* slumbering in Miko's blood and spirit. She was invested with power over the winds; at the height of the ritual, she rose laughing into the

OTHER GOLDEN AGE VILLAINS

Although the major foes of the Liberty League and (particularly) the Allies of Freedom were the various Axis super-agents, there was also no lack of threats both at home and far away. This section offers an overview for Gamemasters interested in sprinkling some more traditional super-villainy between the spy smashing and super-battles of a Golden Age series.

THE CRIME LEAGUE

The original Crime League was founded in 1942 in response to the presence of the Liberty League, when American super-criminals banded together for mutual protection and assistance, forming the first true super-villain team. The original Crime League included the ice-wielding Dr. Zero, the mind-controlling Marionette, Magnifico the Magician (who combined stage-magic tricks with true sorcery), the hulking swamp creature Tom Cyprus, and the mysterious and seductive Opal, wielder of a stolen mystic gem. Later additions included August Roman, the Maestro, King Cole, and others. The Crime League's operations ranged from simple theft (bank heists and such) to complex schemes such as counterfeit ration coupons or blackmailing the government with stolen super-weapons.

THE GRUE UNITY

The Grue are not active on Earth until the 1950s. A Grue scout vessel crashes in the American southwest in 1947 after a skirmish with the Lor in local space. The remains of the vessel and crew are taken into government custody, drawing the Unity's attention. Grue agents arrive on Earth by 1950, infiltrating American society and government. Although the Liberty League helps to root out the "silent invasion" of shapeshifters, the Grue presence contributes greatly to the "Red Scare" of the '50s and casts suspicion on America's heroes (just as the Unity intended). The Grue make suitable foes for a Cold War Golden Age series, as heroes struggle to find a new place for themselves after World War II and confront a chilling alien conspiracy behind the scenes. See the *Freedom City* sourcebook (pages 100-101) for more information about the Grue Unity. Note that neither the Lor nor the Star Knights are active on Earth until after the first Grue invasion attempt.

THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

A powerful criminal conspiracy, the so-called Invisible Empire sought to overthrow the United States government and replace it with a fascist regime. Despite its goals, the Invisible Empire was in no way connected with the Nazis or the Axis powers; indeed, it saw them as rivals for its inevitable domination over the world. Most Invisible Empire schemes involved the development of super-weapons or the use of terrorism to blackmail the government. The organization was significantly diminished by the 1950s, although in truth many of its members simply went underground. The remnants of the Invisible Empire were later absorbed by the growing influence of SHADOW in the underworld.

MYCANOIDS, THE MUSHROOM MEN FROM VENUS

The so-called "Mushroom Men" were not actually from Venus, or even Earth's solar system. The Mycanoids (the scientific name applied to them; their actual name is unpronounceable by humans) are a form of humanoid fungal life. They propagate using spores spread on the solar winds, infesting suitable planets and eventually consuming all life there. Mycanoids rely on their numbers, their fungal physiology (granting them great resistance to injury), and their biological ability to produce various spore-clouds to deal with any native life that may threaten their colonization. A Mycanoid colony from Venus infested Earth for a time before the Liberty League managed to eradicate them. The Alien Invader archetype on page 69 serves quite well as a template for the Mushroom Men, except their technology is organic in nature, "grown" from the same materials as their bodies, and they lack the space cruiser plot device, crossing the void of space as spore-pods to invade new worlds.

THE WIDOW

The mysterious and deadly spy known only as the Widow operated as an agent of the Axis powers during the Second World War and as a free agent thereafter. The Widow claimed to be of Italian origin, although she said the she held no loyalty to any flag or nationality. An expert in disguise, she always wore a dark veil while unmasked and favored black clothing whenever possible. She often implied that her husband was also a spy, killed by agents of the American government. Her most frequent foe during the war was Kilroy, but she also ran afoul of Patriot and later AEGIS during the Cold War. The Widow is believed to have died while working for the Russian government in the early 1970s. Use the Master of Disguise archetype from **Chapter 11** of *M&M* for the Widow's traits.

ALIEN-GATOR

Freedom Eagle fought a creature like a humanoid alligator he dubbed the "Alien-Gator" in the South River Swamp in 1950. It's unknown if the savage creature truly was an alien life form or some earthly mutant, either of human or reptile stock. The Alien-Gator savagely attacked anyone entering its territory and hunted humans as prey. It was believed dead after its last fateful encounter with Freedom Eagle; whether or not that is the case is left up to the Gamemaster.

sky, borne on a whirlwind. She took the name *kamikaze,* the "divine wind" and swore vengeance against all Americans for the deaths of her family.

Kamikaze clashed on several occasions with members of the Liberty League, some of whom were hindered by a reluctance to hit a woman, making Kamikaze's most common sparring partners Siren or Lady Liberty. She remained unwavering in her hatred for all Americans and was prepared to raise storms and typhoons to assault the American coast (which Siren helped to prevent) and to defend Japan against invasion. She never got the opportunity for the latter—she was in Hiroshima when the first atomic bomb was dropped and was killed instantly by the blast.

THE GOLDEN AGE FREEDOM CITY SERIES

The material in this book and the *Freedom City* sourcebook is all you need to run adventures in the Golden Age of Freedom City, whether an ongoing series or just a change-of-pace time travel adventure or two for a group of modern heroes. There are a number of different frameworks available for a Golden Age Freedom City series, from setting up the heroes as members of the Liberty League or Allies of Freedom to replacing one or both groups with a new team of home-front heroes, playing soldiers on the battlefields of World War II, or heroes working as protectors of the time-stream.

LIBERTY LEAGUE

The Liberty League offers a framework for a fairly traditional "home-front heroes" series in the Golden Age of Freedom. Under Dr. Tomorrow's leadership, the Liberty League thwarted Axis plots, particularly those connected to or influenced by Dr. Geistmann, and helped shift the course of the war toward an Allied victory. The League saw fairly little action in the war itself until its end due to the events detailed in the adventure **A Date That Will Live in Infamy** later in this book.

Player character heroes can be new members of the Liberty League, perhaps joining up following the events of the introductory adventure, just weeks after Pearl Harbor. This sets things up for a series lasting the duration of WWII, a healthy run for any *M&M* game. You can also have the new characters replace some or all of the Liberty League, keeping the focus on the player characters. There's a lot going on in the Golden Age, and plenty of room for heroes to do different things.

ALLIES OF FREEDOM

For more of a war-front experience, you can set the heroes up as members of the Allies of Freedom, operating in the European Theatre of war. They may be present at the original gathering of the Allies, as survivors of Wilhelm Kantor's plot, or relatively new members of the team. For a twist, you can have some of the other Allies killed in Poland, leaving the player characters to carry on their legacy during the rest of the war. This series framework suits non-American heroes particularly well.

An Allies of Freedom series offers a chance for a bit more action on the front lines of the war as well as some additional grit and realism, if you prefer. The Allies certainly suffered far more casualties than the Liberty League; many of them did not survive the war or their final confrontation with Nacht-Krieger.

A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

Rather than making the heroes members of one of the pre-existing Golden Age teams, you can set them up as an independent group, operating on the home front, in the European or Pacific Theatres, or all of the above! Some possibilities for additional golden age hero teams include:

PACIFIC PATROL

The Allies of Freedom don't operate in the Pacific Theatre until after V-E Day, and the Liberty League only ventures to the front on rare occasions, so there's room for a team of heroes operating in the Pacific Theatre after Pearl Harbor. They can thwart Japanese saboteurs and sneak-attacks, aid Allied soldiers, free prisoner-of-war camps, and perform similar missions. They can also encounter strange lost islands, including places like Kaiju Island (see **Chapter 5** of *Freedom City*).

MYSTERY MEN

While most American heroes answered President Roosevelt's call to join up, some may prefer to remain in the shadows. They can operate on the home front, breaking up spy rings and criminal gangs alike, thwarting operations to violate rationing or smuggle contraband. They're also likely to run up against Axis spies, fifth columnists, and domestic threats.

THE OFFICE OF SUPER-SERVICES

While the Liberty League technically answers to the U.S. government, they're not government agents as such. It's certainly possible the War Department, the FBI, or a similar government agency might assemble its own team of superhuman operatives. They can be the aforementioned mystery men, loyal citizens, or even less savory types like super-criminals offered early parole in exchange for their cooperation.

FIGHTING ROUGHNECKS

You can use the Second World War and the Golden Age of Freedom City as a backdrop for the war-front adventures of a group of otherwise ordinary soldiers caught up in extraordinary events—a company of "fighting roughnecks" who don't have super-powers, fancy outfits, or magical talismans to protect them from the horrors of war, and who often have to confront vile Axis foes with no more than their wits and their fists.

This sort of series obviously has a considerably lower power level than usual; around power level 6 is recommended. That's enough for the average player character to be a pretty capable soldier. You can also ignore the usual rules for equipment given in **Chapter 7** of *M&M*. Soldiers' equipment is "G.I." (Government Issue) and they often have to make do with whatever they have at hand. You can ignore the usual power level limits when it comes to equipment; soldiers may have grenades and powerful rifles, but so do their opponents.

Suitable foes for a Fighting Roughnecks series are usually enemy soldiers and officers, although some Golden Age villains can also show up. Totenkopf and Schlasbringer make good recurring enemies for a squad of heroic soldiers, especially if they operate primarily behind the scenes as evil masterminds.

DR. TOMORROW & THE GUARDIANS OF TIME

The conflict between Dr. Tomorrow and Dr. Geistmann (later Zeitgeist) simmers in the background of the Golden Age of Freedom as both attempt to shape history to follow what they consider the right course. This covert "temporal war" can become the basis for an entire *Freedom City* series taking place wholly or partly in the Golden Age, and possibly spanning other ages as well.

As Guardian of Time, Dr. Tomorrow is understandably reluctant to intervene in periods he previously experienced, particularly the Second World War, which is already a temporal house of cards in some ways. There are also tasks too involved for only one man. Therefore, Dr. Tomorrow sometimes recruits others to assist him in his duties (as is the case in the time-travel option in **A Date That Will Live In Infamy**).

The heroes may be "freelancers" helping Dr. Tomorrow out from time to time (so to speak) and otherwise carrying out normal superheroic duties in and around Freedom City, or they could be Doc's regular deputies and assistants. The resources of Dr. Tomorrow and the Time-Keepers allow this series to go virtually anywhere throughout space and time. Zeitgeist (and perhaps his own agents) makes an excellent adversary, as

does Overshadow, given his reincarnation and his virtual immortality in the post-Golden Age period.

LEGACIES OF THE GOLDEN AGE

In addition to the various legacies discussed in **Chapter 7** of *Freedom City,* the heroes and villains of the Golden Age offer many opportunities for modern characters to carry on their mantles. This section looks at some of the known legacies of Golden Age of Freedom, along with those suitable for use in your own series, as you see fit.

ALLEN WRENCH

Although Allen Wrench is largely a background character in the Golden Age, he may have left various sorts of legacies. He never married, but may have had children who could have inherited his powers, been mutants due to Allen's exposure to radiation, or both. Such powers could be latent, waiting for the right circumstances to trigger them.

There's also the possibility Allen Wrench "sired" a different sort of offspring; with his technical powers, he could have created an intelligent machine of some sort. This android, robot, or computer could have gone on to become a hero or villain, or simply disappeared to avoid becoming a lab-rat for the government. Perhaps Allen Wrench's creation lies deactivated and crated-up in the back of some closet or government warehouse, waiting to be found and brought back to life.

CRIMSON KATANA

The Crimson Katana's legacy is detailed in **Chapter 6** of *Freedom City* in the description of his granddaughter, the present-day Crimson Katana. It can also be found in the remnants of the Katanarchist cult, created by the second Crimson Katana, and still seeking to reclaim the Three Flames Katana and its power for themselves.

GUNNER

Tommy Griffin's legacy is primarily one of inspiration, although it's conceivable the young man (who was nineteen when he died) could have sired children toward the end of the war. Perhaps Gunner's love of Japan took physical form in a young woman he intended to wed before their relationship was brutally cut short. Gunner's child or grandchild could be a Japanese-American super able to exude and shape "liquid metal" in various ways.

HUMAN TANK

The Human Tank and Lady Celtic had two children, both of whom have superpowers of their own. They may have in turn had kids, a third generation of British supers with ties to America. Indeed, the Griffin family could be "super royalty" of the UK, or secret supers trying to live normal lives (but still dealing with weird menaces along the way).

The more direct, physical, legacy is Hank Griffin's metallic corpse. The most macabre detail of the Human Tank's death is that his severed head has never been recovered. Rumors of a metallic skull circulate occasionally, along with stories of a grotesque metallic facemask made from the former flesh of the Human Tank and marked with mystical symbols. A third rumor suggests the Crimson Katana forged a new blade out of his foe's metal head, the wakizashi wielded by the second and third Crimson Katana.

Finally, there's the spiritual legacy. Hank Griffin's ghost does not rest easily near his grave in Oxford. Is it vengeance (against Nacht-Krieger and Crimson Katana) that keeps him tied to the material plane or something else? Could the "Haunted Human Tank" invest someone with powers like those he possessed in life? A new hero could be the fusion of superhuman spirit and living flesh turned metal. Alternately, the vengeance-obsessed

spirit could possess a living person (perhaps even one of Hank's super-powered grandchildren) in order to carry out his final wishes.

IREZUMI

The mystic Book of Summoning made from the Japanese super-agent's tanned hide remains in the keeping of the mystics of the Shambala Temple, but could fall into the hands of an unscrupulous magician or even a novice seeking power within its pages.

The rituals used by the Green Dragon Society may also still exist, allowing a modern sorcerer to grant similar tattoos to a modern-day Irezumi, perhaps a new agent of the Yakuza criminal syndicate.

KAMIKAZE

The Japanese mistress of the winds was atomized by the Hiroshima bomb, but was that necessarily the end? It's possible Kamikaze's essence was spread out on the winds by her death or that she merged with the very air itself in some way. This could allow her powers to pass on to a successor or even for her to re-emerge as some sort of mystical being of

could have done so, even if unable to use them. Wilhelm Kantor is a prime suspect. If so, he never found a means to harness the power of the druids—or at least hasn't so far.

The remaining possibility involves the silver traceries of Celtic knotwork on the skin of Lady Celtic's daughter, Avril Griffin. Perhaps she inherited her mother's powers in some fashion after Amanda's death. Certainly Avril possesses considerable mystic talent and has acquired power in her own right; whether or not it was her mother's remains unknown. It's left up to the Gamemaster to decide the final disposition of Lady Celtic's legacy in the modern world.

MIDNIGHT

The ultimate fate of the mystery man called Midnight is left up to the GM. A modern day hero or villain could adopt Midnight's moniker and methods, perhaps even discovering his old secret hideout with his spare costumes and a cache of his equipment. Travis Hunter could have even left clues about his legacy, figuring the person able to decipher them would make a worthy successor.

RENARD ROGUE

The Rogue Fox is a famous figure in French history, so a daring and audacious hero (or villain!) might choose to take up the mantle, confounding foes with wit, cunning, and panache. For an interesting twist, a hero and a villain could *both* claim to be la Renard Rogue, creating a rivalry to prove who is more worthy to hold the name.

SERGEANT SHRAPNEL

Tony Gorman's son inherited a measure of his powers. Did he have any children? As a CIA agent, his fate is left deliberately mysterious and in the hands of the Gamemaster. Nick Gorman could still be around (either elderly or well-preserved due to his powers). He could have had children or provided genetic material—willingly and knowingly or not—for government experiments to replicate his powers.

What about the aliens who gave Sarge Shrapnel and Allen Wrench their powers? Who were they? Why did they do it? Are they still around, possibly abducting and enhancing other humans? The answers are left for you to decide, although possibilities include the Preservers or some creation or technology of theirs.

SPITFIRE JONES

An infamous Casanova, it's entirely possible Spitfire Jones sired one or more children before his death and that his offspring inherited his powers, or the potential for them. It might just be a matter of the right circumstances to bring out the latent abilities in one of David Jones' grandchildren or even great-grandchildren. There's also the question of the mysterious cloud that enveloped David Jones' plane: what was it and where did it come from? It's left as a mystery for the GM to decide and potentially re-enact, if a modern-day hero or villain is to gain powers in much the same way.

WHITE ROSE & WHITE THORN

The legacy of the Light-bearers in modern Freedom City is Langston Albright, the current wielder of the power of the light, although perhaps not for much longer. As detailed in *Freedom City,* Albright is seeking a successor to his powers, a suitable vessel as the new Champion of Light, a potential ally of the reincarnated Heru-Ra (see the **Scarab** legacy in *Freedom City*) and a foe of the Nacht-Krieger, warrior of the dark, and his master Overshadow, the reincarnation of Tan-Aktor (see their descriptions in *Freedom City*).

pure elemental fury, ready to strike back at the nation responsible for her death and that of so many of her countrymen. A reborn Kamikaze would make a good ally for Hiroshima Shadow (see page 149 of *Freedom City*). Maybe Hiroshima Shadow *is* Kamikaze reborn!

LADY CELTIC

One mystery of the end of World War II is how Lady Celtic's mystic tattoos disappeared following her death. It's possible (even likely) someone of Celtic heritage came into contact with her body when it was recovered and returned to England, gaining the tattoos and the mystic power and knowledge that went with them. If so, their identity remained a secret. It's also possible the tattoos were stolen in some fashion; an occultist

CHAPTER 6: A DATE THAT WILL LIVE IN INFAMY

A Date That Will Live In Infamy is an introductory adventure for a *Golden Age* series set in Freedom City, at the dawn of America's entry into World War II. It introduces the heroes to the heroes of the day, the Liberty League, and perhaps gives them the opportunity to join that celebrated team, or even replace them if the League should fall to the forces of evil. Of course, before that happens, the characters will have to fight America's greatest heroes in order to save them!

The true villain of this adventure is Dr. Geistmann, the "Aryan Ape" and mad scientist described in **Chapter 5**. The game stats of the various members of the Liberty League from that chapter are also required to run this adventure, along with the supporting cast archetypes from **Chapter 11** of *Mutants & Masterminds*. The *Freedom City* sourcebook is recommended, but not required to run the adventure.

HISTORY, PAST AND FUTURE

When Tomas Morgen stole an experimental Reich time machine in order to travel back and prevent the Axis from winning World War II, he intended to arrive the day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. With sufficient warning, the Americans could better weather the attack and still be inspired to join the Allied cause. Morgen could rally the legendary heroes of the Allied Nations and bring a swift end to the war, or so he hoped.

Morgen's plans went awry the moment Dr. Oberst Geistmann tried to stop him from activating the time-belt. The two men struggled, the temporal warp activated, and Morgen saw Geistmann disintegrated by the unleashed energies before he vanished into the timestream reappearing two days later than he'd planned: December 8th, 1941, the day *after* Pearl Harbor.

Undaunted, "Thomas Morrow" (as he chose to call himself) made contact with President Roosevelt and managed to convince the President and his closest advisors that he was indeed from the future, a future where the Axis won the war. Spurred by the Japanese attack and the appearance of Dr. Tomorrow, Roosevelt asked America's superheroes to band together into the Liberty League.

Within the League, Dr. Tomorrow proposed a bold plan. The newly formed League would take the battle to the Empire of Japan, ending the war in the Pacific in a single stroke and leaving America free to come to the aid of Britain, France, and its European allies. It might well have worked, too, save for something even Dr. Tomorrow couldn't foresee.

Dr. Geistmann was in fact not killed by the unleashed energies of the time conveyor. His body was atomized, true, but his mind somehow survived as an incorporeal wraith. Cast back along the timestream, Geistmann's mind latched onto the brain of an albino African ape, an experimental subject in a Nazi laboratory. He "awakened" in the ape's body, at first convincing his "handlers" they had succeeded in their experiments to endow it with intelligence. In short order, *Herr Doktor* Geistmann convinced Wilhelm Kantor and others in the Nazi High Command that he was in fact from the future and aware of a threat to the inevitable Axis victory. Geistmann had arrived more than a year before Dr. Tomorrow, with visions from the timestream and an opportunity to prepare.

THE TIME-TRAVEL OPTION

One option for running *A Date That Will Live in Infamy* is as a time-travel adventure for modern Freedom City heroes rather than as a Golden Age period piece. In this case, Dr. Tomorrow rounds up the heroes (individually or as an already-established team). This is the "modern" Dr. Tomorrow, in his role as Guardian of Time (see the *Freedom City* sourcebook for details).

The mysterious Time-Keepers have assigned Doc the task of preventing a "temporal incursion" in late 1941, but even the good doctor is a bit in the dark about the details. For some reason, he can't seem to remember the events of those few days. The Time-Keepers have made it clear he is *not* to involve himself directly, which is why he needs help.

The heroes are taken back to December 21, 1941 in Dr. Tomorrow's time-ship, and dropped off in a particular warehouse on Pier Six where the adventure begins. It's up to the players how their heroes decide to pass themselves off. Since new costumed heroes seem to be popping out of the woodwork in Freedom City in the early 1940s, nobody will question the sudden appearance of several more, at least not right away.

The heroes need to be careful not to give away too much about the future or to change things any more than they already have been (are being?). They might want to adopt different costumes or identities for the duration of their stay in the past, so as not to give away their true nature. This is particularly true for any heroes with already active Golden Age predecessors! ("Bowman? Sorry, pal, that's *my* name.") Matter replicators on board Dr. Tomorrow's time-ship can provide the heroes with new costumes, period clothing, or other disguises, as needed.

Once the heroes have put a stop to Dr. Geistmann's plan and rescued the Liberty League, Dr. Tomorrow can return them to their own time, where they can read in the history books about the "mysterious heroes" who aided the Liberty League on that day in late December of '41 and probably turned the tide of the war!

Keep in mind any interactions the heroes have with the past. You can also use the time-travel option to make changes to the modern-day *Freedom City* setting, if you like. The heroes may return home to discover a few things are different than they remember, or you can simply make the changes retroactive so things have "always" been that way. It's a good opportunity to customize *Freedom City* to suit the sort of series you want to run.

The Liberty League never made it to the Japanese islands, walking instead into a Nazi trap. Rather than killing them outright, Dr. Geistmann considered it delicious irony to use the Amerikaner heroes, particularly "Dr. Tomorrow," as the ultimate instruments of Axis victory, *his* victory. He brainwashed the Liberty Leaguers over the course of a week before sending them back to the United States, unaware of their new loyalties.

It's now December 21, 1941 and no one has heard from the Liberty League since they undertook their fateful mission nearly two weeks ago. The official government story is the League is on a "secret mission" (which is true), but the President fears America's heroes have been lost less than a month after the U.S. entry into the war. Was this "Dr. Tomorrow" fellow a traitor? A Nazi secret agent, sent to lure the heroes to their doom? Of course, Roosevelt has other concerns as well: tomorrow he'll be attending a top-secret conference to meet with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at an undisclosed location in Freedom City, which is where our adventure begins.

OKAY, AXIS, HERE WE COME!

Special Agent Dan Bradley of the FBI contacts the heroes, either individually or as a team. If this is your first *Golden Age* adventure and the players' characters haven't met before, then Agent Bradley may arrange it, making it clear it's a matter of national security. He comes to the heroes' headquarters (if they have one known to the public, or at least to the Feds). Otherwise, he invites them to his office, apologizing for the mess of papers and such, saying his secretary, Miss Mason, is away visiting her sick aunt and he's own his own. (Unbeknownst to Agent Bradley, Donna Mason is actually Lady Liberty. Her "sick aunt" is the Liberty League's first mission.) Use the Government Agent archetype (*M&M*, page 227) for Bradley, with the appropriate modifications (mainly removing the Computers skill and any modern equipment).

Agent Bradley explains that he has a number of reasons for getting in touch with the heroes. First and foremost, America needs heroes. He explains how the Liberty League headed for Japan and hasn't been heard from since. The heroes' assistance is needed, both to protect the nation and possibly to shore up morale on the home front. Bradley makes it clear he has no other information to offer about the Liberty League's fate for the time being and that what he has told them must be kept in the strictest confidence.

The President has a two-part job for the heroes. The public relations part is appearing at a war-bond rally in Liberty Park, helping to "run up the flag" and give hope to people still stunned and angered by the attack on Pearl Harbor and the declarations of war. The security part is investigating suspected Axis subversion on the city's waterfront. Agent Bradley makes it clear that it is imperative the heroes prevent any possible sabotage or smuggling operations. The particularly astute among them (Sense Motive DC 25) notice the agent is especially emphatic about this, suggesting there's more to it than just a routine threat from fifth columnists or saboteurs.

ON A NEED TO KNOW BASIS

What Agent Bradley *doesn't* tell the heroes is the reason the FBI is suddenly so interested in activities in Freedom City is because it is the site of a top-secret meeting between President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill!

Churchill is arriving at Lonely Point Naval Base on board the *HMS Duke of York*. He is scheduled to meet with the President before the two men make their way to Washington DC by train. Security is absolutely essential, and Bradley is under orders not to reveal the meeting to the heroes unless absolutely necessary. After all, it's still unclear if these new long-underwear types are trustworthy, and they can't give away what they don't know. Of course, Dr. Geistmann—with his future insight—already knows about the meeting and has planned to take full advantage of it.

(*Historical note:* A similar meeting between FDR and Churchill actually did take place on December 22, 1941 when the Prime Minister visited the United States. In our world, Churchill arrived in Norfolk, Virginia.)

LONE WOLVES

It's possible even the FBI will have difficulty contacting some heroes, either because they are so mysterious or the government finds them particularly untrustworthy. These "lone wolves" may have learned about the Nazi activities at Pier Six all on their own through investigation and connections on the streets. They can show up for the spy-smashing party at the same time as the other heroes, allowing them to meet up and perhaps earn the government's trust (or at least that of their fellow heroes). While the G-men would be cautious about trusting masked vigilantes under normal circumstances, these are troubled times. America can use all the heroes it can get, even if they do wear black and work in the shadows.

PIER SIX BRAWL

The action begins on the Freedom City docks, Pier Six in particular, just after midnight. A casual glance from a safe distance reveals nothing out of the ordinary, just longshoremen unloading a ship and moving the cargo to a nearby warehouse. When the heroes decide to move in for a closer look, they can approach openly or stealthily. If they opt for the former, they know there's something wrong immediately, as the "longshoremen" all start yelling in German and draw guns.

There are two Nazi agents for every hero present. Half are genuine German spies (use the Terrorist archetype on 229 of *M&M*) armed with .32 Walther PPK semi-automatic pistols and German "potato masher" grenades. The rest are just hired thugs and fifth columnists (use the Thug archetype on page 229 of *M&M*) armed with 9mm MP-40 "Schmeisser" light submachine guns.

To successfully sneak up on the subversives, each player must make an opposed Stealth skill check. You can assume the bad guys take 10 on their (untrained) Notice check for an average Difficulty Class of 11. You should naturally reward any especially clever plan for getting the drop on these suspicious characters, perhaps by providing the players with an extra hero point.

Sooner or later, the heroes overhear the supposed "longshoremen" conversing in German or catch a glimpse of the Kraut guns they're packing. If they get the drop on the fascists, the heroes naturally benefit from a surprise round when combat begins (see **Surprise**, page 153 of *M&M*).

The warehouse is full of wooden crates (Toughness 8), good for at least partial concealment, and the enemy agents are smart enough to take advantage of them. They attempt to make a fighting retreat back to the freighter to make it out to sea before the authorities can intercept them. Of course, a sharp hero can make short work of that plan by smashing up the (Toughness 3) gangplank. A more powerful (or dense) hero could also sink the freighter, but the government's bound to frown on such wanton destruction without good cause. *Somebody* will get stuck putting out the blazing hulk and raising it to unblock access to the pier, after all. Still, if you want to liven up the fight, you can have the ship pull away from the dock, giving the heroes the opportunity to stop it.

V FOR VICTORY

In the most likely outcome, the good guys win and the bad guys are in FBI custody on their way to a military tribunal. Ambulances and doctors arrive for those who need them. Award the players a hero point for their success, plus any bonus hero points for clever roleplaying.

The FBI allows the heroes to question any captured infiltrators, so long as they don't cross any lines. Special Agent Bradley is on-hand to listen for anything useful. Unfortunately for the good guys, the fascists don't know much. They appropriated the freighter in South America and secretly loaded some additional cargo during a mid-ocean rendezvous with a U-boat. Their orders were to leave the crates in the warehouse for "future operations," then return to South America to await new orders.

Looking for the items the Nazis off-loaded (whether they're still there or not) is a needle-and-haystack deal. The Krauts can be browbeaten into helping (Intimidate check), but they followed their orders to the letter and

scattered the crates amongst the legitimate cargos in the warehouse. Neither they nor the ship's phony manifest are of any assistance.

Before the players decide to buckle down and take 20 (and all night) to search the warehouse, the piercing wails of air-raid sirens echo through the night. Go on to **Look! Up in the Sky!**

If the heroes somehow manage to lose to the Nazis, the good news is they suffer no lasting harm other than to their egos, and they get a hero point for the setback. They wake up an hour or two after being knocked out, with everything of interest gone, including the Kraut agents, their mysterious cargo, and the ship they came in on. As the bewildered heroes try and get their bearings, go on to the next scene.

LOOK! UP IN THE SKY!

Agent Bradley notes, "There's no air-raid drill scheduled for tonight!" Then the FBI agent rushes outside to see what's going on. Outside the warehouse, a quick glance at the night sky shows the reason for all the air-raid sirens. Searchlights sweep in all directions, but even without their aid, a large flaming object can be seen streaking toward Freedom City! For a moment it seems as though it will take out the tops off the tallest buildings, but it manages to clear them, headed west toward Wharton Forest.

A DC 15 Notice check reveals the skies are otherwise empty, though all the trappings of a full-blown air raid drill continue: searchlights, sirens, nervous helmeted air-raid marshals, and a city-wide blackout. Flying heroes may go aloft to confirm that Nazi bombers are not about to attack, but without an IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) system, they are bound to draw some antiaircraft fire from nervous ground crews. It's just for in-game effect, though, to remind the players of how panicky the city (and country) is at this bleak time.

A huge flaming object crashing near their home city should be enough for most heroes to want to investigate. If they don't head off immediately, it isn't long before the stern-faced G-Men (who've secured the warehouse) and insistent air-raid marshals begin asking when exactly the costumed types are going to go and see what it is. When the players take the hint, move on to **Fallen Eagle**.
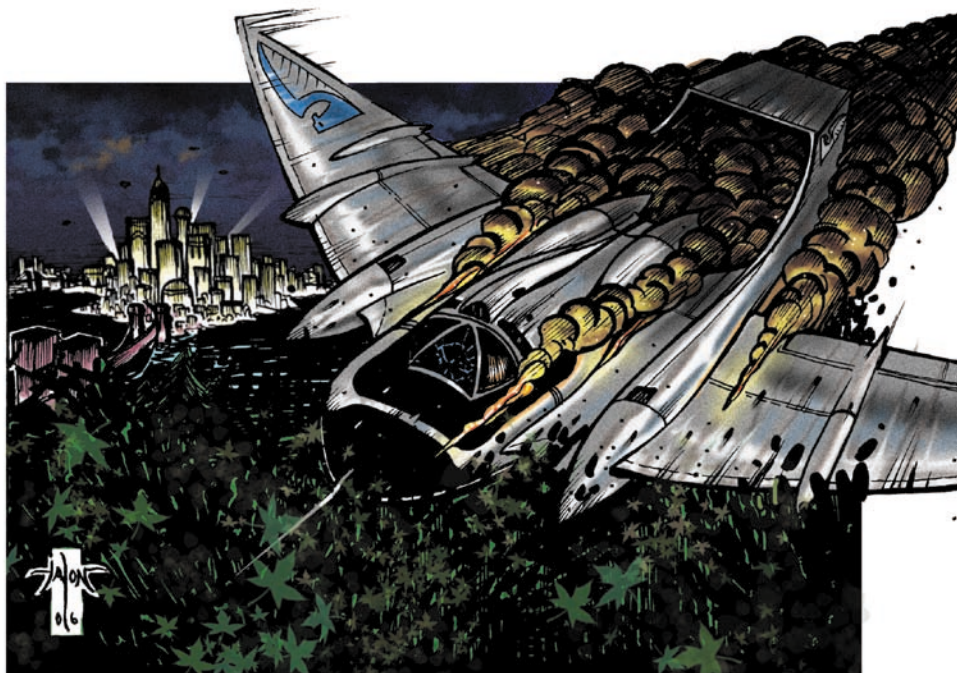
FALLEN EAGLE

The heroes have no problem tracing the fallen object to its crash site. Just heading in the same general direction reveals a pillar of smoke rising from the Wharton Forest and obscuring the stars. The attached column of fire and downed treetops lead them the rest of the way.

At first glance, it appears to be a crashed airliner or medium bomber, but it's hard to be sure with the flames all around. Putting the fire out is likely the next priority, just requiring the right powers (Air, Fire, Water, or Weather Control, for example) to counter the blaze (DC 13 power check). Give any other plans or power stunts the players come up with an equally reasonable chance of success. Otherwise, the heroes either have to brave the flames and go in (resisting +3 fire damage each round), or wait for the plane's fuel tanks to explode, and what kind of heroes would that make them? Award a hero point to any player whose hero leaps into action, heedless of the danger.

Once inside the wreck, the heroes discover the passenger compartment remarkably intact. Anyone trained in the Pilot skill can tell it's not configured like any sort of aircraft cockpit they've seen. Five unconscious costumed passengers are strapped into their seats. It's too difficult to see through the smoke and fire to recognize anyone inside the wrecked compartment, and inadvisable for the heroes to linger and make Notice checks.

Use the impending explosion of the plane's fuel tanks to lend dramatic tension as the heroes struggle to get the unconscious passengers out in time. You can provide additional tension with jammed safety harnesses, having part of the plane collapse, cutting off their escape, a stuck hatch, and so forth. Award each of the heroes a hero point when they get everyone out, having the wreckage explode afterward for dramatic effect.

THAT'S OUR STORY...

Once the heroes have gotten the unconscious people clear of the burning wreckage, they immediately recognize them: some of the missing members of the Liberty League! Specifically, Bowman and his junior partner Arrow, Envoy, Freedom Eagle, and Lady Liberty, who all begin to regain consciousness shortly after their rescue. See **Chapter 5** for details and game information on the Liberty League. The Leaguers are grateful for their rescue and happy to talk to the heroes. They all tell the same remarkable story.

Once they reached the Japanese-controlled area of the Pacific, they found the Imperial Navy a much more formidable foe than anticipated, so much so they never even got close to Tokyo. They did, however, pick up some valuable intelligence on the deployment of the Japanese forces, and decided to try to return home with the information (which has now, alas, been lost in the destruction of the Steel Eagle). Lady Liberty tearfully explains how Johnny Rocket was lost in the initial battle, gunned down by a Japanese Zero, and how Centurion and Dr. Tomorrow valiantly sacrificed themselves to give the others the opportunity to escape.

Due to the Japanese ships and planes close on their tail, the League was forced to maintain radio silence and come back the long way, across the Indian Ocean and Africa. Still, a lucky shot from a German U-boat's deck gun brought them down just before they reached Freedom City. It was only Freedom Eagle's skill as a pilot that kept them alive.

The inevitable Sense Motive checks by the more suspicious players to evaluate all this (DC 20) indicate the Liberty League's story is just a little too pat. All the details hold up and there are no inconsistencies, but there's just something not right about all of it. The heroes can't pick out any specific falsehoods, but their gut instinct says the whole thing just doesn't ring true.

If a player wants to make a Sense Motive check to detect undue influence, make the check secretly and tell the player it's unclear (since Dr. Geistmann's brainwashing is a plot device). This should heighten concerns and the heroes may conclude the Liberty League—the nation's greatest heroes—is deliberately lying to them!

The League members won't consent to any sort of superpowered scrutiny (like Mind Reading), and in fact resent any implication that it's necessary. Who are the heroes to question *their* motives and loyalty, after all? Covert attempts (in addition to being less than heroic) turn up nothing definitive due to the plot device nature of the brainwashing technique.

Before things get too heated between the two groups (or the scene starts to drag), the Freedom City Police and Fire Departments, freed from the now-cancelled air raid alert, arrive on the scene. If the characters couldn't, the professionals see to the medical needs of the Liberty League (as well as any injured rescuers), and give the team a hero's welcome once they realize the heroes have returned home to a city in dire need of some good news. The player characters suddenly find themselves playing second fiddle, and that's as good a time as any for them to exit, stage left.

UP IN SMOKE

The heroes' most likely destinations after leaving the crash-site are home to rest or back to the warehouse to investigate further. The former gets them some much-needed sleep (and the opportunity to recover from damage, if necessary), while the latter leads only to more questions. Back at the pier, the heroes find the Fire Department, having failed to prevent the warehouse from burning to the ground.

Poking around the scene turns up an ambulance crew tending a handful of battered but conscious G-Men. If questioned, the agents recount how they were left to watch over the crime scene while their colleagues whisked the German smugglers off to jail. Not long afterwards, they were knocked unconscious by unknown assailants, and awoke to find the warehouse ablaze.

There's not much for the characters to do then but wait until the firemen finish their work, or try and assist them with it. Once the fire is out, there are still some clues to be found. First, a Search check (DC 20) locates the source of the blaze, and an Investigate check (DC 26) confirms the fire was set deliberately. The destruction of the warehouse was no accident.

Though the players won't know it until later, Dr. Geistmann and the "dead" members of the Liberty League came ashore in the confusion sown by the crash of the Steel Eagle. Finding the G-Men there instead of the German agents Geistmann expected, the Leaguers knocked out the Feds and the Nazi mastermind burned down the warehouse to cover his tracks after removing the crates with the parts he needed.

LIBERTY BOND BATTLE

After the eventful night gives way to morning, the heroes awake to find the newspapers and radio abuzz with news of the Liberty League's return, with the reports only making vague mention of the "other costumed heroes" involved in their rescue, and the events at the warehouse buried below the fold. If the characters elected to remain at the warehouse and didn't investigate the crash, assume the Freedom City police and firemen managed to "rescue" the Liberty League (ensuring *no* mention of the player characters in the news).

At the war-bond rally later that day, as the heroes find themselves the opening act at an event they were supposed to headline, a spot now occupied by the Liberty League. Sadly, the only thing that could

make matters worse would be for the heroes to skip the event entirely, so despite any injury to their pride the characters are left with little choice but to put on happy faces and do their patriotic duty. To make matters more difficult, they have to either come off as heroic in light of the Liberty League's tremendous sacrifice and dramatic return, or seem charming and funny at a rally headlined by Bob Hope, Frances Langford, and Jerry Colonna.

Still, if the characters try to do more than shout "Buy Bonds!" and get offstage, let them. On the Interaction Table, the crowd is Indifferent to the heroes. From that starting point they can try to inspire the audience with a patriotic speech (Diplomacy), tell a few jokes (Bluff or Perform), or show off their super-abilities (Perform). Play out the introduction as long as you like. Based on the results, it may salve the heroes' bruised egos or make them feel even more like also-rans.

They may feel that way regardless, once the Liberty League makes its entrance in a new Steel Eagle (it's a spare Freedom Eagle had to replace the one that crashed the night before, in case you're wondering). When the amazing craft sets down next to the stage and the League disembarks, the crowd gives them a tumultuous welcome that almost drowns out announcer Bill Goodwin's introduction. The player characters are all but forgotten as Lady Liberty takes center stage and the microphone.

BETRAYED!

"Thank you all for coming," the star-spangled heroine says with a broad smile, "and for all the money you have helped to raise!" She gestures toward the barrel literally stuffed with money from war-bond sales as the audience applauds and cheers. "Wealth that will serve the cause of the Third Reich well! *Heil Hitler!*"

A stunned silence falls over the horrified crowd as the other members of the Liberty League return the Nazi salute. Envoy grabs the barrel of money and the Leaguers try to make good their escape before the shocked audience can recover their wits.

NOT SO FAST!

It's pretty much up to the heroes to stop the brainwashed Liberty League: even once the nearby cops and soldier-boys realize what's happening, they're absolutely no match for them, and the League can wade right through them to reach the Steel Eagle.

The Leaguers are willing, indeed eager, to fight, since robbing the rally is just a cover anyway. Their real purpose is to provide a distraction and keep the player characters and the authorities occupied. Make a secret Sense Motive check for the heroes (DC 20) to notice their opponents don't really seem to be trying to make a quick getaway, although they can't tell exactly why. The Leaguers loudly proclaim how they will demonstrate the inferiority of the "soft Americans" by defeating them in public for all to see.

Run the fight; keeping in mind the brainwashed heroes don't really use any teamwork or cooperation. They also don't use lethal force, since they're still subconsciously fighting the Nazi conditioning. This may be a clue of sorts to the players.

Feel free to remind the players during the battle that, however distasteful or shocking the Liberty League's betrayal may be, it doesn't justify sinking "to their level," especially if the heroes have reason to suspect the Leaguers are not acting of their own free wills. Lethal attacks or tactics aren't warranted and true Golden Age heroes shouldn't use them.

LIBERATING THE LEAGUE

It possible (even likely) the players will figure the Liberty Leaguers are not in their right minds. They may attempt to overcome Dr. Geistmann's brainwashing and get the heroes to start thinking like themselves again, appealing to their true natures to stop and realize what they are doing.

It takes an interaction (Bluff or Diplomacy) skill check with a DC of 25 to accomplish this, the same as shifting an unfriendly character's attitude to friendly. Technically, the brainwashed heroes are hostile to all "enemies of the Reich," but they've been struggling against the conditioning. The characters can give them the extra help they need to overcome it. At your discretion, a use of Intimidate may also work if phrased properly.

Mental powers like Mind Reading might also work, as well as a Nullify affecting mental powers, , but you might want to require extra effort for the attempt to succeed since interaction isn't required. The Difficulty Class for these attempts is also 25.

A Liberty Leaguer freed from the brainwashing passes out from the terrible mental strain. They're fine once they recover, but they're basically out of action for the rest of the adventure, meaning the player characters have to handle things on their own without any help. The brainwashing may have more serious aftereffects if you're looking to limit the Liberty League's role in the series (see **The Not-So Happy Ending** for more on this).

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

As soon as the heroes have overcome the rogue members of the Liberty League, Agent Bradley comes running up to them. "We need your help!" he says. "There's a Nazi war-machine walking down Monument Street!" Before the heroes rush off to stop it, Bradley takes them aside and tells them an even more serious concern: not only are the supposedly-dead members of the Liberty League aiding the giant Nazi robot, but it has abducted President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill! Needless to say, there's no time to waste!

THE EISENMECH

Never one for subtlety (in the tradition of the finest Nazi masterminds), Dr. Geistmann's giant war-machine has grabbed the American and British leaders, brushing aside soldiers and G-Men like ants. He plans

to rendezvous with a U-boat waiting off the coast while the remaining Liberty Leaguers run interference (and take the blame). The *Eisenmech* clanks and lumbers down the street, overturning the occasional car, as people scatter and run for cover. The only thing stranger than the sight of the giant German war-machine is that of the albino ape visible inside its head, driving it!

Like their erstwhile teammates, the brainwashed Leaguers react robotically, using neither teamwork nor innovative tactics against the heroes. They focus on keeping the characters away from the *Eisenmech,* heedless of their own safety. The same guidelines from **Betrayed!** apply to this conflict: the heroes should exercise restraint against their opponents, and may attempt to free them from the effects of the Nazi ape's brainwashing. See **Chapter 5** for details and game information on the members of the Liberty League and Dr. Geistmann. The Aryan ape's *Eisenmech* is detailed here.

The President and Prime Minister are held captive in a cargo-hold in the robot's barrel chest. Feel free to remind the players any attacks on the *Eisenmech* risk harming the prisoners; the heroes should take great care in disabling it! Someone able to get past the Liberty Leaguers and the *Eisenmech's* weapons may be able to smash through the canopy (Toughness 8) and grab Dr. Geistmann, although the Nazi scientist is not without defenses of his own (see his stats in **Chapter 5**).

Geistmann focuses on escaping while the three Liberty Leaguers run interference. If the fight proves too difficult for the heroes, you can provide them with some aid in the form of one or more of the Liberty League members from the previous encounter (who have no shaken off the brainwashing) or Agent Bradley and a squad of G-Men.

EISENMECH — POWER LEVEL 10 (CONSTRUCT)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+13	+0	—	—	—	—
36	10	—	—	—	—

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	—	+0	—

Powers: Blast 6 (machine guns, Autofire, Cone Area, Touch Range, Alternate Power: **Blast 9** [cannon]), **Growth 8** (huge, +16 Str, +4 Tou, Permanent, Innate), **Immunity 30** (Fortitude), **Leaping 3** (x10 distance), **Protection 8** (Impervious)

Combat: Attack +7 (includes –2 size), Grapple +28, Damage +13 (unarmed), +9 (blast), Defense +7 (includes –2 size), Knockback –18, Initiative +0

Note: Make a normal attack roll for the *Eisenmech's* machine guns in autofire mode and apply the result (and any autofire damage bonus) to all targets in the guns' cone area of effect.

Abilities –30 + Skills 0 + Feats 0 + Powers 93 + Combat 36 + Saves 0 = Total 99

ALL'S WELL...

Ideally, the heroes rescue the President and Prime Minister and free the Liberty Leaguers from the sinister Nazi brainwashing. Dr. Geistmann either escapes or appears to perish in the destruction of the *Eisenmech.* You can have it explode spectacularly after the hostages are saved, for example, having a bystander (even Roosevelt or Churchill) declare, "No one could have survived that!"

THE NOT-SO HAPPY ENDING

If things *don't* go well or you want to thin the ranks of Golden Age Freedom City's heroes, then it's possible this adventure may be the last for some (if not all) of the present members of the Liberty League. The simplest option is for the Nazi brainwashing to cause serious and permanent injury: the heroes who manage to resist it die or are left comatose or brain-dead (depending on how gruesome you want to get). Alternately, some of the freed Leaguers might decide to quietly retire, since it's unclear if they can ever truly be trusted again. It becomes up to the player characters to replace (and perhaps avenge) the fallen heroes, carrying on the fight.

If the heroes manage to get President Roosevelt or Prime Minister Churchill killed (difficult given the default assumption of non-lethal damage in *M&M* and the Golden Age era, but still possible), you can either let the chips fall where they may, creating an alternate history for your series, or come up with a plausible explanation that salvages the situation. Perhaps the dead VIP(s) are not the genuine article, but decoys (disguised G-Men, shapeshifters, robots, super-spies, etc.) intended to lure Axis agents away from the *real* top-secret meeting. Codename Kilroy from **Chapter 5** could be impersonating a threatened leader. Either man could be wearing a super-science "bulletproof vest" or similar protection that stops the otherwise fatal blow, and so forth. Maybe the men are not in the *Eisenmech* but have already been spirited away by Geistmann's agents while he provides a distraction, giving the heroes another chance to stage a rescue.

If all else fails, there's always the possibility of Dr. Tomorrow's future-self intervening to prevent an otherwise disastrous event from occurring. Try to avoid such a *deus ex machina,* if you can, but it's an ace-in-the-hole if you need it. How do the Time-Keepers justify such meddling? Well, they're mysterious, you see....

If captured, the sinister simian manages to give the FBI the slip and disappears (no doubt picked up by a waiting U-boat to return to Germany). The heroes have the thanks of President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, the Liberty League, and a grateful America. An invitation to join the new Liberty League from President Roosevelt is a virtual certainty unless the heroes prefer to form their own team.

Award each hero in the adventure 1 power point if things went well. You might want to suggest the players pool these points to start getting some team equipment, particularly a headquarters (unless they're going to be joining the Liberty League and using their downtown mansion). NPC members of the team may also contribute, allowing you to "discount" the equipment as much as you see fit.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Although the heroes have (hopefully) saved the day, the fires of the Second World War have only been fanned. There are many more adventures in store for them. Take a look over the **Timeline** in **Chapter 5** for just a sample of the Golden Age adventures heroes can have in the wartime World of Freedom. An examination of a good historical summary of World War II can provide plenty of other ideas.

For an immediate follow-up, there's the duration of Prime Minister Churchill's stay in the United States. The President and Prime Minister depart Freedom City the next day on a train from Greenbank bound for Washington DC. Axis assassins might target the train, and the dignitaries (and the FBI and Secret Service) have good reason to ask the heroes to come along on the trip.

Then there's Christmas at the White House, followed by Churchill's historic address to Congress supporting the war and the Anglo-American alliance. The Prime Minister makes a two-day trip by train to speak before the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa, spends New Year's Eve on a train back to Washington, and doesn't return home to England until mid-January (time enough for a New Year's crisis of some sort), and that's only in the first few weeks!

Assuming Dr. Geistmann escaped (he *did* escape, right?), the Nazi villain will swear vengeance against the heroes and return to plague them in the future (or perhaps in the past, given Zeitgeist's time-travel abilities). If you ran *A Date That Will Live in Infamy* as a time-travel adventure, Zeitgeist might interfere in the heroes' personal histories, getting Dr. Tomorrow involved in helping them to save *themselves* from never having existed.

Whatever adventures lie ahead for the heroes of the Golden Age, you can be sure they'll fight the good fight to protect liberty and freedom in the world. Have fun in the Golden Age of Freedom and keep 'em flyin', heroes!

APPENDIX: FIELD BATTLE RULES

The Golden Age's various armed struggles may interject themselves into any campaign set during that era. While the *Mutants & Masterminds* rules can handle the superhero vs. supervillain clashes of the comic books, military battles fought during this time were on an unprecedented scale. Even superpowered heroes can find themselves overwhelmed. Things get a little hectic for the Gamemaster, too, when a fight involves more participants than even George Perez wants to draw!

The following optional rules are designed to assist Gamemasters in better simulating the military aspects of Golden Age adventures. With a few adjustments for scale, the core *M&M* mechanics can be made 1-A and fit for military service, putting million-man battles within the Gamemaster's grasp with no threat to his sanity at all. Whether the struggle against fascism is the primary focus or just an occasional sub-plot in the campaign, this section helps Gamemasters manage a global war with little more than a twenty-sided die.

MILITARY ORGANIZATION

Battles occur between the typical military units of the era, the exact nature of which are likely unfamiliar to non-hardcore military history buffs. Fortunately, the various military organizations of the time were similar enough to be abstracted in a like fashion. For most intents and purposes, the definitions and parameters provided below apply across the board, regardless of the unit's time and country of origin.

LAND UNITS

Wars are ultimately decided on the ground. Thus, despite the importance of air and sea power, the biggest and most important battles are fought on the land. The following are the typical land units deployed during mid-20th century wars. They proceed from the smallest to the largest.

SQUAD

Individual squads were the smallest unit deployed during this era, consisting of ten soldiers on average armed with service rifles, grenades, a light machine gun, and a submachine gun for the squad leader. Squads are small enough that combats involving them can be resolved using the standard *M&M* combat rules.

A sergeant was typically in command of a squad. On rare occasions, two squads operated together as a *section*. In this event, one of the squad's sergeants or a more senior sergeant was in charge. Armored (or tank) formations had a squad-equivalent consisting of a single tank and its crew.

PLATOON

Three to five squads together make up a platoon, of 30 to 50 fighting men plus approximately five support personnel (often including a combat medic) and a couple of vehicles (trucks or the like). In addition to the normal squad armaments, platoons were also assigned light mortars and antitank weapons, deployed from the supporting headquarters unit as needed.

Typically, a first lieutenant was in charge of each platoon, but combat losses sometimes put a senior sergeant in that role. In many instances, an experienced, battle-tested sergeant in command enjoyed greater respect and trust than the hurriedly trained, inexperienced first looey he replaced (and would eventually be replaced by). In an armored formation, a platoon was made up of three to five tanks, under the command of a captain. This was the smallest unit of tanks ever deployed on an actual battlefield.

Platoon-level battles can be resolved under the standard *M&M* combat rules if the Gamemaster and players are *really* up for some combat, otherwise, the field battle rules should be used.

COMPANY

Three to five platoons together make up a company, consisting of about 140 combatants plus 20 men and a few vehicles in support roles. If none of the component platoons had a medic assigned to them, one is included at this level.

Companies normally had additional weapons assigned to its supporting headquarters unit. Typically, this consisted of medium or light machine guns. Under normal circumstances, a captain was in charge of a company. In an armored formation, a company also consisted of from three to five platoons. One or two additional tanks were assigned to serve as a headquarters unit.

Companies within a battalion were given letters to differentiate them. Thus, each battalion had an A (or "Alpha") Company, a B (or "Bravo") Company, and a C (or "Charlie") Company. Some battalions added a D (or "Delta") Company and perhaps an E (or "Easy") Company as well. Gaming groups not trapped on a desert island with nothing but time on their hands are strongly urged to resolve company-scale fights with the field battle rules.

BATTALION

Three to five companies grouped together make up a battalion, plus support personnel and vehicles. On aggregate, this totaled out to between 500 and 1,000 men under the command of a major.

Battalions frequently had a heavy-weapons company assigned to it, armed with heavy machine guns, medium machine guns, or medium mortars. In addition, battalions were the smallest unit in which a true medical facility could be found, complete with actual doctors. In an armored formation, a battalion also consisted of from three to five companies. One or two additional tanks were assigned to serve as a headquarters unit.

Battalions were differentiated with numbers and the types of units they contained, such as the 100th Infantry Battalion, or the 63rd Armored Battalion. For obvious reasons, units of this size or greater should use the field battle rules.

REGIMENT

Three to five battalions grouped together make up a regiment. Quite regularly, these battalions were of different types. Three infantry battalions plus an antitank and an artillery company was a typical configuration, but component units were often transferred between regiments as their perceived needs dictated.

Support units attached to a regiment were substantial, and were also changed as necessity required. On aggregate, a regiment consisted of between 3,000 and 4,000 men under the command of a full colonel, with a lieutenant colonel serving as his second-in-command. Two similar regiments were sometimes grouped together as a *brigade*. More typically, a brigade was merely a non-combat headquarters unit that handled regimental administrative affairs.

In an armored formation, a regiment also consisted of from three to five battalions. One or two additional tanks were assigned to serve as a headquarters unit.

DIVISION

Three to five regiments plus a number of other smaller units grouped together made a division. A typical division encompassed three infantry regiments and one artillery regiment, plus engineer, antitank, signal, and reconnaissance battalions, as well as enough support and headquarters personnel to make the unit self-sufficient.

The integral nature of a division allowed it to operate independently for long stretches of time, handling everything from routine paperwork to mail delivery to laundry and payroll all on its own. Counting the copious support personnel, a division was made up of anywhere from 9,000 to 15,000 men. Divisions were normally under the command of a major general. A brigadier general served as second-in-command.

In an armored formation, a division also consisted of from three to five regiments, plus a number of smaller units (typically artillery). One or two additional tanks were assigned to the headquarters unit. A division was the largest all-tank unit deployed during this time.

CORPS

Several divisions plus the necessary support personnel and a number of additional regiments (usually artillery, antitank, and infantry) made up a corps, usually totaling about 50,000 men. Normally, a lieutenant general was put in charge.

ARMY

A number of corps plus support personnel (on average, about 150,000 men in all) grouped together made up an army. Such large formations were usually under the command of a full general.

WHAT THIS SYSTEM IS NOT

The field battle system is *not* intended as a realistic war-game simulation for battles between superhuman foes and vast armies. It's a fast and general system for resolving conflicts between powerful superhumans and large numbers of considerably less powerful opponents quickly and easily, rather than having to deal with the minutiae of individual soldiers or units in a large-scale conflict. It gives the GM the tools to decide how difficult a particular force is to overcome and to see if the characters are capable of doing so without having to play out hours of combat.

As with all game systems, the field battle system is not meant as a substitute for common sense. If a particular outcome seems unreasonable, the GM should feel free to modify it as needed to suit the campaign and the story. In fact, *M&M* Gamemasters don't have to use this system at all if they're not looking to play out a battle in game terms. If a particular military engagement is just background color for one of your Golden Age adventures, it's perfectly fine for it to stay that way, providing the occasional complication for the heroes, but nothing more.

ARMY GROUP

If the situation merited it, a number of armies could be combined into an army group of between 600,000 and a million men under the command of a full general or higher ranking officer. For the most part, such mass groupings were only found on the Russian Front of World War II.

AIR UNITS

An air "platoon" equivalent was a group of either four fighters or three bombers, while six to twelve aircraft made up a "company" simulacrum. Twelve to 25 planes made up a squadron (battalion equivalent), while 20 to 125 made up a group (regiment equivalent).

Officers commanding these units have ranks similar to the equivalent land units, at least on paper. The often disproportionately high casualties suffered by air units during the war meant that both actual numbers and commanding ranks varied greatly, as replacement men and materiel routinely failed to keep up with battlefield losses.

NAVAL UNITS

The deployment of warships varied greatly throughout the war and from country to country. Under almost all circumstances, any naval force the player characters are likely to encounter is one small enough (a few destroyers or submarines, perhaps a cruiser) to be fought under the standard *M&M* combat rules.

Any larger fleets are encountered in detachments, which are also small enough to be handled by the standard rules: a few destroyers, a few cruisers, and then a few battleships. If the fleet has one or more aircraft carriers, the players will likely encounter their fighter and bomber groups first; the ensuing dogfight can be resolved using the rules for field battles, if need be.

MILITARY FORCES

The field battle system sums up the actions and abilities of a number of less powerful characters and treats them as a single more powerful character for the purposes of combat and conflict. This combined entity is called a *force*, as opposed to an individual character. Rounds in the battle system proceed slower than in normal combat and reflect more tactical actions and movements.

Like individual characters, forces have their own particular traits, measuring their capabilities. In general, the traits of a force are based on the components making up that force (individual soldiers, for example), with certain traits gaining a modifier based on the size of the force.

FORCE SIZE

The most important quality of a force is its size, how many individuals make up that particular force. Gamemasters may choose to treat an entire group as a single force or split the group up into smaller forces, as suits the dramatic needs of the story. Sometimes having the player characters deal with two or four smaller forces can be more interesting than a single massive force, particularly if more than one character is interacting with the force(s) at the same time.

A force's size determines its *force modifier*, which is an increase in certain traits based on the total number of individuals in the force. Each step up the Progression Table from one individual provides a +1 force modifier. So a force of two individuals has a force modifier of +1, five individuals +2, ten individuals (a squad) +3, and so forth. The **Military Unit Size** table shows the force modifiers for common military units.

MILITARY UNIT SIZE

Unit Type	Approx. No. of Troops	Force Modifier
Corps	20,000–50,000	+14
Division	9,000–15,000	+12
Brigade	6,000–8,000	+11
Regiment	3,000–4,000	+10
Battalion	500–1,000	+9
Company	140	+6
Platoon	30–50	+5
Squad	10	+3

Generally speaking, it's easier to break entire armies down into corps, divisions, or brigades.

TROOP QUALITY

Troop *quality* refers to the overall abilities of the individuals making up a particular force and forms the basis for the force's traits. There are three levels of troop quality: green, trained, and veteran. Gamemasters may want to divide a larger force into smaller forces in order to differentiate them by troop quality. For example, a force of 1,000 soldiers might be made up of three forces: a force of 100 veteran troops (+6 modifier), a force of 250 trained troops (+7 modifier), and a force of 500 green troops (+8 modifier).

Green troops are inexperienced and largely untrained, unfamiliar with combat and working together as a unit. Conscripts and average people are green quality, as are troops in societies where armed conflict is rare.

GREEN TROOPS

Attack +1, Damage +4, Defense +1, Toughness +0, Initiative +0, Morale –3

Trained troops have experience and training in combat and unit tactics. Most trained military fall into this category, along with police officers and others experienced in combat situations.

TRAINED TROOPS

Attack +2, Damage +5, Defense +2, Toughness +1, Initiative +2, Morale +0

Veteran troops have considerable experience and training in warfare, tactics, and working together as a unit. They include special-forces units and other elite military units.

VETERAN TROOPS

Attack +4, Damage +6, Defense +4, Toughness +2, Initiative +4, Morale +3

ATTACK

A force's attack bonus is the total of its base attack bonus for troop quality and the force modifier, so a larger force has a greater attack bonus

than a smaller force of the same quality. A force's total attack bonus is based on a large number of troops making simultaneous attacks and using coordinated tactics. It doesn't assume all the troops attack or may hit at once; like other traits, it abstracts the entire force's capability.

DAMAGE

A force's damage bonus is the total of its base damage bonus and the force modifier. This assumes larger forces of troops have access to both more and more powerful weapons, so it takes into account that a large force is likely to be using grenades, rocket launchers, and eventually tanks, bombs, and other heavy weapons in addition to man-portable armaments. The force's damage capabilities are generalized and summed up as single damage bonus.

Generally speaking, a military force's damage bonus is lethal damage, unless the GM decides the force is specially armed with stun-damage and incapacitating weapons (certainly anachronistic in WWII, but possible in a four-color comic book setting). A force's damage bonus works just like an individual's damage bonus and is saved against in the same way.

DEFENSE

A force's Defense represents how difficult it is to inflict a successful attack on that force. Defense is based entirely on the force's quality, with no modifier for its size. A larger force is easier to "hit" overall, but can also suffer more damage than a smaller force (represented by applying the force modifier to Toughness save).

A force does not have a dodge bonus to Defense; conditions on the battlefield change too rapidly for dodge bonus to be considered a factor in the force's overall Defense. The Gamemaster may permit certain maneuvers to modify a force's Defense, but otherwise situational modifiers only apply if they affect the entire battlefield.

TOUGHNESS

Add the force modifier to base Toughness bonus for troop quality to determine the force's total Toughness saving throw bonus.

For a force as a whole, this Toughness save doesn't quite represent the ability to shrug off damage but rather how long a force can suffer damage and continue fighting. See **Damage** for details on force Toughness saves.

INITIATIVE

A force's Initiative modifier is likewise based solely on troop quality, unaffected by unit size. A force uses its Initiative modifier just like a character, and all parts of the force are assumed to act together as a unit during its turn in the initiative order. Unlike characters, forces are not flat-footed before their first turn in the initiative order (since, in order for a force to act at all it needs a certain degree of readiness).

FORCES AND SURPRISE

Under the right conditions, such as a well-planned ambush—the GM may rule that a force is surprised at the start of a combat. This has its normal effects: the attacker gets to take an action during the surprise round before combat begins. There's still no modification to the force's Defense for being "flat-footed" unless the GM feels the *entire* force was caught by surprise, in which case defense bonus may be halved for the surprise round alone.

MORALE

A force has a modifier to its morale checks based on troop quality, unmodified by unit size. When the force must make a morale check, apply its morale modifier to the check. See **Morale Checks** for details.

FORCES IN ACTION

When one or more forces are involved in a conflict, the combat shifts to *battlefield rounds*. Each battlefield round is approximately twenty times the length of an ordinary six-second combat round, or two minutes, and represents a considerable amount of maneuvering and activity on the battlefield during that time. Individual characters and forces can take the normal allotment of actions during a battlefield round: one move action and one standard action (possibly trading the standard action for an additional move action), or a full-round action. Free actions and reactions are also allowed, up to the limits imposed by the GM.

A force makes an attack just like an individual does: a d20 roll, plus the force's attack bonus, against the Difficulty Class of the target's Defense, whether the target is another force or an individual character. A force may also move before or after an attack. Typically a force's movement is limited so long as a significant portion of the force is on foot. Motorized forces may be able to move more quickly as the GM's discretion.

MANEUVERS

A force can use particular maneuvers in battle, much like individual characters. These maneuvers are similar in many ways to character-scale maneuvers.

OFFENSIVE POSTURE

A force that takes an offensive posture sacrifices Defense in exchange for greater attack accuracy: for every –2 penalty (up to –4) that the force takes to its Defense, it gains a +1 attack bonus. Trained and veteran forces can trade Defense for attack bonus on a 1-for-1 basis (that is –1 Defense equals a +1 attack bonus) up to a total of –5 to Defense (and +5 to attack bonus).

DEFENSIVE POSTURE

A defensive posture is the opposite of an offensive posture; the force sacrifices attack ability for improved Defense (including intercepting some incoming attacks using the force's offensive capabilities): for every –2 penalty (up to –4) that the force takes to its attack rolls that round, it gains +1 to Defense. Trained and veteran forces can trade attack bonus for Defense on a 1-for-1 basis (that is –1 on attack rolls grants a +1 Defense bonus) up to a total of –5 on attack rolls for +5 Defense.

CHARGE

A force can charge, moving up to twice its normal movement in a relatively straight line. A charging force suffers a –2 modifier to Defense, but gains a +2 bonus on attack rolls for the round.

SPLIT

A force can choose to split off into smaller forces with reduced force bonuses, but with greater maneuverability and freedom of action. A force must be made up of troops of the same quality; the force uses the traits of its least qualified troops if is has troops of mixed quality.

Splitting a force is a full-round action. When a force splits, it becomes two forces, each with a portion of the troops of the original force. Each separate force has its force modifier recalculated according to its new

THE LIMITS OF THE FIELD BATTLE SYSTEM

The field battle rules are intended to provide quick "shorthand" for Gamemasters to handle conflicts between superhumans and large forces. It can be quite tedious to run combats involving dozens, much less hundreds, of troops, and it's unfair not to give large forces at least a chance against super-powered foes. Seen one-on-one, no soldier has a prayer against a power level 10 or greater character with significant offensive and defensive powers, but working as a unit, a force of soldiers should have one.

The system is necessarily abstract, boiling down several rounds of normal combat into longer battle rounds that resolve many different exchanges of attacks and maneuvers one or two die rolls. It's quite possible to resolve a conflict between a superhuman (or group of them) and an entire army in just a couple battle rounds (as seen in the example above). It also summarizes things like equipment, weapons, and tactics.

The Gamemaster is responsible for providing the description of the battle and what exactly occurs while the system provides a general outline of things (who won and by how much, etc.). Gamemasters who feel that the field battle system tends to run *too* quickly should try breaking a single large force into two or more smaller forces and running the battle with those, giving the individual characters a few more "opponents" to overcome. This is particularly true for battles involving multiple super-powered characters. As a rule of thumb, try to give each character involved in the battle either a superhuman foe or a single force as an opponent, preventing the characters from "ganging up" on a single force and quickly ending the battle.

The field battle system is *not* intended as a war game for resolving military conflicts between armies; it's main intent is as an individual vs. force system. It's far better to handle large-scale military engagements by GM Fiat, modified according to the actions of the heroes and their major foes. There are plenty of far better and more detailed games for playing out the actual battlefield conflicts of the Second World War, if that's what you're looking to do.

troop compliment. If the original force suffered any damage, both of the split forces have the same damage.

COMBINE

Two forces may also choose to combine to form a single, larger, force. Combining forces is a full-round action. This increases the force's size, and therefore force modifier, normally. For example, if two forces of 250 troops combine to form a single force, that force has a force modifier one higher than the original forces.

If any of the forces are disrupted when they combine with another force, the combined force has the highest total of hits from among its components. The components' hits are not added together. Disabled forces cannot combine with others.

COORDINATED ASSAULT

Two or more forces may attempt to make a coordinated assault on a target. Each assisting force makes a normal attack roll against the target. Each successful attack inflicts no damage, but grants the coordinating force a +2 bonus on its attack roll against that same target. Note that a coordinated assault does not increase the attack's damage, only the likelihood of a successful attack, so several small forces looking to increase their damage potential are better off combining into a larger force with a higher force modifier (see **Combine** previously).

FLANKING

Two forces may attempt to catch an opponent in between them, *flanking* that opponent. If two forces are located on opposite sides of a target, each force gains a +2 attack bonus against that target.

TERRAIN & CONDITIONS

Certain kinds of terrain and environmental conditions make things difficult (or easier) for large forces in combat.

A force fighting in particularly difficult terrain (rocky, broken, confined urban areas, etc.) suffers a –1 penalty to attack, defense, and initiative. A force fighting in an area under cover of darkness, heavy fog, severe weather, and so forth must deal with concealment modifiers, unless the force has equipment to overcome these penalties (such as lights or night-vision equipment to overcome darkness penalties).

DAMAGE

Units successfully attacked during a round attempt Toughness saving throws as per the standard *M&M* rules. The results of Toughness saves are found under the **Field Battle Damage** table below.

Each round's attacks are considered to happen simultaneously. Therefore, the effects of damage are not applied until the following round.

FIELD BATTLE DAMAGE

Toughness Saving Throw...	Effect
Succeeds	No Effect
Fails	Disrupted
Fails by 5 or more	Shaken + Disrupted
Fails by 10 or more	Staggered + Disrupted + Disabled
Fails by 15 or more	Destroyed

DAMAGE CONDITIONS

The potential damage conditions resulting from field battle damage are as follows:

DISRUPTED

The unit is suffering from the chaos of battle. Casualties and wounded are starting to add up and it is beginning to feel the pinch of lost manpower. Cohesion is starting to break down under stress, making it difficult to relay orders from component unit to component unit. Moreover, the loss of commissioned officers and NCOs is adversely affecting the unit's ability to fight effectively. The sight of dead and wounded comrades has begun to hurt the unit's morale.

As a result, each disrupted condition enforces a –1 penalty to all the field unit's rolls, including further Toughness saves and morale checks. The penalties for multiple disrupted conditions are cumulative with each other and with any other penalties incurred.

SHAKEN

The unit suffers a dramatic loss. Maybe a shell hits the headquarters tent, a trusted and respected officer is killed, or a previously unseen enemy machine gun nest mows down an entire subunit.

Whatever the cause, the unit cannot take any actions during the next round. During this time, it suffers a –2 penalty to all rolls but any additional shaken results are ignored. The unit recovers automatically on the following round, but may then be shaken again as normal.

STAGGERED

The unit's soldiers are no longer fighting at peak efficiency, as fear and confusion hamper their decision-making and losses weaken their strength. They are limited to a standard or move action each round, not both.

DISABLED

A disabled unit has been demoralized or damaged to the point where it can no longer fight effectively. It may not attack other units, but it may still attempt saving throws to resist attacks against it, and take actions to retreat from the field of battle.

DESTROYED

A destroyed unit has had its morale completely broken. Scattered elements may continue to fight, but their impact on the battle is negligible as the majority of the unit has been killed, captured, or has taken flight in a disorganized retreat. The unit in question is obviously done in the battle at hand—and likely for all battles to follow, for that matter.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND FORCE DAMAGE

As a general rule, player characters—whether ordinary grunts or costumed heroes—are considered separate from a force with regard to damage. Damage to the overall force does not directly affect the heroes, except insofar as it weakens the support they can expect. Gamemaster's should handle possible damage to the heroes individually according to the standard *M&M* combat rules. So a mortal bombardment would require a Toughness save from the overall force, and the GM might call for Reflex and Toughness saves against a particular instance of Explosion Damage from the heroes.

MORALE CHECKS

Certain events require a force to make a *morale check* to determine if the majority of the force is still willing to continue the fight. A failed morale check means the force is disrupted. A second failed moral check means the force is shaken, suffering a –2 penalty on attack and defense until the force succeeds at a morale check. A third failed morale check in a row means the force is routed. The force's fighting spirit is broken and the force either surrenders or flees (based on the conditions and the GM's discretion).

A morale check is a d20 roll plus the force's morale modifier (based on troop quality). The Difficulty Class for morale checks starts out at 10, but each failed morale check increases the DC by 1, and each disrupted condition the force suffers also imposes a –1 morale check modifier. Forces must make morale checks after any of the following events:

- The force fails a Toughness save and suffers damage.

- The force fails to inflict any damage against any target for two successive battle rounds.

- The force suffers a serious setback or reversal (in the opinion of the Gamemaster).

Additionally, the Gamemaster may impose modifiers to the morale check based on the conditions. An especially effective use of Intimidation or powers by a superhuman foe may apply a –2 (or greater) penalty to a force's morale checks, while the presence of an especially charismatic leader may apply a bonus (equal to the leader's Charisma modifier) on the force's morale checks.

FEATS

The effects of most combat feats are *not* incorporated into the field battle rules. The Gamemaster might assign the Improved Critical feat to a veteran unit, or Sneak Attack to a paratrooper division, or Precise Shot to a platoon of expert marksmen. For the most part, however, combat feats don't apply when dealing with mass battles, and the average dogface doesn't have that many of them, anyway.

General and skill feats are too small-scale and individual to figure into these rules. Sure, it'd be no fun to suffer the effects of the Taunt feat from an entire regiment, but it's hard to hear even the best burn over machine-gun fire. In any case, their targets are probably more worried about being shot and killed than they are about the enemy bustin' on their mommas.

POWERS

For the most part, powers affect forces in the way they affect individuals, with a few exceptions.

- Powers that inflict damage are assumed to do their normal damage against the force as a whole, even if the power does not normally affect an area. The wielder is assumed to be making multiple attacks with that power during the battle round. Damaging powers with the Area extra inflict +2 damage to a force, with each Progression feat increasing this bonus by +1, but the total additional damage from Area and Progression cannot exceed the force modifier (since the damage effectively encompasses the entire force at that point).

- Non-damaging powers that do not normally affect an area have a negligible effect on a force in battle. The character can only use such powers if they have the Area extra and sufficient Progression to encompass the entire force. So a character with the Mind Control power, for example, could not attempt to Mind Control an entire force unless he possessed sufficient area for the power to affect the entire force. The GM can allow these powers to operate normally at the individual scale, they just don't have much influence on the outcome of unit-level conflicts.

- A particularly spectacular or destructive use of powers may impose a modifier to a force's morale checks at the GM's discretion, either a penalty for an enemy force of a bonus (rallying the troops) for an allied force.

- Impervious Toughness is compared against the force's *total* damage (including force modifier) before determining whether or not the character has to make a Toughness saving throw against the force's attack. This is one of the advantages of larger forces: they can overcome—through superior numbers and firepower—Impervious Toughness that would render a target immune to the attacks of a smaller force. So, for example, a character with Impervious Toughness 10 can ignore the damage of a platoon of green troops (+9 damage total) but not that of a trained platoon (+10 damage) that knows how to apply its firepower.

SAMPLE CONFLICT

A force of 100 trained troops is defending a base from the Nazi super-soldier Donar, Lord of Thunder. The troops have a +6 force modifier for their numbers. This gives the force the following traits:

TRAINED TROOPS

Attack +8, Damage +11, Defense +2, Toughness +7, Initiative +2, Morale +0

Unfortunately for them, Donar is a powerful foe. His Impervious Toughness is only 6, however, not high enough to ignore the force's attacks, so they have a chance. Donar has the following traits (see **Chapter 5** for details):

DONAR, LORD OF THUNDER

Attack +8 (+10 with his hammer), Damage +9 (unarmed) or +12 (hammer), Defense +9, Toughness +12 (Impervious 6), Initiative +1.

As an individual character, Donar doesn't have a morale bonus or make morale checks.

The troops get initiative and attack Donar. They roll an 11 on their attack roll for a total of 19, which is a hit, so Donar makes a Toughness save (DC 26, the force's damage of +11, plus 15). He gets a 22 and suffers a hurt result, roaring angrily at the "little fleas" stinging at him.

Then the Lord of Thunder counterattacks: he only needs to roll a 2 or better to hit the troops (since his attack bonus with his hammer is the same as their Defense). The force needs to make a Toughness save (DC 27 for Donar's +12 damage hammer). With their +7 Toughness save bonus, they need to roll a 20 to succeed. They roll a 19, and manage to suffer only a disrupted result. However, the force has taken damage, so they must make a morale check (DC 10). The GM rolls and gets a 9. They suffer an additional disrupted result from the display of Donar's power.

The troops attack again and hit. The Teutonic Nazi makes another Toughness saving throw and succeeds, shrugging off their assault. He counterattacks and the force makes another Toughness save. This time they roll only a 10, which fails the save by 10, meaning the force is disabled. The GM rules that Donar's fierce assault overturns vehicles, smashes bunkers, and sends the remainder of the force packing.

Mere minutes after his arrival, Donar leaves a devastated military force behind, carrying away the Allied scientist he was ordered to abduct. Only a few scattered troops remain to tell the heroes of the super-soldier's assault so they can go after him.

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A freelance writer for the *Mutants & Masterminds* line, Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed. is a lifelong Virginian whose prior works have been published by PEG, WEG, Guildhall Press, and Gold Rush Games. He holds Bachelor of Science Degrees in Political Science and Journalism, as well as a Master's in Education, from Radford University. For the past nine years, he has worked as a High School Social Studies Teacher, and he serves as a moderator for the New Gamers Order pro wrestling/game industry discussion e-list.

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Scott graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1995, and hasn't looked back since. He began freelancing right out of collage. He began working for Fasa's *Battletech*, *Shadowrun*, and *Earthdawn*. At this time he began to do work for White Wolf and Pinnacle Entertainment Group as well. He then began doing work for AEG, which he parlayed into a part time staff position for a year working on all their game lines. After that, he did conceptual design for Hasbro on the movie *Small Solders* doing character designs, and creating the look for the toy and computer animated cartoon *Action Man*. He continues to freelance for a multitude of companies, along with teaching college art classes.

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Talon Dunning is a fantasy illustrator in the great Southern metropolis of Atlanta, Georgia, where he was born in 1972. A survivor of both Auburn University's Fine Art school and White Wolf's production intern program, he has served as the chief illustrator for the *Ravenloft 3rd Edition Roleplaying Game* as well as a regular in other Sword & Sorcery Studios projects and, more recently, *Mage The Awakening*. He's also done work for West End Games (*D6, Star Wars, TORG Revised*), Wizards of the Coast (*Legend of the 5 Rings CCG*), Kenzer & Co. (*Kingdoms of Kalamar*) and Green Ronin (*Thieves' World*, *Mutants & Masterminds Second Edition*) as well as a host of other small-press RPG and comic book companies. Talon is an avid roleplayer, comic book collector, movie buff, and all around nice-guy. And yes, that is his real name.

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Gus Vasquez has worked for a wide variety of different comic companies, including Marvel and Image. He also spent some time in "prison", on seasons five and six of HBO's original series, *OZ*, where he could be seen as spanish gang leader, Morales', bodyguard! You can usually catch Gus at comic book conventions. He's the guy wearing a cowboy hat and lots of "flair," sporting many rings, and leather bands. He's not hard to find and is very easy to talk with.

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Michelle Lyons spends her days as a mild-mannered editor who aspires to join the crew at the Daily Planet. When trouble calls, however, she sheds her mundane diurnal persona and becomes... well, that would be telling, really. Between her fabulous pair of red X-ray Glasses and her sassy editorial commentary, though, no criminally bad prose stands a chance.

RAMON K. PEREZ, ART

Ramón K. Pérez was born prematurely (dislikes overstaying his welcome) on June 4th, 1973, to immigrants of the Great White North. Ramón laid about for the first three months of his life un-named (this is why he responds quite well to "hey you!") till his parents agreed upon making him a "jr," Ramón for dad and Krzysztof for mum. Over time little Ramón grew up (somewhat) and learned many things, like what an ottoman is. Though his body has never quite caught up to the size of his head, luckily the size of his face caught up with the size of his nose, allowing him to lead a somewhat normal life.

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— SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL